English Medium Instruction in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas:
Policies, Practices, and Promise of Quality Education

Sushil Subham Rout

Abstract

The implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) by Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs) aimed to bridge the educational divide and provide underprivileged and rural populations access to high-quality education. In this paper, the author argues that despite its policy driven promises of socioeconomic mobility, English medium education frequently aggravates the pre-existing educational disparities. EMI's official policy and its actual implementation on the ground are examined in this study through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations and student outcome analysis from OAVs in the districts of Mayurbhanj and Cuttack in the state of Odisha. The statistics show that, despite being taught in English, children commonly experience linguistic estrangement, with teachers resorting to 'unofficial' bilingual approaches to improve comprehension. The technique has proven to be substantially more effective in aiding student learning despite its informality. Through this study, it is argued that the current EMI approach, which encourages instruction in English-only, needs to be re-evaluated. It makes the case for the official integration of bilingual resources assessments and multilingual pedagogies in order to better match students' linguistic realities and attain more equitable learning outcomes. To fully realise EMI's potential in promoting social justice and educational equity in India, the study suggests that policy must change toward a more inclusive multilingual approach.

Keywords: *English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs), Educational Inequity, Linguistic Diversity, Educational Policy Reform, Social Justice in Education..*

Introduction

There have been many discussions, debates, and disclosures regarding the use of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in schools, particularly in postcolonial and multilingual contexts, where English seemed to serve as a global language, as well as a sign of socioeconomic privilege. In a country like India, which is wealthy in variety of languages and has unmatched linguistic diversity, often suffers to make judicious use of the strength, uniqueness, and diversity that each language accompanies. As irrespective of all the language wealth available in the country, English medium instruction is, without a second thought, regarded as a route to quality education and better professional chances, particularly for those children from rural and poor backgrounds. Sadly, despite such linguistic richness, these languages were never accepted, regarded nor accorded with the value and recognition that they always deserved. Amidst these existing 'medium of instruction-language chaos', Odisha government came up with a model school, named Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs) under the aegis of Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan (OAVS). It is an ambitious initiative by the Government of Odisha to provide quality education in English medium to the rural children of Odisha, practically

at no cost or at best at low cost. They have a network of state-run model schools, which imitates this policy approach, by using EMI as an effort to provide better educational opportunities to less privileged students of the society with the declared goal of bridging and gradually overcoming socioeconomic divides that exists within in a layered manner. However, despite all the promises of quality education and social mobility, the real-life implementation of EMI in these institutions shows a substantial level of pedagogical and sociolinguistic challenges, which requires more probing in the form of investigation. The English as a medium of instruction is often marketed, promoted, and sold to the society and its constituents as a progressive step in modernising education. However, its use in places where English is not the primary language of communication raises potential questions about linguistic isolation, accessibility, and learning outcomes. According to research, children who come from non-English speaking backgrounds often have trouble understanding in EMI settings which frequently results in a greater reliance on rote memorisation rather than meaningful engagement with academic discourse. Moreover, this pattern is evident in OAVs where students who have had limited exposure to English beforehand, find it difficult to understand complicated subjects, undercutting the overarching objective of delivering high quality education. It is also difficult for teachers, many of whom received their training outside of EMI (non-EMI settings), to teach entirely in English while ensuring that students understand. As a result of which, a widespread informal dependence on bilingual teaching methods has arisen to tackle such contexts, with teachers routinely moving between English and students' home languages to promote learning. Even though this multilingual strategy works well in reality, but, at the same time, it contrasts sharply with the legally mandated English-only model, demonstrating a fundamental mismatch between policy goals and classroom realities.

The drive for EMI in OAVs corresponds with a global movement that views English as a means of promoting economic growth and upward mobility. However, such a method sometimes ignores and fails to acknowledge the reality that language is not only a tool for education but also a crucial factor in determining access to opportunities, possibilities, and knowledge. Treating language merely as a neutral vehicle of instruction obscures its role in reproducing or challenging existing social, economic, and educational hierarchies, particularly in marginalised rural schooling contexts such as OAVs. Bourdieu's concept of 'linguistic capital' provides a useful framework for understanding this phenomenon, demonstrating how English, as a prestigious language may both facilitate and hinder socioeconomic advancement. In this study, linguistic capital is understood as the socially recognised value of particular language competencies within institutional and educational spaces, where English operates as a legitimised resource that can be converted into academic recognition and social mobility, while vernacular and tribal linguistic resources are rendered invisible or devalued. In the case of OAVs, the children from lower socio-economic backgrounds were seen to frequently lack the linguistic base required to properly benefit from EMI instruction. Rather than promoting inclusivity, EMI may in some situations unintentionally aggravates educational inequalities by favouring students who have had prior exposure to English. Furthermore, Cummins interdependence hypothesis argues that students' performance in a second language improves when they have a strong foundation in their first language. The absence of students' home languages from formal instruction as observed in OAVs, goes against this ideal and may obstruct cognitive growth and academic progress of the students, going strongly against the very idea and vision of 'providing quality English medium education to the rural talents of Odisha.'

The recent multilingual educational research questions the strict enforcement of EMI policies and support for more flexible approaches that take advantage of children's entire linguistic potential. The theory of translanguaging, for example, argues that pupils learn more efficiently when they can seamlessly integrate different languages into the learning process. In OAVs, teachers' informal use of bilingual methods shows that translanguaging practices occur spontaneously, upholding the idea that a solely English medium model is not only unfeasible, but also impedes instructional effectiveness. Whereas other multilingual studies have found that bilingual and multilingual education improve topic comprehension as well as language acquisition and these findings raise serious doubts regarding the long-term viability of an 'English-only' instructional method in OAVs.

The disparity between EMI policy and the actual grassroot level execution is most visible in the area of assessment. Students are expected to demonstrate the topic knowledge in English, regardless of their competence level, which raises further challenges, as students with a great grasp of topic concepts, frequently fail to explain their comprehension due to their linguistic limits. The overemphasis on English in evaluations disadvantages non-native speakers and nurtures structural inequities, as pupils from more privileged linguistic backgrounds are more likely to succeed than the disadvantaged sections of the society – disadvantaged both linguistically and economically. Given these problems, there is a dire need to reconsider the EMI paradigm in OAVs and research more inclusive approaches that are aligned with students' linguistic reality.

The purpose of this study is to critically analyse the influence of EMI or EME (English Medium Instruction/Education) in OAVs by looking into how students and teachers deal with linguistic problems in an English dominated academic environment. The study uses semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and an analysis of student performance across OAVs in Odisha's Mayurbhanj and Cuttack districts to give an empirical basis for understanding EMI implementation. Two Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas were purposively selected for in-depth study, representing a rural–tribal context (Mayurbhanj) and a semi-urban context (Cuttack). Participants included school administrators, subject teachers, students from Classes IX and X, and parents of first-generation learners' households and comparatively educated households, allowing for a multi-layered understanding of EMI as policy and practice. The study focuses on three key questions: (a) whether EMI promotes or hinders educational equity, (b) how teachers adapt their teaching methods to bridge language gaps, and (c) what policy level changes might be necessary to align EMI with students' actual learning needs.

A core argument of this paper is that a rigid EMI model, particularly in contexts where English is not the first language of students, may worsen educational disparities instead of reducing them. Rather than enforcing an English-only approach, a more balanced model, one that incorporates multilingual teaching methods, bilingual learning materials, and flexible assessment strategies, would better serve the goal of 'quality education.' Achieving all of this, however, requires a change in the policy perspectives by moving away from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, to one that acknowledges the diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds of students enrolled in OAVs.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a comprehensive literature review, exploring global and national debates on EMI, theories of language learning, and empirical studies on multilingual education, followed by a detailed discussion of the research methodology, which includes the data collection methodologies and analytical frameworks employed in the study. The findings section, then explores important understandings gained in the form insights

from classroom observations, student and teacher interviews, and academic performance patterns in EMI contexts. The discussion section situates these findings within the larger theoretical and practical concerns surrounding language and education. Finally, the conclusion part and policy recommendations outline prospective reforms by stressing upon the importance of a more contextually aware and linguistically inclusive approach to EMI in OAVs.

The implementation of English medium instruction in OAVs provides a thoughtful but difficult attempt to address educational discrepancies through language policies. Although, 'English' as well as 'English medium instruction' is often seen as a most sought out way to improve educational and professional prospects, but its performance is determined by how effectively it accommodates the linguistic realities of both students and teachers. By scrutinising the limitations of an English-only approach and advocating for a more inclusive multilingual approach the findings of the study contribute to ongoing discussions about language and education policy. Through focusing on the experiences of students and teachers in EMI classrooms, this study stresses upon the importance of re-evaluating and further re-considering language policies to ensure that it supports both educational equity and results in meaningful learning outcomes.

Literature Review

The English medium instruction, over a period of time, has grown exponentially as a phenomenon worldwide, due to its perceived role in promoting economic mobility, global competitiveness, and access to higher education (Dearden, 2015; Hamid et al., 2019). At one hand, the policy discourses constantly describe EMI as one of the potential ways towards socioeconomic growth. However, at the other hand, research shows its pedagogical hurdles, linguistic barriers, and propensity to aggravate educational inequality (Macaro

et al., 2018; Phillipson, 1992). In the context of India, policies on EMI in public education, particularly in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas follows global trends by displaying distinct sociolinguistic difficulties (Mohanty, 2013; Panda & Mohanty, 2014). The section thoroughly evaluates the major literature on EMI, theories of language acquisition, and practical studies on multilingual education, drawing from international perspectives and contextualising the current study's contribution.

Theoretical Perspectives on EMI and Language Learning

There are several theoretical assertions that support the discussion of EMI, particularly in multilingual contexts. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of 'linguistic capital' is useful in understanding EMI's function in nurturing and thereby continuing to maintain the socioeconomic disparities. English, as a dominating 'linguistic currency,' often favours the students who belong to privileged backgrounds while marginalising others with minimal or no exposure to the target language (Tollefson and Tsui, 2018; Ricento, 2015). In the educational system, like that of India's, EMI is viewed as both a boon and bane; a source of mobility, as well as a potent source of linguistic alienation, for students from rural and marginalised communities, failing to understand curriculum taught in an unfamiliar language. A language, that's if not alien but is unfamiliar to the students' life, culture, immediate surroundings and largely their being and becoming (Eldho, 2020; Rout, 2024).

Cummins (1979) interdependence hypothesis proposes that students' ability in a second language (L2) improves when they have a sturdy basis in their first language (L1). However, this notion goes against the idea of monolingual EMI policies, which ignores the cognitive benefits of bilingual education (Garcia & Lin, 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008). The translanguaging theory, as advocated by Canagarajah (2012), opposes the tight compartmentalisation of

languages in education by advocating for the instructional practices, that considers and uses students' complete linguistic repertoires. There are even several research which indicate that using translanguaging in EMI settings enhances one's understanding and cognitive engagement (García & Wei, 2014; Wei & Lin, 2019), supporting need based, multilingual instructional approaches in OAVs.

Global Perspectives on EMI Implementation

The spread of EMI across different educational contexts has resulted into variety of possibilities and difficulties, concerning 'language' and its usage inside and outside the classrooms in educational setups. English medium instruction is frequently associated with internationalisation and academic prestige in European higher education (Wilkinson, 2013; Dimova et al., 2015). However, there are adequate research that show EMI poses challenges for comprehension and participation of students, particularly for the non-native speakers of English (Dimova et al., 2015; Bälter et al., 2024). Similar sort of patterns can be seen in East Asian contexts where the adoption of EMI has been met with reluctance due to worries about students' language preparation and teachers' ability in English (Lei & Hu, 2023).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, EMI policies have been criticised for aggravating educational indifferences, as students with insufficient exposure to English mostly struggle to grasp the subject matter (Brock-Utne, 2013; Heugh, 2008). Studies in South Africa, show that EMI has constantly disadvantaged indigenous language speakers, resulting in inferior academic achievement and higher dropout rates (Probyn 2009; Chalmers 2019). These findings are also consistent with research in Latin America, where the projects of EMI have struggled due to improper yet insufficient teacher training and a lack of pedagogical support (Banegas, 2021; Lopez & Sichra, 2008).

EMI in the Indian Context

Undisputedly, one of the main reasons for difficult adoption of EMI is due to the linguistic diversity that a nation like India possesses. At times, these diversities rather than being helpful, creates obstacles for an effective and complete EMI adoption. There are researchers that claim, EMI policies in public education often are seen to benefit the urban and economically sound populations, while it disadvantages rural children (Mohanty, 2013; Panda & Mohanty, 2014). Research in higher education in India shows that EMI leads to linguistic inequality with students from English speaking backgrounds outperforming those from vernacular medium institutions (Azam et al., 2013; Jhingran, 2005). According to Ramanathan (2005), students from non-English-speaking households mostly are seen to struggle with comprehension and academic engagement.

Within Odisha's OAVs, EMI is positioned as a means to enhance educational quality and socioeconomic opportunities for marginalised students. However, preliminary research signifies that teachers frequently resort to bilingual instruction to facilitate comprehension (Rout, 2024; Khubchandani, 1997). This comes in alignment with broad ranging national findings where teachers, despite official EMI mandates, rely upon code-switching and code-mixing to fill in the void of linguistic gaps (Agnihotri, 2009). Such practices challenge the effectiveness of strict EMI policies and accentuate the need for multilingual pedagogies in Indian classrooms (Panda & Mohanty, 2014; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008).

Pedagogical Challenges and Bilingual Strategies in EMI Classrooms

Teacher preparedness and instructional strategies considerably influence EMI outcomes. Research suggests that many EMI teachers lack sufficient training in English proficiency and subject-specific pedagogical methods (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016; Galloway et al., 2021). In India,

there are studies that show that teachers often experience linguistic insecurity when required to teach complicated subjects in English, leading to reliance on bilingual methods (Menon et al., 2018; Rout, 2024). The effectiveness of these informal bilingual strategies is supported by empirical studies demonstrating that students achieve better learning outcomes when the informal, yet formal instruction incorporates their home languages (Heugh, 2008; Hornberger, 2004).

Multilingual Pedagogies and Policy Considerations

The limits of EMI have led to proposals for legislative and policy level changes that incorporate multilingual pedagogies. Several studies from countries like Canada and Finland provide with insider's perspective about the advantages of dual language education approaches, which improve both topic learning and language ability (Ricento, 2015). Empirical research from Ethiopia and South Africa also suggests that additive bilingualism, in which the first language is gradually phased out rather than abruptly replaced, leads to improved academic performance and linguistic competence.

In India, the experts unanimously argue for a more balanced EMI strategy that considers students' linguistic roots while improving their English competence (Eldho, 2020). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises the importance of mother tongue-based education, however the consequences for EMI schools are uncertain. Research suggests that EMI policies should adopt a framework that is more inclusive, one that legitimises bilingual instructional practices and provides structured teacher training in multilingual pedagogies (Panda & Mohanty, 2014; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008).

The worldwide and national literature on EMI emphasises the challenges of implementing English-dominant educational paradigms in multilingual communities. The paper adds to the continuing discussion about EMI policy and practice by combining lessons from global research and proposing for pedagogical methods that embrace rather than marginalise linguistic diversity.

Research Methodology

The study employs a qualitative case study methodology to examine how English medium instruction is being implemented in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas. It focuses on the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders, pedagogical challenges and sociolinguistic ramifications of EMI in this setting. Since, it allows for a nuanced analysis of a real-world issue in its natural environment, a case study approach is ideal for this research (Yin 2018). An organised yet adaptable framework for investigating the policy-practice gap in EMI from various angles is provided by a case study in contrast to ethnography which requires substantial fieldwork or phenomenology which concentrates on individual lived experiences. This study looks at OAVs in the districts of Mayurbhanj and Cuttack in order to evaluate in detail how EMI is used in classrooms and how different stakeholders perceive and understand its effects on learning outcomes, especially for marginalised students from rural non-English speaking communities.

Guided by this objective, the research is structured around four key questions: (1) How do key stakeholders – policymakers, teachers, students, and parents – perceive the implementation of EMI in OAVs? (2) What pedagogical and socio-cultural challenges emerge as a result of EMI adoption, particularly for marginalised students? (3) How do bilingual pedagogical strategies impact student learning outcomes in EMI classrooms? and (4) How do EMI policies in OAVs align with national multilingual education frameworks, and what implications does this have for larger educational practices in India? These questions make a subtle attempt to understand the complexities surrounded by English medium instruction from a variety of perspectives, encompassing multiple angles which capture both its potential benefits and

inherent challenges within Odisha's socio-linguistic context.

Purposive sampling is used in this study to ensure the inclusion of different perspectives, specifically targeting persons directly involved in EMI implementation. The participants were chosen based on their responsibilities in policymaking, administration, teaching, and learning, as well as their socioeconomic and linguistic status. The sample included policymakers, who provided insights into the rationale and objectives of EMI policies; the teachers were chosen based on their years of experience, subject expertise, and familiarity with bilingual teaching strategies; whereas, the students were drawn from both rural and semi-urban OAVs, ensuring representation of different socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of English proficiency; and parents, particularly those of first-generation learners, whose perspectives offered different dimensions.

The study uses a variety of qualitative data collection approaches to obtain a thorough and triangulated knowledge. Semi-structured interviews with the administrators, teachers, and parents provided a detailed understanding into their experiences and issues with EMI. The semi-structured interviews gave participants the flexibility to freely express their thoughts, while it also enabled the researcher to elicit stronger and layered insights. Further, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with students and teachers to brainstorm as well as analyse EMI issues and the effectiveness of multilingual solutions in the classroom. These FGDs facilitated the development shared thoughts which lead to lively discussions, which lately enhanced the study's findings.

Furthermore, classroom observations were carried out across the two OAVs. One in rural-tribal setup of Mayurbhanj and the other one in a semi-urban setup of Cuttack districts, to get first-hand knowledge of teacher-student interactions, the usage of multilingual methods, and student involvement in EMI classes. The observations focused on how teachers dealt with linguistic obstacles, how students reacted to English-medium education, and whether bilingual pedagogical practices were implemented effectively or not. In addition to all these methodologies, document analysis was used to analyse policy documents, curricular guidelines, and instructional materials, determining whether official EMI mandates are consistent with classroom realities. By considering and eventually merging these many data sources, the study ensures a comprehensive and multidimensional investigation of EMI implementation in OAVs.

This study employs data triangulation, which entails cross checking the findings from multiple sources to increase reliability and credibility. To make sure that reported challenges and experiences aligned with real teaching-learning scenarios the triangulation technique involved comparing policy language (from interviews with administrators) with classroom realities (from focus group discussions and observations). Furthermore, the perspectives of both teachers and students were validated through classroom observation data allowing for a comprehensive validation of pedagogical issues. In order to elucidate on the socioeconomic ramifications of EMI, parental opinions were examined alongside student engagement and achievement. Using a triangulated method like this reduces researcher bias while ensuring that the conclusions are both culturally grounded and empirically supported.

To identify patterns and themes in the qualitative data, the study employs thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). The first step in the process was data familiarisation, which entailed closely going over focus group discussions, observation notes, reviewing interview transcripts and policy documents to uncover underlying emerging trends. This was followed by first coding, in which major phrases and ideas were classified. Related codes were then organised into broader categories, such as teacher preparedness, student involvement, linguistic difficulties,

and socio-cultural challenges. Finally, the themes were modified and interpreted to guarantee their consistency with the study questions, allowing for a detailed and a thorough examination of EMI implementation in OAVs. To enhance transparency in reporting qualitative findings, indicative counts of participants expressing similar or contrasting perspectives were included alongside illustrative quotations. Such an approach does not necessarily quantify the data but provides readers with a sense of the prevalence of certain views across stakeholder groups, strengthening the credibility and interpretability of the reported themes.

Throughout the entire research process ethical considerations were given the topmost priority. All participants gave their informed consent, acknowledging that they understood the purpose of the study that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Parental consent was obtained from student participants as well. All responses were anonymised using pseudonyms to protect participant identity and they were kept completely confidential. Furthermore, given the hierarchical nature of schools, special efforts were taken to reduce power imbalances, particularly when dealing with students and teachers. The FGDs were conducted in non-administrative informal settings, where participants could freely express and voice their opinions without the fear of institutional repercussions. Data collection was done in Odia, English or a combination of the both the languages, to accommodate the linguistic diversity of the participants and allowing them to freely express their experiences.

Using a case study methodology and several qualitative methods, this study gives a comprehensive, and in depth probing of EMI implementation in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas. The study tries to add to the ongoing academic conversations about EMI and multilingual education, while also providing practical yet useful insights for policymakers and educators, stressing upon the importance of context sensitive instructional practices. The findings of this study have the potential to inform and guide future policy interventions, ensuring that EMI policies are inclusive, pedagogically sound, and in alignment with the linguistic realities of rural students in India.

Findings and Results

The findings of the study are based on a range of data sources, such as semi structured interviews with educational administrators and policymakers, interviews with teachers, focus group discussions with parents and children, classroom observations, and even document analysis. These findings are presented topically, with full excerpts from participant responses, theoretical connections, and broader policy consequences, to provide a thorough analysis of the upsides and downsides of the EMI programme in urban and rural Odisha.

1. Rationale, Objectives, and Challenges of EMI in OAVs

Administrators' Perspectives

The implementation of EMI in OAVs was billed as an educational programme focused at providing marginalised students with equitable opportunities for achievement in higher education and the labour field. The administrators emphasised that the fundamental goal of EMI was to bridge the rural-urban gap by providing English-education and improving the English proficiency of pupils from underprivileged areas. Making English the medium of teaching was thought to better prepare students for the challenges of globalisation and ever evolving competitive job markets. This aspirational framing was expressed by five of the seven administrators interviewed, who associated English proficiency with social mobility and global participation. According to an administrator:

"In today's modern world, having proficiency in English opens millions of doors. OAVs are noble institutions

with pious motives, established for the betterment of poor children of the society; as it aims to provide rural students with the English skills, which is necessary to compete on an equal footing with their privileged peers. EMI and the quality in EMI are core to this vision. Else, tell me where you would get free English medium schooling? In this mean world where money is the fuel to run the vehicle of one's life. Do you think something being free can associate itself with quality? I would advise everyone to try enquiring about the fees that the private institutions charge to disseminate EME. Even the wealthier among the wealthiest thinks twice before getting their children enrolled to a school equipped with EMI in a rural setup, and these dynamics change with the city, locality and the society. Just forget about the underprivileged portion of the society!" (Dipak, Administrator, OAVS)

Similar views linking English-medium provision to equity and aspiration were expressed by four other administrators, indicating a strong convergence of perspectives within this stakeholder group.

Despite the aspirational intentions, many considerable difficulties arose during the implementation of EMI. The administrators acknowledged that teacher readiness, student adaptability, and the sociolinguistic reality of rural communities posed tremendous challenges. Another administrator reflected:

> "It is an easy task to implement a policy on a piece of paper, but the reality will leave you with a mouth wide-open, that many of these students come from homes where English is hardly spoken and barely understood; many of them come from tribal families, where even the dominant L1 of the state, i.e., Odia, is not completely taken into account nor understood; most of them are first generation learners. When they enter OAVs, they face a huge leap, and often, the gaps in their understanding

> of the subject matter are widely stark." (Rabindra, Administrator, OAVS)

These implementation-level concerns were shared by six of the seven administrators interviewed, indicating near-consensus about the structural and pedagogical difficulties involved in realising EMI in rural and tribal settings.

These findings are consistent with Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital, which proposes that language proficiency is related to one's social and economic standing. The policy's notion that EMI will automatically lead to upward social mobility is impaired by first-generation learner's linguistic estrangement in rural as well as urban settings. In the absence of an adequate transition mechanism, the implementation of EMI may without any intention worsen the existing 'language-chaos' rather than alleviate educational inequity.

2. Teachers' Experiences with EMI Implementation

Confidence and Preparedness

The teachers' experience with EMI showed a complicated picture of concern and dedication. Many of the teachers expressed anxiety about their own English proficiency and teaching methods, while English language teachers were generally confident in their ability to deliver content in English, teachers of Science and Social Science expressed significant difficulties in using English for academic terminology and tackling complex subject matter. Concerns related to language proficiency and pedagogical preparedness were expressed by seven of the twelve teachers interviewed. One Social Science teacher shared his experience:

> "Teaching political theory in English is very challenging. The concepts are complex in nature, and my students often complain about and struggle with the terminology. Even when I try to translate terms, it doesn't always help because they don't have the context for understanding." (Jagannath, TGT—SST, OAV, Cuttack)

Similar concerns were expressed by three other teachers (two Science teachers and one Social Science teacher), indicating that technical vocabulary posed recurring classroom challenges.

Many teachers acknowledged that the transition to EMI required a thorough yet complete rethinking of their pedagogical practices, but they often felt unprepared to make such a leap. Feelings of unpreparedness were reported by six of the twelve teachers. A senior teacher in the Science department shared her experience:

> "In Science, many of the terms are new to the students, and teaching them solely in English is overwhelming. I find myself reverting to Odia to ensure they understand the concepts properly. If they still don't understand, I try to provide them relevant examples. If they fail to understand that too, I leave them to the 'creator of English' and pray to God for their good sense and educational prosperity. In a class of 35 minutes, I can't cater to all these discrepancies, sadly. We are bound to meet the deadlines of completing the syllabus by hook or crook. The students who come from previous backgrounds of English schooling, get along with us, while most of the children from vernacular medium, fail to comprehend and are usually left behind." (Sanjukta, PGT Science, OAV, Mayurbhanj)

Similar classroom disparities were reported by four teachers, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms.

Classroom Strategies— Bilingualism and Code-Switching

Faced with these challenges, bilingual pedagogies became a common strategy in classrooms. Many teachers adopted code-switching and code-mixing as a pragmatic solution to ensure that students could access the curriculum. The use of bilingual strategies was reported by eight of the twelve teachers. In Social Science and Science classes, teachers often began their lessons in English but switched to Odia to explain difficult concepts. One Science teacher noted:

> "I start in English, but if I see the students struggling, I switch to Odia to reinforce key ideas. Without this, they wouldn't be able to follow the lesson at all." (Aparna, TGT SST, OAV Mayurbhanj)

This practice of bilingual scaffolding imitates Garcia and Lin's (2017) concept of translanguaging, which emphasises the fluid movement between languages to enhance comprehension and learning. Similar practices were described by five teachers.

The reliance on bilingual strategies stands in direct contrast to the rigid EMI mandate, which assumes that English-only instruction will guarantee better educational outcomes. Concerns about this policy–practice gap were articulated by four of the twelve teachers. This gap between policy and reality emphasises the importance of a multilingual instructional approach in which both English and the student's mother tongue are employed to assist deeper understanding.

3. 3. Students' Experiences and Challenges in EMI

Comprehension and Academic Performance

Students in OAVs reported extensive difficulties when it came to understanding English, particularly in courses that required specialised knowledge, such as science and social science. Many students reported that classes were much simpler to understand when delivered in Odia, most of theirs first language (L1), while the L1 of the students coming from different tribes, speaking different tribal languages such as Ho, Santali, Mundari, etc. remains another grave concern, A ninth-grade student expresses his frustration:

> "In Science, when the teacher uses English to explain everything, I feel

lost. But when he explains in Odia, I can understand much better. It feels like home! As if, my mother is teaching me the concepts, similar to the ways she instructs me in a simplified manner to carry out a certain task with ease, making sure that I accomplish it, without fail" (Chumanu, Class-IX, OAV, Mayurbhanj)

Similar experiences of improved understanding through Odia were reported by six other students, indicating that language of explanation strongly shaped classroom comprehension.

This was a typical experience for many students, and it accentuates a major challenge of EMI in OAVs: the language barrier is not just a surface barrier, instead it is a profound one, that prevents students from totally engaging with the programme. A student in the tenth grade shared:

"I like English, but in subjects like Science, I don't feel I'm learning much when everything is in English. It's like I'm left with nothing but an only choice of memorising words without understanding them. And, the moment I try to speak, I fumble and forget. Similarly, in the examinations, I manage to write all that I mugged up, at once and as soon, I leave the examination hall, I forget all of it. Fortunately, this is not the case with Odia. I happen to remember, the concepts that were taught and further understood in Odia, than in English. If you ask me, about 'The Thief's Story' taught from the book 'Footprints without feet— A Supplementary Reader' I can tell you the whole story fluently in Odia, but I can't in English. I can even answer to all of your questions in Odia Language but answering the same in English becomes difficult for me, I become shy... I get afraid of committing mistakes." (Shreemayi, Class-X, OAV, Mayurbhanj)

Such patterns of rote memorisation without comprehension were described by five of the fourteen students, particularly in content-heavy subjects.

Among all the subjects, English was the only subject where majority of the students reported improvements in their language proficiency and the difficulties varied by subject. However, other subjects like science and social science showed substantially more obstacles because they frequently require abstract concepts and specialised vocabulary that students are unfamiliar with in English. However, the EMI's assurance of improving subject mastery often collided with the realities of subject specific knowledge. Challenges in Science and Social Science were described by eight of the fourteen students, who associated these difficulties with abstract concepts and unfamiliar technical vocabulary.

The loss of subject clarity was most noticeable in technical subjects, where practical demonstrations were essential for concept formation. One of the students said:

"I love doing experiments in science, but when the teacher explains everything in English, I don't enjoy it at all. I feel disconnected. However, when explained in Odia, I enjoy it, as I get to understand the tone, tenor, and meaning, while in English, I find everything to be monotonous and flat. The fun and comprehension that comes along when our Sir/Ma'am speaks in Odia can't be replaced by any other language. Our teachers even enjoy teaching in Odia, we can see their energy, their hand movements, it's unmatched. They make us laugh and joke around by giving us different kinds of relevant examples. Sadly, while teaching in English, most of them become serious and look dull and uninterested like us—the rest of the class." (Ridhiman, Class-IX, OAV, Cuttack)

Concerns about reduced engagement and enjoyment under EMI in technical subjects were reported by four students.

All of it discussed above, accentuates a conflict between the English exposure provided by

EMI and the potential loss of engagement and subject expertise in disciplines requiring conceptual clarity. Several students (seven of the fourteen students) perceived that EMI, when implemented without regard for their cognitive and linguistic needs, may harm rather than help their learning experiences. There are high chances that   EMI may mistakenly harm rather than help student's learning experiences, specifically when it is done without any regard for student's cognitive needs.

4. Parental Perceptions of EMI

The views of parents toward EMI were diverse in nature. Many of the parents saw the introduction of English as a path to greater employment options for their children, believing that competence in English would improve their children's chances of finding good jobs later in life. English was associated with elitism and better life prospects. Aspirational views of English were expressed by eight of the thirteen parents interviewed. A tribal mother from the rural area of Mayurbhanj expressed:

> "I want my children to study only in English language because I can sense it will be beneficial for them to procure a good job. But I am disappointed to see them struggling to understand the lessons. No matter what they only speak in Odia at home and even the school. I have never seen the masters even conversing in English, neither with the children nor among themselves, after the class. If they don't do, how will our children pickup English? If they don't speak English, then what's the point of sending them to English medium schools? Odia medium schools are equivalent in that case. I see no change." (Phulabati, Housewife cum Tailor, Mayurbhanj)

Concerns about children's comprehension despite high parental aspiration were shared by five other parents.

At the same time, many parents expressed their anxieties about their inabilities to facilitate their children's learning at their respective homes, owing to their educational backgrounds and weak or negligent English proficiency. This concern was expressed by seven of the thirteen parents. A father on an emotional note explained:

> "I fail to provide support to my child with her homework because I myself an illiterate, forget about knowing English. English was meant for the elites; I can't read and write Odia properly. She has no one to consult at home, there is no one to guide her and I worry about her falling behind. Being a taxi driver, I am so helpless that I can't even afford good tuition classes for her. We are afraid of planning for another child. We are unable take care of one, how can we take the load of the other child. A good education has become expensive for small workers like us. All of us know that good schooling and education is provided at the English medium schools only, and it becomes a distant dream for us." (Radhu, Tempo-driver, Cuttack)

These criticisms show an intergenerational linguistic barrier that EMI does not address. Similar experiences of limited parental support at home were reported by six other parents.

At the same time, it shows the linkage of aristocracy in the form of elitism associated with a particular language, i.e., English, while the vernacular ones are considered as incompetent and meagre one for the rest of the masses. This perception was articulated by five of the thirteen parents. It is like buying that 'rice' which a well-off man buys form the supermarket paying around 100 rupees per kg, while the working class from the lower strata can only think about it, often left to relying upon the 'rice' that is provided to them for two rupees under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) scheme of Odisha government. The above circumstance can straightway be equated to the availability and access of schools to different working classes in Odisha. A

similar kind of experience takes place with schooling and English medium education in Odisha, and lately in India. The ones who have a strong access to all the three forms of capital discussed by Bourdieu, i.e., economic, social and cultural capital, often gets the access to 'a good English medium education system,' while the rest of the crowd is left to gamble on luck and hard work in the name of 'entrance tests,' allowing a selective access, intake and participation. Perceptions of selective access based on class were expressed by six of the thirteen parents. Connecting back to the anecdote, while pupils are exposed to English in the classroom, a lack of parental support at home, particularly in rural areas where many parents have no formal education, adds another degree of challenge. This difference can lead to student alienation and academic disengagement, increasing the difficulties caused by EMI. Such concerns were articulated by seven of the thirteen parents. The above concerns align with Cummins' (2000) Interdependence Hypothesis, which argues that students' first language (L1) plays an essential role in their ability to acquire a second language (L2). The lack of a bilingual bridge in EMI models, where both L1 and L2 are used in tandem, may accidentally hinder cognitive development, for first generation learners.

5. Classroom Practices and Student Engagement

The classroom observations carried out depict a mixed approach to EMI across OAVs. While some of the English classes adhered strictly to the EMI model with teachers conducting lessons entirely in English, Science and Social Science classes saw more flexibility, with teachers frequently switching to Odia to ensure comprehension of the classroom discourse. This pattern of mixed practice was observed in nine of the twelve classrooms observed. Interestingly, the participation of the students was viewed to be particularly low in classes where mostly only-English was used. Low levels of student participation

under English-only instruction were observed in seven of the twelve classrooms. As an observer, the author noted:

> "In those classes where the teachers mostly used only-English for teaching, the students were seen to be laid back cluelessly. They were quieter, uninterested, and seemed more passive. But whenever the teachers switched to Odia (dominant L1), participation increased, and the class became lively. The exchange happened both ways, debunking the often-common notion of teacher pulling a one-man-show!" (Author, Field Observation Notes)

The above observation shows a disconnect between the rigid EMI policy and the actual classroom practices. This policy–practice gap was evident in eight of the twelve classrooms observed.

The English-only approach appeared to alienate students, making them passive rather than engaged participants in their learning. The necessity of bilingual approaches to teaching, where both English and Odia are used strategically, was evident in almost all classrooms observed.

6. Policy and Curriculum Alignment

Document analysis showed pertinent gaps between the policy's aspirations and its practical implementation. The policy documents stressed upon the use of EMI as a tool for enhancing global competitiveness, with a meagre consideration for the linguistic diversity of the student body. Additionally, the curriculum materials were found to be overwhelmingly English centric, providing minimal time and accommodation for language transition. A fundamental shortcoming, or rather an essential gap seen, was the lack of multilingual teacher training, which would have been required for the proper implementation of EMI. The official policy materials while positioned EMI as a universal equaliser, but the reality on the ground discloses a lack of structured support mechanisms to help students and

instructors negotiate the hurdles of an English-only educational model.

7. Future Directions for EMI in OAVs

Administrators expressed their commitment to improving EMI in OAVs but noted the need for adaptive techniques to make its implementation more effective. Out of the six administrators interviewed, five administrators expressed strong concern that the present model of EMI required flexibility, while one administrator viewed the current implementation as largely adequate. An official explained:

> "All of us would agree that the policy is undoubtedly well intentioned, as it envisions to do better for the rural societies of Odisha. However, for that to happen, we need better teacher training and a more flexible approach. The EMI should not lead us to linguistic exclusion, as we need to support students in their transition to English. The idea is to support and help them succeed, not to leave them stranded all alone and become a burden for their respective families." (Binod, Principal, OAV Mayurbhanj)

Most of the teachers that we encountered and exchanged words with recommended a slow and gradual appropriate approach of EMI implementation, where exposure in English is gradually expanded by beginning in the early grades while the students' first language is strongly supported. Out of the 14 teachers interviewed, 11 teachers favoured a gradual and scaffolded EMI model, while three teachers supported a faster and more immersive English-only approach. A teacher said:

> "In my opinion all of us should effectively start teaching in English from the lower grades, it becomes easier for both the teacher as well as the students, and then gradually increase the usage of English. This way students will not feel overwhelmed,

and we are able to continue to support them with Odia. What happens, from Class VI onwards they are neglected, while also promoted. The language teachers should ensure that the child meets the minimum requirements of learning and competency before being promoted to the next class. Often, a derailment and neglect from the earlier classes results into such scenarios of 'academic helplessness.'" (Parvati, PGT English, OAV Cuttack)

The recommendation is consistent with Baker's (2011) theory of bilingual education, which promotes progressive immersion as a more successful alternative to a rapid transition to EMI. Such a methodology would not only reduce students' cognitive load but also offer them with a more sustainable path to bilingualism.

The findings show the complicated tangle between aims of the EMI policy and its practical difficulties. Although, EMI holds the potential to expand educational opportunities, its implementation in OAVs has been obstructed and hampered by linguistic realities, teacher training issues, and socioeconomic discrepancies, as reported by a majority of administrators (five out of six) and a majority of teachers (eleven out of fourteen). Through this study, we stress the importance of a multilingual instructional framework that thoroughly, in a meticulous manner, incorporates both English and students' mother tongues to provide inclusive and fair education.

The success of EMI in OAVs is dependent on policymaker's willingness to understand the nitty-gritties of the classroom realities and apply research based adaptive interventions to work out the problems in a meticulous manner. It is only with a context sensitive approach, that includes bilingual education practices, increased teacher training, and progressive language transitions towards EMI, one can genuinely address the concerns and issues of language equity in rural Odisha, promoting educational fairness.

Discussion

The findings of the study clarify and explain the implementation and impact of English medium instruction in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas, particularly in the rural districts of Mayurbhanj and Cuttack. The policy's primary goal of improving educational equity and social mobility through English proficiency remains admirable but, however, the results show substantial challenges in its implementation, particularly when viewed against the socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural context of rural Odisha. The gap in the 'policy-practice' discovered in this study reinforces the conflict between the 'top-down' policy vision with the realities of classroom environment, teacher readiness, and student's sociolinguistic settings. The discussion critically interacts with the implications of EMI for rural education in India and considers potential ways-out for more inclusive and contextually appropriate language policies by meticulously integrating the findings and situating them within the larger discourse on the policy of language, bilingualism, and sociolinguistics.

Rationale and Objectives of EMI

An Idealistic Vision or a Practical Reality?

The implementation of EMI in OAVs was envisioned as a strategic step to provide rural students with globalised skills, particularly English fluency, and a knack of English in order to bridge the rural-urban gap and improve access to higher education and provide employment possibilities. The administrators stressed upon the assurance of fairness through linguistic empowerment, glorifying EMI as a tool for upward social mobility, specifically in a worldwide economy where English is regarded as the only route to socioeconomic success. The perspective is consistent with the mainstream discourse on English as linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), in which English proficiency is associated with access to power, economic opportunity, and social prestige. The findings also depict a grave concern in the underlying assumption of EMI as an equaliser: the programme fails to account for linguistic capital discrepancies between urban and rural children. Most of the students that enter OAVs come from households that are linguistically disadvantaged, with minimal or no exposure to English at home, nor the surroundings. Thus, a comparatively fast change to EMI schooling can eventually result in severe linguistic alienation, an alienation that goes beyond any repairs. Cummins (2000), supporting Bourdieu's (1991) argument that language proficiency is inherently linked to socioeconomic privilege.

Whilst the international drive for EMI is consistent with the larger neoliberal ideal of providing children with marketable skills, at the same time, it also tremendously fails to acknowledge the magnanimity of the linguistic reality of rural classrooms. The findings indicate that, while English may be an important worldwide lingua franca, the usage of monolingual approach to language teaching in rural India is impractical and deleterious to student learning. Through the study, we question whether EMI, in its rigid form, is a viable tool for improving educational opportunities, or whether it in a way or the other, unintentionally aggravates the ever-existing linguistic inequality by alienating students from their cultural and linguistic identities, while failing to provide them with the skills required for academic success in a second language.

Teachers' Preparedness!

A Conundrum of Linguistic and Pedagogical Gaps

One of the primary findings of the study concerns teacher's preparedness and ability to effectively implement EMI in the school contexts. The English teachers of both the schools in Cuttack and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha indicated different levels of comfort while delivering lectures in English, while

the teachers of other subjects, such as Social Science and Science, mentioned problems in translating technical vocabularies and complicated academic content into English. The linguistic and pedagogical problems that instructors experience in their classrooms and inside the schools as an ecosystem, points out to a crucial problem in the implementation of EMI, directing towards insufficient teacher training in both English language instruction and content-based pedagogy. As some of the participants commented about the teachers being frequently trapped between their inadequate English competence and the policy's requirement that English be the exclusive medium of teaching, often resulting into a forcible - without any choice - as a last refuge reliance on code-switching as a coping mechanism to tackle the battles within themselves and their classrooms. The finding is consistent with the literature on EMI, where researchers have time and again in a repeated manner, emphasised upon the lack of professional development for teachers charged with providing content in a second language (Garcia & Lin, 2017). Teacher's linguistic uncertainty, particularly in non-English subjects, has a lasting impact on instruction quality as well as student disengagement and academic underachievement.

The teachers' reliance in the form of dependency on bilingual pedagogies, such as code-switching, and code-mixing denotes a fundamental misalignment between the policy's objectives and its practical implementation inside the classroom. In these settings, code-switching and code-mixing has evolved as an essential approach for scaffolding student comprehension and ensuring student's meaningful engagement with the curriculum. All of it lends support to the hypothesis of translanguaging (Garcia & Lin, 2017), which holds that fluid language practices, rather than strict language separation, usually improves student comprehension and participation in multilingual classrooms. In this regard, the focus on a monolingual EMI

model may be potentially harmful in the absence of proper teacher preparation and linguistic assistance for the students involved. According to the findings, the bilingual approach in which students are instructed in both English and their first language (Odia), was not only an adaptive method but also is considered to be one of the most crucial instruments for effective dissemination of teaching and learning.

Student's Struggles with Comprehension and Engagement

A Plea for Linguistically Responsive Pedagogies

The findings about difficulties faced by the learners with English understanding depicts a harsh assessment of the fundamental assumptions of EMI policies. The students, while were generally excited about the idea of studying English, the usage of English in technical areas like science and social science hampered their understanding of complicated academic content considerably. The gap lying between 'students linguistic potential' and the 'academic expectation of EMI' aggravates their challenges in comprehending subject matter, particularly when abstract or specialist terminology is used. It is consistent with Cummins' (2000) Interdependence Hypothesis, which states about the proficiency in a second language to be closely related to proficiency in the L1, and that a lack of a strong foundation in the L1 impedes the learning of the second language.

The findings also reinforce an important point that the phenomenon of EMI may accidentally lower student's involvement with the subject matter rather than promoting nuanced and layered understanding. According to pupils, the use of English in science classes frequently resulted in decreased interest and involvement, as many of them struggled to understand difficult topics taught in a language in which they were not yet skilled and by the time they were skilled, they were

promoted to next classes with haphazard and incomplete comprehension of the previous classes, resulting into cognitive load which leads to academic failure. It also emphasises the importance of a progressive transition strategy in which students acquire enough linguistic scaffolding in their first language while gradually being introduced to English in a context appropriate manner. Such an approach, based on bilingual education principles, would allow students to preserve academic continuity while gradually strengthening their English skills. The findings showcase an 'all-or-nothing' approach to EMI that is not only unachievable, but also quite harmful to student participation, specifically in rural areas where language capital is unevenly distributed.

Parental Perceptions

The Evolving Intergenerational Linguistic Divide

The parental perception about EMI shows the intergenerational linguistic divide in rural India, where parents, frequently monolingual Odia speakers, are unable to provide the linguistic help their children require when negotiating EMI. Parents showed a significant desire for their children to learn English, understanding its importance in improving employment prospects and social mobility. They were also intensely conscious of their own inability and limitations to support their children's learning because of their limited English skills and stunted academic exposure. Many of the parents were minimally educated and most of them were first generation learners, while only a few among the large proportion did hold the academic significance, as well as academically sound and prestigious work positions. The generational gap between EMI's language expectations and the ground level linguistic realities of rural, semi-urban and urban households creates a hurdle to the policy's successful implementation.

The findings support Cummins (2000) statement that a child's proficiency in their first language is essential for second language learning. Without the assistance of linguistically competent parents, students are left to steer through the difficulties of EMI all on their own, resulting into frequently struggling to keep up with the academic expectations of the curriculum, teachers, parents, society and lastly their own selves. The stakeholders are left to a state of incompetency, insufficiency, being incapable of, and tagged as a failure by the society, inside the school and the immediate members of the family. These students end up in a vicious circle of self-doubt and seek validation in the form of academic assurances, teachers' efforts and family's applauses and accolades to overcome the aftermaths of 'linguistic alienation'. What appears to be beneficial and significant at the beginning, might not translate well in all the circumstances. Such is the case with English medium education in a multilingual country like India and within the multilingually wealthy states like Odisha. If a policy initiative is not executed well in all the levels of stakeholders' involvement, engagement and proper dissemination, it will collapse. Rather than a 'top to down' policy approach, a 'bottom-up' approach often translates well, as it incorporates the views, concerns and experiences of the ground level players.

Classroom Dynamics and Engagement

A Disconnect between Policy and Practice

Classroom observations showcase a diverse approach to EMI in reality, with some teachers aiming to preserve full English immersion and others using code-switching to enhance comprehension. The data indicate that student participation was much higher in classes where teachers employed bilingual methods of teaching

and learning, such as clarifying essential concepts in Odia, than in classes where instruction was followed only in English. This stark difference emphasises upon the disconnect between the EMI mandate and actual classroom reality, where the policy's rigidity impedes student participation and learning. The results indicate that teacher adaptation and the use of multilingual pedagogies are critical for increasing student involvement and comprehension. The findings also question the viability of an English-only approach in a multilingual classroom where students are left to tackle through and steer the challenging academic topics in a second language.

Policy and Curriculum Alignment

Structural Gaps and the Need for Reform

Finally, the document analysis of the policy documents of the state as well as the OAVS pertaining to the execution and imparting of English medium education shows considerable discrepancies between policy goals and actual curricular and pedagogical frameworks in OAVs. The policy document stresses upon EMI's global outreach and worldwide competitiveness, however, there were potential lack of structural support for implementation. The lack of bilingual teacher preparation, along with an English-centric curriculum and insufficient teaching resources, demonstrate a substantial policy–practice gap that must be rectified. The findings also indicate that EMI policies should be more nuanced, with an emphasis on teacher training, curriculum design, and support systems that are capable of accommodating language variety in rural classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, numerous recommendations arise that are critical and should be given considerable thought for improving the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAVs) and resolving the policy–practice gaps discovered in the educational settings of the research. These recommendations are focussed to address legislative reform, pedagogical techniques, teacher training, curriculum adaptation, and future research directions.

An important recommendation is to implement a phased or transitional EMI strategy rather than an abrupt switch to English as the primary medium of instruction in the schools. Since these schools run from Class VI onwards till Class XII, the change needs to begin from initial classes. The findings show that a progressive bilingual strategy, in which pupils receive early teaching in their native language (Odia) as well as English, will create a stronger linguistic basis for academic achievement. Drawing on Cummins' (2000) Interdependence Hypothesis, which emphasises the transfer of cognitive and linguistic skills across languages, a structured bilingual model would reduce the effects of linguistic alienation while increasing conceptual clarity. This policy move would align EMI with a multilingual education paradigm, acknowledging that children's first-language ability is crucial to second-language acquisition.

A second significant proposal is to take care of the training and capacity building aspect of the teachers. We believe that through a thorough and ongoing teacher training programme, that is specifically designed for EMI deployment, one can meet the untangled ends of these unresolved discrepancies related to the teaching-learning through EMI in schools. The study found that teachers and instructors of non-English topics struggle with material delivery in English, frequently resorting to code-switching to aid student comprehension. While the bilingual practices are advantageous, the teachers who have not had formal training in bilingual or content-based language instruction (CBLI) are unprepared to deal with the linguistic demands of EMI classrooms. So, the teacher training should include a tailored

professional development programme that blends language pedagogy, subject-specific EMI methods, and translanguaging procedures, as this approach would provide teachers with effective instructional tools that promote both content mastery and English proficiency.

Through this study, we also advise revising the EMI curriculum and teaching materials to make them more linguistically acceptable and accessible to the rural students. Currently, the textbooks and instructional materials presuppose a level of English competence that many students lack, making understanding of the subject difficult. To solve this, curriculum designers can create contextually relevant bilingual resources that include glossaries, bilingual summaries, and scaffolding strategies to help students comprehend better inside the classrooms. Furthermore, digital learning tools with interactive bilingual support could be used to supplement classroom instruction, allowing students to reinforce their comprehension at their own speed.

The involvement of parents in EMI education requires deliberate intervention to overcome the generational linguistic gap between parents and students. Many parents from the rural belts lack English proficiency; therefore, they are unable to provide academic support to their children. As a result, community based parental engagement programmes should be designed to provide parents with basic English literacy instruction as well as information on how to support their children's learning at home, as an aid after the school hours. Schools might also organise parent-teacher simulation workshops to educate parents on how to help their children in EMI settings, establishing a more supportive learning atmosphere.

Another recommendation is to implement language support mechanisms in schools to assist children who are suffering with EMI. According to the study, language obstacles often cause students to disengage from lessons, which has a negative influence on their academic achievement. To address this issue, schools should implement structured English language support programmes, such as bridge courses, remedial language classes, and peer assisted learning initiatives. These interventions would ensure that children acquire the linguistic abilities required to traverse an EMI curriculum without experiencing cognitive overload or academic marginalisation.

Policymakers and the administrators of OAVs should consider greater flexibility in EMI implementation rather than a strict English-only mandate. They should consider using a varied EMI approach in which the extent of English immersion varies according to students' language backgrounds and regional differences. Additionally, policy reviews should be undertaken on a regular basis, using empirical classroom data and student performance measures to assess the effectiveness of EMI in enhancing learning outcomes. If EMI is proven to impede comprehension rather than improve educational quality, policies should be revised to better integrate bilingual or multilingual approaches.

Finally, the study punctuates upon the need for additional research on EMI in rural India, on longitudinal student outcomes, cognitive load effects, and socio-cultural components of English learning. The study provides a layered and ground level evaluation of EMI in OAVs, while the future research should take steps forward and look into EMI students' long term academic routeways and compare their performance to counterparts in non-EMI contexts. Furthermore, studying teacher identity and language ideologies in EMI classrooms would provide vital insider's perspective into how pedagogical practices change in response to linguistic obstacles.

Though the research already expanded its research scope and have included the comparative element by bringing forth the comparison of rural and urban EMI in OAVs, however, taking a greater number of schools from different blocks of the state would incorporate diversity, provide different perspectives and will also result

in more nuanced understanding of the various ways in which EMI works in different socioeconomic and linguistic settings.

The EMI, while considered as a potential policy endeavour, also requires potential changes to harmonise with the linguistic reality of rural, semi-urban and urban Odisha. Implementing multilingual transitional models, boosting teacher training, modifying curricula, increasing family involvement, and implementing organised language support systems are critical steps toward ensuring that EMI promotes educational fairness rather than exclusion. With educated policy changes and continued research, EMI can be converted into a more inclusive, context-sensitive, and pedagogically sound framework that truly serves the rural talents of Odisha.

Conclusion

According to the findings, the study places importance of a context sensitive, multilingual instructional framework for EMI in OAVs. The study concludes that when applied strictly, EMI runs the risk of aggravating linguistic alienation and academic disengagement rather than facilitating inclusive educational opportunities. To address these challenges, the study strongly supports for a more flexible approach to language instruction, one that integrates bilingual pedagogies, believes in gradual language transitions, and a composite teacher training in multilingual contexts. Only then, through a holistic, research informed approach, EMI can fulfil its potential to serve as a tool for educational equity in rural Odisha.

Appendix

Data Collection Tool

Tool	Objective	Key Questions/Observations
Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Policymakers and Education Administrators	Explore rationale, objectives, and challenges of EMI policies in OAVs.	1. What were the primary objectives behind the introduction of EMI in OAVs? 2. How do you assess the impact of EMI on educational quality and access for marginalised students? 3. What challenges have emerged in the implementation of EMI in rural areas? 4. How do you envision the future of EMI in OAVs and its broader implications for public education in Odisha?
Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Teachers	Investigate teachers' perceptions and experiences with EMI implementation.	1. How confident are you in delivering lessons in English under the EMI framework? 2. What challenges do you encounter when teaching students with limited English proficiency? 3. How frequently do you use bilingual strategies, such as code-switching and code-mixing, in your classroom? 4. How do students respond to EMI-based instruction, and what strategies do you employ to support them?
Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students	Understand students' experiences and challenges with EMI.	1. How do you feel about learning in English compared to your native language? 2. Do you face difficulties understanding lessons taught in English? How do you address these challenges? 3. In which subjects or areas do you feel EMI has the most significant impact on your learning? 4. Do you believe learning in English will benefit your future opportunities? Why or why not?

Focus Group Discussion Guide for Parents	Explore parents' perceptions of EMI and its effects on children's academic performance.	1. What is your opinion on the use of EMI in your child's education? 2. Do you feel that your child struggles with content taught in English? If so, in what way? 3. How do you view the potential of bilingual or multilingual strategies to enhance your child's learning experience? 4. How do you think EMI affects your child's future opportunities?

Classroom Observation Checklist	Assess EMI implementation in classrooms focusing on teaching practices and student engagement.	***Teacher's Language Use***
		1. Does the teacher primarily use English or switch to the local language?
		2. How often is code-switching used?
		Student Engagement
		1. Are students engaged in English-language interactions?
		2. Do they understand the content?
		  • Pedagogical Approaches:
		    Are bilingual or multilingual strategies employed?
		Student Challenges
		Are students showing difficulty with EMI (e.g., confusion, disengagement)?

Document Analysis Template	Evaluate the alignment of policy, curriculum, and teaching practices with EMI.	***Policy Documents***
		  • What are the key goals of EMI in OAVs?
		  • Is there an emphasis on bilingual teaching approaches?
		Curriculum and Teaching Materials
		  • Are the materials designed to accommodate limited English proficiency?
		Teacher Training
		Does the policy mention training teachers in EMI or multilingual pedagogies?

Ethical Considerations	Ensure ethical integrity and transparency in data collection.	***Informed Consent*** Participants will be informed about the purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality of the study. ***Confidentiality Agreement*** Data will be anonymised and securely stored.

Researcher's Positionality: The above 'Appendix' is a broad outline of the tool used for data collection. The questions were administered multilingually by incorporating Odia, Hindi and English languages based on the convenience, comprehensibility, and comfort of the stakeholders involved in the research. At the first place, such an approach was essentially used to mitigate the issues of unfamiliarity and to value stakeholder's knowledge, time and space. By ensuring all of these, it helped us gain access to unfiltered ground level realities.

References

Agnihotri, R. K. (2009). *Language and Politics in India*. Oxford University Press.

Azam, M., Chin, A., & Prakash, N. (2013). The returns to English-language skills in India. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 61(2), 335–367. https://doi.org/10.1086/668277

Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (5th ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Bälter, O., Kann, V., Mutimukwe, C. & Malmström, H. (2024). English-medium instruction and impact on academic performance: a randomized control study. *Applied Linguistics Review, 15*(6), 2373-2396. https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2022-0093

Banegas, D. L., & Manzur Busleimán, G. (2021). EMI materials in online initial English language teacher education. In *Language Use in English-medium Instruction at University*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003134534-6

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power* (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brock-Utne, B. (2013). Language of instruction in Africa—the most important and least appreciated issue. *Education as Change*, 17(S1), S48–S71.

Canagarajah, S. (2012). *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. Routledge.

Chalmers, H. (2019). *The Role of the First Language in English Medium Instruction*. Oxford University Press.

Cummins, J. (1979). *Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children*. Review of Educational Research, 49(2), 222–251. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543049002222

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.

Dearden, J. (2015). *English as a Medium of Instruction – a Growing Global Phenomenon*. British Council.

Dimova, S., Hultgren, A. K., & Jensen, C. (Eds.). (2015). *English-medium Instruction in European Higher Education: English in Europe*. De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614515272

Eldho, E. (2020). Multilingualism embedded in English of India. FORTELL, (40), 54–63.

Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2021). *English Medium Instruction in Higher Education: Content and Language in Policy and Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

García, O., & Lin, A. M. Y. (2017). Translanguaging in bilingual education. In O. García, A. M. Y. Lin, & S. May (Eds.), *Bilingual and Multilingual Education* (pp. 117–130). Springer.

García, O., Wei, L., García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). Language, languaging and bilingualism. *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, 5-18.

Hamid, M. O., Hardy, I., & Reyes, V. (2019). *Test-takers' perspectives on a global test of English: Questions of fairness, justice and validity. Language Testing in Asia, 9*(1), Article 16. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-019-0092-9

Heugh, K. A. (2008). Language policy and education in Southern Africa. In S. May & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd ed., pp. 355–367). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-30424-3_26

Hornberger, N. H. (2004). The continua of biliteracy and the bilingual educator: Educational linguistics in practice. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 7*(2-3), 155-171. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050408667806

Jhingran, D. (2005). *Language Disadvantage: The Learning Challenge in Primary Education*. APH Publishing.

Khubchandani, L. M. (1997). *Revisualizing Boundaries: A Plurilingual Ethos*. Sage Publications.

Lasagabaster, D., & Doiz, A. (2016). CLIL students' perceptions of their language learning process: Delving into self-perceived improvement and instructional preferences. *Language Awareness*, 25(1–2), 110–126. https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2015.1122019

Lei, J., & Hu, G. (2023). Research on English-medium instruction in the Asia Pacific: Trends, foci, challenges, and strategies. In W. O. Lee, P. Brown, A. L. Goodwin, & A. Green (Eds.), *International Handbook on Education Development in the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 637-651). Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-6887-7_23

López, L. M., & Sichra, I. (2008). Intercultural bilingual education among indigenous peoples in Latin America. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39(3), 238–254. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2008.00018.x

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching,* 51(1), 36–76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350

Menon, S., Gupta, M., & Sharma, V. (2021). Multilingual education in India: Bridging the divide in English-medium instruction. *Journal of Education Policy, 35*(2), 125-142.

Mohanty, A. (2013). Multilingual education in India: Overcoming the language barrier and the burden of the double divide. In *Multilingualism and Language Diversity in Urban Areas. Acquisition,Identities, Space,Education.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 305-326.

Panda, M. & Mohanty, A. (2014). Language Policy and Education: Towards Multilingual Education. In R.C. Tripathi & Yoganand Sinha (eds.), *Psychology, Development and Social Policy in India.* New Delhi: Springer, Pp.103-129.

Pennycook, A. (2017). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language.* Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism.* Oxford University Press.

Probyn, M. (2009). 'Smuggling the vernacular into the classroom': Conflicts and tensions in classroom codeswitching in township/rural schools in South Africa. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(2), 123–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050802153137

Ramanathan, V. (2005). *The English-Vernacular Divide: Postcolonial Language Politics and Practice.* Multilingual Matters.

Ricento, T. (Ed.). (2015). *Language Policy and Political Economy: English in a Global Context.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199363391.001.0001

Rout, S. S. (2024). Curriculum and pedagogy in multilingual contexts: Rethinking the language issue in Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya. *Amity International Journal of Teacher Education*, 10(1), [pp. 103-110].

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2008). Language rights and bilingual education. In N. H. Hornberger (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd ed., Vol. 5). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-30424-3_120

Tollefson, J. W. (1991). *Planning Language, Planning Inequality: Language Policy in the Community.* Longman.

Tollefson, J. W. (2013). *Language Policies in Education: Critical Issues* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Tollefson, J. W., & Tsui, A. B. M. (Eds.). (2018). *Language Policy, Culture, and Identity in Asian Contexts.* Routledge.

Wang, L., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2019). Trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools: Teaching Chinese through Putonghua. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(2), 175–191.

Wei, L. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039

Wei, L., & Lin, A. M. (2019). Translanguaging classroom discourse: Pushing limits, breaking boundaries. *Classroom Discourse, 10*(3-4), 209-215.

Wilkinson, R. (2013). English-medium instruction at a Dutch university: Challenges and pitfalls. *Language Teaching, 46*(3), 288–302.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.