

# English As A Medium Of Instruction – A Growing Global Phenomenon

G.M.C.M.Dayananda\*

\*Research Scholar, Gills College, Perth, Western Australia

**Citation:** G.M.C.M.Dayananda, (2024), English As A Medium Of Instruction – A Growing Global Phenomenon , *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 2833 - 2838  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i3.8257

---

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka is seeing a rise in the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), which is consistent with international trends in educational reform. This study investigates the causes of EMI's expansion in Sri Lanka as well as its advantages and disadvantages, with a focus on equity and linguistic variety in the local context. The authors investigate the effects of EMI on educational quality, employment opportunities, and cultural identity using a mix of qualitative data from policy texts, educator interviews, and student surveys. Globalization, the need for fluency in English, and the growing internationalization of education are the main forces behind the rise of EMI. English is being taught as a foreign language (EFL) in non-anglophone nations, but there seems to be a swift global movement toward English being the medium of instruction (EMI) for academic topics. There are significant ramifications for youth education from this issue. However, there hasn't been much empirical study done on the introduction, timing, and delivery of EMI. English is being taught as a foreign language (EFL) in non-anglophone nations, but there seems to be a swift global movement toward English being the medium of instruction (EMI) for academic topics. Universities, secondary schools, and even elementary schools are using EMI more and more. There are significant ramifications for youth education from this issue. However, there hasn't been much empirical study done on the introduction, timing, and delivery of EMI. The linguistic landscape of the nation was established by its colonial past, when English was the primary language. Due in large part to globalization, the demand for better English proficiency & internationalization of education, EMI has grown dramatically in the last several years in both the public and private education sectors. To fulfil the knowledge requirement, approaches and outcome of English as a medium of instruction concept; this paper is intended to enlighten the people about the recent scenario of Sri Lanka as well global level.

**Keywords:** English as a medium of instruction (EMI), education policy, English as foreign language (EFL), local languages

---

## 1. Introduction

English has spread around the world, and teaching it to foreigners (EFL) is becoming a requirement for everyone. According to [1], the use of English as a teaching language is becoming more and more commonplace worldwide, especially in higher education. These days, an increasing number of universities are eager to provide undergraduate and graduate courses in English [2]. This is due to a variety of context-specific factors. These include the perceived need to internalize the higher education institution [3] in order to make it prestigious enough to draw in international students in light of local student enrolment declining due to demographic shifts, national investments in higher education being slashed, the public sector's need to compete with the private sector, and English's status as an international language (EIL), particularly in the context of research publications [4]. In postsecondary education, English has changed from being a foreign language or L2 to being the language of academic fields [5]. Additionally, because of the effects of globalization, which are evident in the rise in English-medium programs at higher education institutions, English-medium supremacy is firmly ingrained in social, economic and technological advancement as well as in international communication [6].

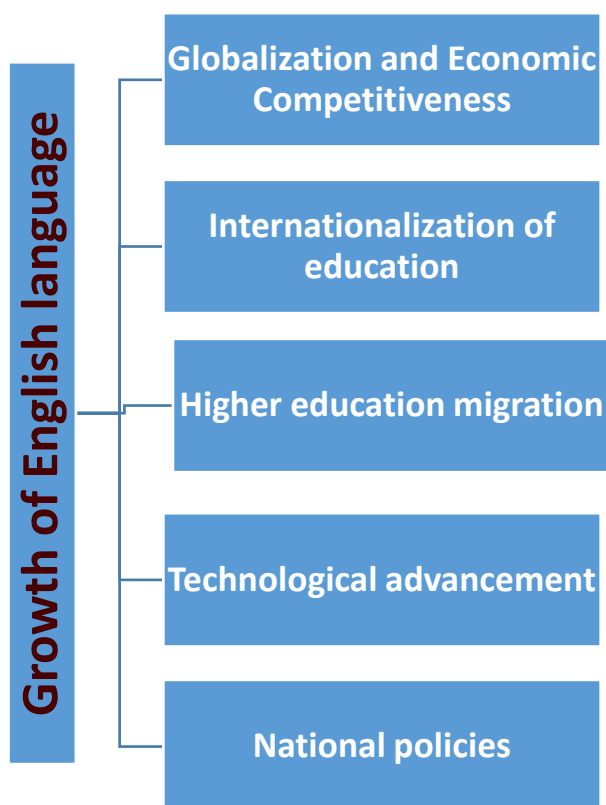
It is believed that knowing English is essential for improving one's employability in both domestic and foreign

markets. Speaking English fluently opens up more chances, according to a lot of parents and students—especially in fields like commerce, IT, tourism, and higher education. English language competency is seen by organizations and nations as a means of boosting one's competitiveness internationally. In order to better prepare students for the global labour market, more educational institutions are implementing EMI. Both understanding of the course material and proficiency in the English language are regarded as benefits that EMI offers. Therefore, governments and students alike believe that this will increase their employability in the global labour market [7]. Studying in their first language (L1), as opposed to studying in English, has shown kids to comprehend more knowledge. [8] provides a good example of the Netherlands' strong emphasis on prioritizing English as the second language in a language polity. But the wave can also lead to conflicts between the interests of local languages and linguistic globalization. This means that attempts to preserve the strength or importance of local languages may also be made to oppose the tidal wave. However, the wave may also lead to conflicts between the interests of local languages and linguistic globalization, which means that attempts to preserve the strength or importance of local languages may be made to oppose the tidal wave.

## 2. Globalization and growth of EMI

The English language has its impact on overall world. In our literature survey, we came to situations that concluded the English language is having dominant even in non-English-speaking countries because of several significant reasons. Globalization, the need for fluency in English, and the growing internationalization of education are the main forces behind the rise of EMI.

**Globalization and Economic Competitiveness:** In business, science, and worldwide diplomacy, English is frequently regarded as the common language. English language competency is seen by nations and organizations as a means of achieving greater global competitiveness. Because of this, more educational establishments are implementing EMI to get students ready for the global labour market.



**Fig.1 Factors of growth of English language**

- **Internationalization of education:** Internationalization of Education: Academic institutions worldwide are striving to draw in foreign faculty and students. Offering courses that appeal to students from a variety of linguistic backgrounds is made simpler with EMI, which enhances the university's reputation and promotes a more international campus culture.
- **Higher education migration:** Since most academic material, research, and professional possibilities are available in English, students who choose to pursue higher education overseas frequently need to be proficient in the language. EMI helps students acquire these skills early, improving their ability to compete for international scholarships, internships, and jobs.

- **Technological Advancements:** With the rise of online education platforms and digital resources, English has become the dominant language for knowledge dissemination. EMI allows students to access a broader range of learning materials and collaborate across borders.
- **National Policies:** Some countries have introduced EMI as part of their national education reforms to boost their economic and intellectual growth. For example, governments in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa have integrated EMI into higher education to raise the quality of education and make their students more competitive globally.

### 3. Benefits and challenges of EMI implementation

#### ▪ Benefits:

The use of English to teach subjects at schools, colleges, and universities where it may not be the students' first language is known as English as a medium of instruction (EMI). For a number of reasons, this strategy has grown in popularity across numerous nations:

**Access to Resources:** Students have greater access to a greater variety of information because a large number of academic texts, research papers, and online courses are available mostly in English.

**Career Opportunities:** Being able to communicate effectively in English can help one stand out in the global job market, particularly in industries like business, science, technology, and engineering.

**Cultural Exchange:** EMI can promote worldwide cooperation in research and education as well as cultural exchange.

Nevertheless, there are difficulties related to EMI:

**Language Proficiency:** Students who do not have sufficient English language proficiency may find it difficult to understand difficult material.

**Cognitive Load:** Studying a second language might result in an increased cognitive load, which can hinder pupils' ability to understand concepts.

**Issues with equity:** Not every student may have equal access to instruction in the English language, which could lead to a rise in educational disparities.

**Cultural Context:** Some topics might not transfer well between cultures, and crucial local information might be missed.

English has long been the primary language of instruction in many Sri Lankan schools and universities, particularly those that are private and located in urban areas. This practice has its roots in the colonial era, when education and administration were conducted in English.

**Bilingual Education:** A lot of schools provide a curriculum that is taught in both English and Sinhala or Tamil. The goal of this method is to help students become proficient in English while retaining their ability to speak their mother tongue.

**Higher Education:** English is the predominant language of instruction in the majority of institutions and professional courses. This is especially true for professions like business, engineering, and medicine.

**Socioeconomic Factors:** There is a growing demand for English-medium education since proficiency in the language is frequently regarded as a valued talent that can improve employment opportunities and social mobility.

**Policies of the Government:** The government of Sri Lanka has put regulations in place to encourage English instruction in schools, realizing the value of the language. But there are obstacles, such as differences in urban and rural populations' access to high-quality English education.

**Cultural Perspectives:** Although English is regarded as a universal language, some groups are worried that the prevalence of English in schooling could lead to the possible extinction of regional languages and cultures.

Overall, English has a significant impact on Sri Lanka's educational system and shapes many students' academic and career paths.

#### ▪ Challenges:

According to our research review, there are four main EMI issues that instructors must deal with: students' language proficiency, proper teaching strategies, and insufficient funding [9]. Similar to this, [10] identified four categories of problems that are present in EMI: challenges connected to language, culture, structure, and identity (institutional). The elaborated research finds detail factors mention below, that impact on the implementation of practical conduction of English language as a medium of instruction.

**Language competence:** Different degrees of English competence among students and teachers might cause understanding problems and learning gaps.

**Cultural Relevance:** Students may find it more difficult to relate to the curriculum when English-language resources do not necessarily correspond with regional circumstances.

**Cognitive Load:** Learning difficult material in a second language can lead to an increase in cognitive load, which can affect comprehension and retention.

**Equity concerns:** Disparities in educational performance may arise from the difficulties faced by students from various linguistic origins.

**Teacher Training:** Teachers who are not native English speakers may need further training in order to teach the language successfully.

**Motivation:** When content is provided in a language they are not as familiar with, some students can be less inclined to interact with it.

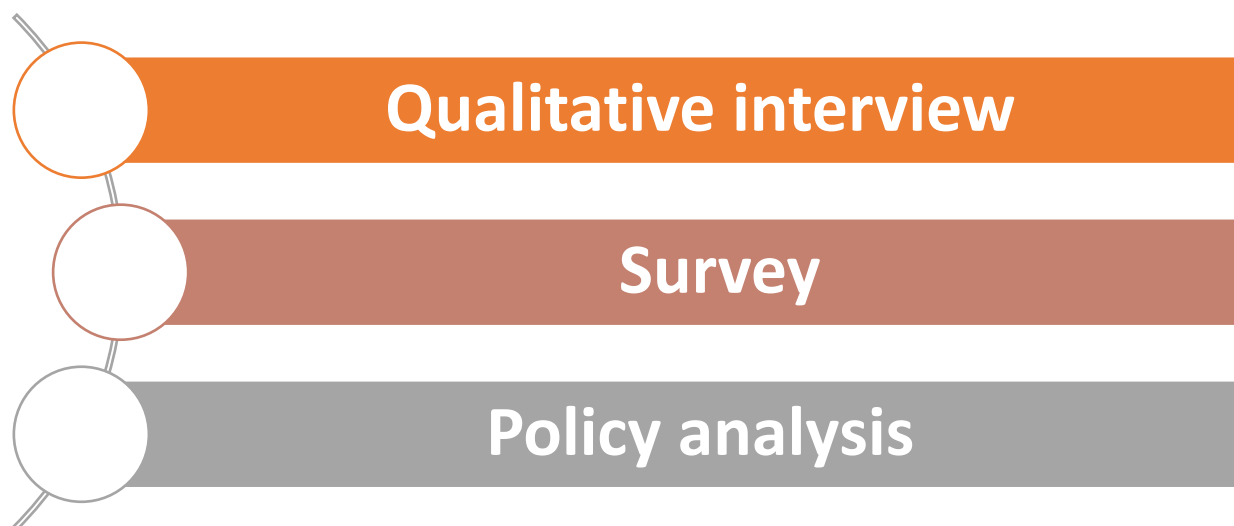
**Assessment Challenges:** Students who are not fluent in English may perform worse academically as a result of standardized testing.

**Resource Availability:** In underfunded educational systems in particular, there may be restricted access to high-quality English-language teaching resources.

Careful approaches, like scaffolding methods, multilingual education, and culturally appropriate curriculum, are needed to address these issues. The obstacles must be overcome for English to be used as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) especially in Sri Lanka country such as; language proficiency, cultural context, equity access, teacher training, resource restrictions, cognitive, assessment problems, opposition to change, motivation and attitude. This may be future scope of the current research work.

#### 4. Research methodology

A combination of approaches is used in this study to emphasize the value of using English as the instruction language. This section describes the roles of language schools, teachers, and learners (students).



**Fig. 2 Research tools**

1. **Qualitative interviews:** To acquire a more profound comprehension of the encounters and viewpoints on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Sri Lanka, qualitative interviews were carried out with educators, policymakers, and students from diverse educational backgrounds. The purpose of the interviews was to identify the main drawbacks, advantages, and issues related to EMI in Sri Lanka. The interview method, which was semi-structured, allowed for in-depth conversations while yet providing a flexible framework to accommodate a range of viewpoints. There is main two factors that considered in this study: participants and interview topics.

In order to offer a fair representation of stakeholders from different facets of the educational system, the participants were chosen. Participant types is describing as below.

- **Educators:** Principals and instructors from overseas schools as well as those in public and private institutions.
- **Policymakers:** Those in charge of developing curricula and language policies at the regional education authorities and the Ministry of Education.
- **Students:** A heterogeneous mix of university students enrolling in EMI programs, as well as students from urban and rural schools in both EMI and non-EMI settings.

Then, interview topics are also performing role of qualitative interview methodology. Below are some examples of interview topics.

- **Views on EMI:** Participants were questioned regarding their opinions on EMI's place in Sri Lankan education. This included their opinions on the usefulness of EMI, its effect on education, and its potential to further their careers.
  - **Difficulties of EMI Implementation:** Teachers and legislators talked on the real-world challenges of EMI implementation, including resource constraints, teacher readiness, and student English competence. Pupils were questioned regarding their individual difficulties with English language learning.
  - **Effect on Local Languages and Culture:** Participants discussed how EMI affected students' sense of cultural identification and whether it had an effect on the use of Sinhala and Tamil. One major subject was worries about how English and other national languages should be balanced.
  - **Equity and Access:** The interviews looked at how accessible EMI education was for people from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Talks concerning the differences between urban and rural schools as well as the potential benefits of EMI for underprivileged children were covered in this.
2. **Survey:** Surveys with students from both EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) and non-EMI (Sinhala or Tamil medium) backgrounds were undertaken to supplement the qualitative interviews. The purpose of the study was to measure how different students' academic performance, language proficiency, and career goals were depending on the medium of teaching. Knowledge how EMI affects students' educational experiences and future aspirations required a knowledge of this data. Students currently enrolled in universities, public schools, and private schools offering English-medium courses.

There were three primary sections to the survey:

- **Language Proficiency:** Using a 5-point Likert scale that went from "Very Poor" to "Excellent," students were asked to rate their own proficiency in Tamil, Sinhala, and English. Their exposure to English outside of the classroom and their comfort level in speaking, writing, reading, and listening were among the topics covered in the questionnaire.
  - **Academic Outcomes:** Students shared details about their most recent academic achievement, including their grades or scores in important subjects like language arts, science, and arithmetic. In addition to asking whether EMI or non-EMI schooling will better prepare students for their future occupations, the survey also looked at the professional objectives of the students.
3. **Policy analysis:** Important government policy documents pertaining to language instruction were examined in order to have a thorough grasp of Sri Lanka's official position on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). This analysis focuses on how the government sees EMI's position in relation to national language policy and educational reform in a larger context. It also emphasizes the difficulties mentioned in these publications as well as the attempts made to introduce EMI in colleges and institutions. Some of the policies are mentioned as under that conducted in Sri Lanka.

- National Education Policy Framework (2018-2025)
- Ministry of Education Circular on Language Policy in Schools (2008)
- University Grants Commission (UGC) Guidelines on EMI in Higher Education (2020)
- National Language Policy (Sinhala, Tamil, and English)
- The Sri Lanka Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) (2013-2017)

Policies also stress the need to make sure EMI doesn't worsen educational disparities or push out regional languages. The government is aware of the difficulties in implementing EMI, especially in remote and underfunded schools, and is working to resolve these problems by providing resources, supporting multilingual education models, and educating teachers.

In this paper, authors have performed above research methodology to gain data based on their techniques like survey, interview and referring policies. The results of the qualitative interviews showed that although EMI is widely supported in Sri Lanka, there are numerous obstacles to its implementation, especially with regard to equality and resource availability. Teachers and students both acknowledge the importance of English for possibilities in the global arena, but they are also concerned about the widening gap between those who can afford quality EMI education and those who cannot. The survey's findings highlight the unique benefits and difficulties of EMI schooling in Sri Lanka. Although EMI improves English language skills and provides access to international opportunities, it also puts obstacles in the way of students from underprivileged or non-English speaking backgrounds who could find it difficult to understand academic material presented in English. Although non-EMI students feel less advantaged when it comes to accessing global possibilities, they succeed in speaking the local language.

Policies also stress the need to make sure that EMI doesn't worsen educational disparities or push out regional languages. The government is aware of the difficulties in implementing EMI, especially in remote and underfunded schools, and is working to resolve these problems by providing resources, supporting multilingual



education models, and educating teachers.

### 5. Outcome of EMI

According to the research, students enrolled in EMI programs typically score higher on standardized English language exams and have greater confidence in their ability to communicate in the language. They also mention having easier access to academic resources from around the world. Underqualified teachers and a lack of resources pose a problem for rural pupils attending public schools. Additionally, there is proof that EMI may make already-existing educational disparities worse. A number of respondents voiced worries about the declining usage of Tamil and Sinhala in EMI schools, raising concerns about cultural uniformity.

### 6. Conclusion

The demand for English competence in the globalized economy is driving a wider worldwide phenomenon, which includes the rise of English as a medium of instruction in Sri Lanka. While there are many benefits to EMI, such as improved job possibilities and opportunity for study abroad, there are drawbacks as well, including as issues with equality, language hurdles, and the possible loss of regional languages. To guarantee that all Sri Lankans may benefit from EMI, addressing these issues calls for extensive education programs, teacher preparation, and assistance for students from different language backgrounds.

It is necessary to conduct research on language assessment systems for teachers and students, levels of English proficiency that will allow EMI teachers to deliver high-quality instruction, whether or not EMI improves academic subject learning, and how classroom interactions change as the medium of instruction changes. We can be very certain of one thing, though: considering the current momentum behind the EMI phenomenon, it is extremely doubtful that most nations, at least those in the tertiary phase, will attempt to go back on their decision to continue pushing forward with even more courses taught in English.

### References

1. Dearden, J. (2014). Report of EMI Oxford The Centre for Research and Development in English Medium Instruction. UK: University of Oxford, Department of Education.
2. Earls, C. W. (2016). *Evolving agendas in European English-medium higher education: Interculturality, multilingualism and language policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
3. Knight, J. (2013). The changing landscape of higher education internationalization – for better or worse? *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 17(3), 84-90.
4. 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.
5. Wanphet, P., & Tantawy, N. (2018). Effectiveness of English as a medium of instruction in the UAE: Perspectives and outcomes from the instructors and students of University Science Courses. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 17(2), 145-172.
6. Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. (2013). *English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges*. Bristol: Multilingual matters.
7. Galloway, N. (2017). How effective is English as a medium of instruction (EMI)? Retrieved March 9, 2020.
8. Ytsma, J. (2000). Trilingual primary education in Friesland. In J. Cenoz & U. Jessner (Eds.), *English in Europe: The acquisition of a third language* (pp. 222-235). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
9. Garcia, M. L. B. (2020). Formal features of Filipino ESL research papers. *The Asian ESL Journal*, 24(1), 29-44.
10. Bradford, A. (2016). Toward a typology of implementation challenges facing English-medium instruction in higher education evidence from Japan. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(6), 339-356.