

The Mediation of Learning through English in Africa and Asia

Rodwell Makombe

*University of the Free State, Private Bag x13. Phuthaditjhaba, 9866, South Africa
E-mail: makomber@ufs.ac.za*

KEYWORDS Student. Education. Language. EMI. Learning

ABSTRACT The paper is a review of literature on the use of English as a medium of instruction in Africa and Asia and the attendant challenges that it brings to the classroom. Three questions beg for answers in this paper. These are, what are the challenges of English-medium learning? Should academic institutions in Africa and Asia continue to use English as a medium of instruction? Are there alternative instructional models that can replace or complement the current hegemony of English? The findings reveal that English-medium learning is a stumbling block for many people who wish to acquire education in Third World countries. Therefore, the paper concludes that the majority of people in Third World countries are deprived of the opportunity to acquire education because academic institutions continue to deliver instruction in foreign languages. The paper recommends that these countries should consider alternative instructional methods that recognize the role of local languages in mediating learning.

INTRODUCTION

The question of language in education, particularly in formerly colonized countries, remains a subject of heated scholarly debate. Scholars such as Brock-Utne argue that there is a correlation between development, language and culture. If language is understood to be the central feature of culture, and development is seen as ultimately a cultural phenomenon, it is not difficult to discern the interconnections between language and development (Brock-Utne 2012: 492). Language is, in fact, a vehicle of culture and culture is an important ingredient for development. According to Neville Alexander, languages do not grow by themselves, they are “formed and manipulated within definite limits to suit the interests of different groups of people” (2011: 314). Alexander made this assertion in the context of apartheid South Africa where Afrikaans was developed and systemically institutionalized to meet the developmental needs of the Afrikaans-speaking people. “In any modern state,” argues Alexander (2011), “whether or not it is explicitly acknowledged by governments, languages are always planned, in that legislation prescribes, often in great detail, where and how one or more languages are to be used.”

Having a particular language as a medium of instruction entails promoting the interests of the group that speaks that language. Language is not neutral. The question that may need to be asked is whose interests are served by the use of European languages as the medium of instruction in developing countries. It has been argued,

in support of English, that the language has a large body of literature, and scientific terms, which make it cost-effective for developing countries to adopt it as a language of instruction. It is also a fact that English has become a global language of business and international communication. The point is not to get rid of English or replace it with indigenous languages on the international arena, although that also may be a noble idea, but to recognize that the majority of people in formerly colonized countries do not speak English, which entails that learning through such a language, will continue to marginalize the majority. Several studies on English Medium Instruction (EMI) have been conducted in recent years. However, the majority of the studies seem to focus on the European higher education context. This is understandable given that most European universities are moving towards English medium education especially in the aftermath of the Bologna Declaration of 1999, which sought to standardize European qualifications and encourage free movement of students and academics across European universities. Although most studies have rehearsed the benefits of EMI, EMI fraught with challenges particularly in Third World countries. In a study on the training and accreditation of EMI teachers in European universities, O’Dowd (2015) argues that teaching subjects through the medium of English has several advantages. Firstly, it promotes the internationalization of universities, enables international students to access study programs and improves employability prospects of local students. O’Dowd, however,

acknowledges that EMI is a “complex and serious problem” especially in those universities where instruction has always been carried out in a local language. In such contexts, the teaching staff finds themselves being pushed to teach in English in order to survive in the new academic environment. O’Dowd’s study reveals that European universities embraced EMI without making meaningful efforts to invest in the training of teachers to teach in English. As a result, students are usually taught by teachers with low proficiency in the language of instruction, and in most cases, the teachers have not been trained in second language (L2) pedagogical practices. Respondents in O’Dowd’s study, which targeted 79 European universities, lamented low levels of communicative competence among teachers and students.

Similarly, a study conducted in Vietnam by Vu and Burns (2014: 1) concurs that lecturers in EMI institutions are challenged by their own language abilities, students’ language competence and learning styles, pedagogical issues, and resource availability. Vu and Burns (2014: 1) note that there is rapidly growing tendency for English to be adopted as the medium of instruction, even when a majority of the population speaks a local language. Highlighting a number of challenges associated with EMI, Vu and Burns (2014: 4) argue that EMI leads to social division, inequitable resource allocation and “language apartheid”, a phenomenon whereby English dominates local languages. Quoting Williams (2011), Vu and Burns (2014) note that in most universities, there is often a mismatch between goals and implementation realities of EMI. While English is usually hailed as a global language that unlocks opportunities for students, the reality on the ground is that “children in EMI classes become educationally disadvantaged because they do not understand the teachers or the textbooks” (Vu and Burns 2014: 4). In some cases, lecturers in universities may be well versed in content but handicapped by language. In view of these challenges, Vu and Burns (2014: 9) conclude that the most effective way is to turn universities into a bilingual environment wherein the mother tongue is the means of general communication and instructional medium of social science subjects and English is the instructional medium of science and technology.

In another study, which was conducted in Turkey, Basibeka et al. (2014: 1821) argue that

many students in Turkey prefer to learn in English for instrumental and integrative reasons. English is no longer just a compulsory subject but also a must for most of the jobs in Turkey. However, Basibeka et al. (2014: 1821) point out that some educators are opposed to EMI because it leads to reduced ability to understand concepts, low-level of knowledge about the subject studied, excessive consumption of time, feelings of alienation and separation, and the least amount of participation in the classes due to low level proficiency in English. Lecturers acknowledged that teaching in Turkish (the local language) provides deeper and clearer understanding in terms of the content of the lesson (Basibeka et al. 2014: 1824)

In Nigeria, the results of a study by Fakeye (2014) show that English language proficiency of students has a significant positive relationship with their overall academic achievement. Fakeye (2014) intimates that the poor performance of students in English language at public examinations in recent times has been explained as a major cause of the decline in academic achievement and standard of education in Nigeria. Although Fakeye recommends that more effort should be put on improving proficiency so as to improve academic achievement, it is evident that English Medium Instruction can actually be a stumbling block to academic success. In multilingual countries such as Nigeria, English is often perceived as a neutral language with potential to unite the nation. As a result, EMI is enforced on academic institutions without questioning its effectiveness.

Writing about the increasing use of English in Asian universities, Kirkpatrick (2014: 15) raises a concern that the increased use of English as a medium of instruction has the potential of further advantaging speakers of English and disadvantaging speakers of other languages. Although most universities claim to implement EMI for internationalization purposes, Kirkpatrick (2014) argues that internationalization in the context of the increased use of English simply translates to “English medium higher education”. The implication is that students who learn only through English tend to adopt English ways of thinking and thus tend to adopt a narrow, monolithic worldview. Internationalization has become the legitimization of English epistemology and the decimation of alternative worldviews embedded in other languages. Kirkpatrick (2014) also

notes that most universities in Asia are introducing EMI courses in an attempt to attract international students and keep local students who may want to leave their countries to acquire education in English medium institutions elsewhere. It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the decision to introduce EMI in universities is usually a response to the pressures of globalization rather than a sound decision informed by research. Oftentimes, this decision is parachuted from above, as was the case in Rwanda (2008) where English was declared the official medium of instruction in spite of the fact that the majority of the population does not speak English. A study on EMI in Rwanda by Tabaro (2015) intimates that the system has not produced positive fruits since learners fail to develop communicative competence either in English or in French.

In view of the above, Hu et al. (2014) opine that EMI is often viewed by many governments as the only way through which cutting edge knowledge can be accessed, and a way of enhancing national competitiveness in innovation and knowledge production. A study conducted by Belhiah and Elhami (2015) at several universities in the United Arab Emirates shows that EMI is not effective as students struggle to understand subject matter due to their low proficiency in English. In spite of government efforts to promote EMI in the UAE, literacy presents a serious challenge as literacy rates continue to be extremely low in English (Belhiah and Elhami 2015: 6). In addition, the expansion of English is generally perceived as a threat to the Arabic language, which is also the language of Islam. The study confirms that there are some advantages of EMI such as improving students' reading, writing and speaking skills in English, which are critical in today's working world. However, there are also serious concerns that the exclusive use of English compromises the students' understanding of subject matter. The study thus recommends a bilingual curriculum in which instruction is delivered in both English and Arabic (Belhiah and Elhami 2015: 20). The argument is that English should be viewed as an ally to Arabic, so long as instruction is conducted in an equitable manner and English neither displaces the mother tongue nor poses a threat to national identity and heritage (Belhiah and Elhami 2015: 20). A study on EMI conducted by Huang (2015) in Taiwan reiterates that students have an inter-

est in taking EMI courses in order to improve their English. However, most local students experience anxiety from self-perceived lack of proficiency in English. Students with high self-perceived anxiety often lack motivation and perform badly while those with less self-perceived anxiety (mainly foreign students) are more motivated and achieve better. According to the study, EMI in Taiwan has faced challenges since its inception because most local students do not possess sufficient English abilities and most of the enrolled international students come from countries where English is not the native language (Huang 2015: 72). It is evident from the foregoing discussion that EMI is still facing a number of challenges in terms of its implementation on the ground, particularly in the developing world.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is mainly a review of literature on English Medium Instruction in Africa and Asia. The literature is reviewed systemically in response to specific research questions: What are the challenges of learning through English? Should academic institutions in Africa and Asia continue to use English as a medium? Are there any alternative instructional models that can replace or complement the current hegemony of English? Sources that have been consulted include journal papers, books, Internet-based sources and newspapers.

Context and Rationale

This paper is situated within current debates, as reflected in the Millennium Development Goals, about improving the quality of education particularly in developing countries. While significant advances have been made towards improving access to education for all in developing countries, scholars continue to ask questions about the relevance and quality of this education. In response to efforts by the United Nations to promote education for all in Africa, Brock-Utne (2001), in a paper entitled, "Education for all-in whose language?" cites the language of instruction as a major stumbling block in the promotion of meaningful education in Africa. The crux of the matter is that children, in Asian and African countries, continue to be taught in languages that they encounter for the

first time when they begin school or enroll at tertiary institutions. Ironically, nobody has a full command of these languages, including the teachers that facilitate learning in them. In recent years, there have been increasing complaints from the corporate world about the low quality of graduates that universities release into the market. One of the major concerns for industry is that graduates cannot communicate effectively in English, which in most cases is the language of business. In response to these concerns, universities have tended to adopt new pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning such as student-centered learning, experiential learning, and collaborative learning. Although these are useful initiatives, it is the contention of this paper that these can only be effective when students understand, and have a full command of, the language of learning.

Objectives

The objective of this paper is to review available literature on the mediation of learning through English in Africa and Asia. It is hoped that a review of available literature will give a holistic picture on the effectiveness of EMI in institutions of learning between the two continents. Ultimately, the paper seeks to provide answers to questions around the challenges of English Medium Education, the relationship between the language of instruction and academic performance as well as investigating alternative instructional models appropriate to the African and Asian contexts.

RESULTS

Challenges of English-medium Education

Research has shown that “while vast resources are directed toward language teaching and bilingualism, especially involving English, more people than ever are unable to acquire the language skills they need in order to enter and succeed in school, obtain satisfactory employment, and participate politically and socially in the life of their communities (Alexander 2003). The implication is that while local languages continue to be marginalized on the pretext that promoting them is expensive, promoting English costs more money with very little returns. Brock Utne argues that the great majority of students

in Africa lose out because of the use of English. “They drop out of school, have to repeat grades, and lose their self-confidence” in the classroom (Brock-Utne 2012: 498). Yet surprisingly, more countries across the world continue to embrace English as a medium of instruction. The adoption of English in most countries tends to be based on political and economic reasons rather than on sound research. A case in point is that of Rwanda, which, in 2008, shifted from French to English medium education following diplomatic fallout with France. This shift, from French to English, in a country, which was never colonized by the British, is a clear example of the politics behind the use of English as a language of learning in developing countries. The case of Rwanda shows that English has become a medium through which international capital continues to exert hegemony on formerly colonized countries. English is the language of financial institutions and donors that remotely control policy-making in Africa and Asia.

The problems caused by English medium education in developing countries affect both teachers and students. The problem arises from the fact that non-native speaking professors teach in English to non-native speaking students. In other words, students (and even some professors) often lack adequate proficiency in the language, let alone the higher level of proficiency required in an academic setting (Byun et al. 2011: 440). In a study conducted by Byun in Korea, the respondents revealed that they often requested instructors to use at least some Korean in English-medium classes, indicating that an appreciable number of students have trouble following courses conducted entirely in English (Byun et al. 2011: 442). Some of the professors also acknowledged that they were forced to cover less content in an English-medium course and that student learning was compromised by the language used (Byun et al. 2011: 440).

Universities in developing countries have introduced language proficiency courses in the curriculum in an attempt to address the language problem. Previously, universities used to work on the assumption that anybody who enrolled at university would be able to communicate in English, given that English is the language of instruction at primary and secondary levels. However, with the advent of mass education, there is a growing concern that English Medium Instruction may actually hinder the students’

acquisition of the subject matter being taught, even though it can possibly contribute to improving the students' command over the English language (Byun et al. 2011: 442).

Reflecting on the history of colonial education in India, Jayaram notes that "the excessive emphasis on the mastering of English as a language often eclipse(s) the purpose of education. It encourage(s) mechanical learning through memorizing and discourage(s) inquisitiveness and an experimental bent of mind" (1993: 94). Similarly, in most African countries, being proficient in English is usually seen as a marker of being educated. Studies conducted by Brock-Utne (2012) in Namibia show that students actually perceive studying in English as more prestigious than studying in local languages. In fact, Brock-Utne records that the department of African Languages at the University of Namibia was on the brink of closure because no students were interested in studying African languages.

In a similar vein, Smith (2004) (cited in Coleman 2006:10) argues that although the gains from English Medium Instruction outweigh the losses, English Medium Instruction does create risks of domestic language attrition and cultural identity loss. Jayaram (1993: 97) also notes that the inability of students to use language effectively as a means of communication is a major problem and the prime failing of university education in India. Pattanayak (in Jayaram 1993: 97) hypothesizes that the disjunction between the home language and the school language is responsible not only for wastage and stagnation but also for the development of a low self-image and lower achievement all through education in the schools. It is a major concern that millions of children in Africa and Asia enter school without knowing the language of instruction. The only type of formal schooling available to them is in a language they neither speak nor understand (Brock Utne 2007: 511). Dutcher (in Brock-Utne 2007) argues that the basic problem is that children are expected to learn a new language at the same time as they are learning in and through the new language. According to Flowerdew et al. (1998: 208), "one of the problems for lecturers is how to make lecture content comprehensible to such students".

Given the importance of language in knowledge construction and acquisition, teaching and learning initiatives cannot be adequate without addressing the language question. How can students learn actively in a language they do not know? The basic problem for most learners is

that they simply cannot understand what the teacher is saying. Initiatives towards active learning are therefore ineffective when both teachers and students do not fully understand the language of instruction.

In a research project dubbed LOITASSA (Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa), Brock-Utne et al. (2007) looked into the performance of students taught in English as compared to those taught in their mother tongue. The first study was conducted at a primary school in Khayelitsha Township in Cape Town, South Africa. Pupils were provided with six pictures and then asked to arrange them and write a story based on the pictures, first in IsiXhosa (their home language) and then in English. The study was replicated in Tanzania and Zanzibar. Results showed that pupils struggled with narrating the story in the pictures in English. The stories that they wrote in English were so garbled that meaning was lost, yet the IsiXhosa and Kiswahili versions were clear and articulate. The study confirmed that English is a serious handicap for most students whose mother tongue is not English. In spite of the hype around new pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning such as student centered learning, second language students in English medium classrooms remain inactive, as their poor command of the language does not allow them free self-expression. One has to admit that in some countries, second language students from middle class families have managed to successfully swim through English-mediated learning, however, the majority from rural peasant backgrounds remain on the sidelines.

Research has persistently confirmed that children learn better in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. However, many countries in Africa and Asia continue to facilitate learning through English—a foreign language. To make matters worse, governments around the world are introducing English as a compulsory subject at younger and younger ages, often without adequate funding, teacher education for elementary school teachers, or the development of curricula and materials for younger learners (Nunan 2003: 591).

Should Academic Institutions in Africa and Asia Use English as a Medium Education?

In Africa, the dominant language in schools is a language which children never hear outside school and which only five to ten percent of the

population masters (Brock-Utne 2012: 486). The fact that students use a language that they do not know as a medium of accessing knowledge means that they cannot engage with what they learn and transfer it to their lives. Byun (2011: 433) asserts that utilizing non-native English speakers as English-medium instructors produces less interaction and intimacy between professors and their students, increases student and faculty workloads and the instructors' tendencies to cover less material and reduces their abilities to improvise to clearly and accurately express their subject. Studies conducted in Korea by Byun et al. (2011) also demonstrate that those students straight from high school tend to experience greater difficulty understanding English Medium Instruction content, as they are less accustomed to listening to and speaking in English (Byun et al. 2011: 434). This can be attributed to the absence of bridging mechanisms between universities and high schools to ensure a smooth transition. Brock-Utne asserts, "primary English (in South Africa and Tanzania) does not provide an adequate basis for the switch to English in the secondary phase" (Brock-Utne 2012: 488).

It is only when students understand what the teacher is saying that they can engage in meaningful conversations and build on previous knowledge as well as the knowledge of their classmates and teachers. Use of a foreign language as a language of instruction is a recipe for inequality because it creates a gap between those who have more exposure to the English language (and thus likely to succeed in English-medium institutions) and those who have less (and thus likely to fail). Brock-Utne (2007: 526) also notes, "the use of an unfamiliar language as the language of instruction appears therefore as a strategy to keep the masses down, to stupidify them and make it difficult for them to rise out of poverty".

Learning in one's language enables one to customize knowledge and use it for real life functional purposes. Poor language proficiency often translates to poor academic performance. In 2009, Malaysia abandoned the use of English to teach mathematics and science because teaching in English had caused academic results in those subjects to slip (Brock-Utne 2012: 491). A study by Mwinsheikhe and Vuzo (2007) in Tanzania found that test results were significantly better when the students were taught in Kiswa-

hili than when they were taught in English. The study also confirmed that when lessons were conducted in Kiswahili the whole classroom atmosphere was also totally transformed.

The students were eager, asked questions, raised their hands and competed to answer and even argued against the teacher. However, when they were taught in English, they sat there passively, afraid to be asked a question (Brock-Utne 2012: 493).

This study clearly shows that learning is a social, interactive process rather than a mechanical and thoughtless one. Therefore, if students are to learn effectively, they ought to have a full command over the language of learning so as to be able to express their thoughts in it. Holmarsdottir (2001: 315) notes that work in Nigerian schools show that pupils educated through the medium of Yoruba are more proficient in school subjects including English than pupils educated through the medium of English.

Another study, which was carried out by Vuyokazi Nomlomo (2014) found that when children were taught in isiXhosa, their own language, they did significantly better than when they were taught in English. Brock Utne concludes, "having English or French as the language of instruction does not promote understanding and learning in the majority of schools in so-called Anglo- or Francophone Africa" (Brock-Utne 2012: 498). Watkins et al. also argue that lack of confidence in the language of instruction affects the students' approach to learning. Kember and Gow (in Watkins et al. 1991) mention that tertiary students in Hong Kong, who typically learn in English (an L2), often adopt a 'narrow' approach to learning. This approach is characterized by a combination of deep level processing and a step-by-step strategy similar to operation learning. Students narrow their focus in order to minimize processing load, and then understand-memorize-understand-memorize the target contents, a strategy with something of both deep and surface approaches (Watkins et al. 1991:332). These studies indicate that the less confident students are in the language of instruction, the more likely they are to rely on rote learning without trying to understand what they are learning (Watkins et al. 1991: 338). The two studies indicate that the more confident students are the more they are likely to adopt highly organized learning strategies.

Nambissan (1994) reiterates that the language of instruction compromises the learners' ability to engage with the learning materials. While analyzing the poor response of tribal children to formal schooling, scholars tend to emphasize the economic marginalization of these communities, their illiterate home environments, inadequate facilities for education, and culturally, the alien nature of the school system. However, Nambissan argues that it is essential to focus on school processes as well (Nambissan 1994: 2747). Students may actually perform better in spite of their socioeconomic background if some school processes such as the language of instruction are addressed. The average student in an English medium classroom has poor reading abilities, does not master content areas in mathematics and performs poorly in science (Nambissan 1994: 2747). The question that may need to be asked is how such a student would fare if they were instructed in their own language.

Nambissan (1994: 747) maintains that the child's access to subject areas in the curriculum depends on a minimal level of proficiency in the language used for instruction within the school. In the United States, for example, research shows that the submersion of Latino-speaking children in English instruction has been ineffectual. In Tanzania, students are taught in Kiswahili throughout primary school but when they enter secondary school, they are expected to switch over to English. Roy-Campbell notes that there is no effort in the system to facilitate a smooth linguistic transition. Students must, on their own, make the deductive leap from what they learned previously in the local language to what they are learning in English (2001: 274). Roy-Campbell (2001: 271) also highlights that by requiring students to learn all of their subjects through a language in which they can barely communicate, knowledge and language is being equated.

Alternative Models

The foregoing review of literature has confirmed that English-medium instruction causes serious pedagogical challenges that may be alleviated through the adoption of alternative instructional models. Education is about knowledge acquisition and knowledge acquisition is easier through a familiar language. Therefore, it is only appropriate for institutions of learning to provide instruction in a language understood

by both the instructors and the learners. However, one also has to consider the hegemonic position of English, which is not likely to change in the near future. What one can wish for, and this is the researcher's argument, is an instructional model that recognizes the plight of the majority of students in developing countries who continue to receive instruction in a language they do not speak. Jayaram recommends what he calls "selective bilingualism", that is, the introduction of regional languages as alternative media of instruction along with English in selected courses and levels of education (1993: 108). This model, if appropriately implemented, would limit the effects of the current one-size-fits-all approach, in which in all learning is mediated through English. Some scholars have argued that English-medium instruction has been overrated to the extent that it is seen as a panacea for all kinds of learning challenges. Since research has established that most English as a second language programs do not go beyond training a native elite, it is of critical importance that English be taught in a context of additive bilingualism that promotes continuing home language use. In the context of South Africa, the goal as Timbur puts it, is "to replace the prevailing subtractive bilingualism of unidirectional transition to English found in mainstream ESL programs with a functional multilingualism that mobilizes the country's linguistic resources" (2002: 653). In countries such as India, the move towards the use of regional languages as media of instruction has been stalled by lack of political will and commitment to the rigors of implementing the policies.

As much as local languages are important vehicles of learning, the hegemonic status of English and its pervasive influence as a language of trade and communication cannot be ignored. Students need an education that will enable them to navigate the world and penetrate international borders. Since monolingual language policies tend to suppress alternative knowledge, this study recommends a model that incorporates both vernacular and English so that students can have a choice (Timbur 2002: 253). Selective bilingualism, recommended by Jayaram may also be a viable alternative. The rationale behind this model is that not every field of study requires communication in English, therefore students specializing in such programs should be allowed to study in a language they under-

stand. Another model, which may be appropriate for most African countries, is additive bilingualism as opposed to subtractive bilingualism. This model has its own challenges, such as the fact that students tend to spend too much time studying languages. However, it is better than monolingualism because it exposes students to alternative worldviews. If English is required for communication purposes, it need not be used as a language of instruction, rather it can be studied as a foreign language. Education should, first and foremost, focus on knowledge acquisition and not on learning a language. Therefore, priority should be given to knowledge acquisition through languages that both learners and instructors fully understand.

DISCUSSION

The foregoing findings of the study have shown that EMI, which has been introduced in institutions of learning worldwide, is facing a number of challenges particularly in the developing world. The bulk of research on EMI has been conducted in European countries and findings in these countries have been erroneously generalized to the Third World. However, the fact of the matter is that the Third World is a totally different context and research has shown that EMI in these countries has not produced the best of results. Studies conducted by Brock-Utne (2012) in South Africa and Tanzania have debunked the myth that English-medium education is cost-effective, highlighting that most English-medium initiatives have been more costly with little benefits. It is evident, as has been argued by Huang (2014) and Kirkpatrick (2014), that the adoption of English as a medium of instruction in most developing countries is more of an economic and political decision rather than a pragmatic one based on research. In fact, research has persistently shown that students learn better and achieve better results when they learn in their mother tongue. Yet institutions of learning continue to deliver education in English. The idea of internationalization, which is one of the reasons why many institutions of learning are embracing EMI, is problematic if it is narrowly interpreted as “English-medium education”. Internationalization should expose students to different perspectives and worldviews, which are embedded in different languages. This view concurs with Kirkpatrick (2014) who argues that

EMI should complement rather than eclipse other worldviews.

Studies by Byun (2011) and Brock-Utne (2012) have shown that English as a medium of instruction is a handicap for both lecturers and students in developing countries. Moreover, there is a huge gap between primary and secondary English language competency level of students and the English language competency level required by universities. In most cases, students are expected to take the leap by themselves. O’Dowd (2015) has shown that the language proficiency courses that are offered by universities tend to be inadequate and incapable of addressing the language gap. Most literature concur that students in Third World countries face one basic challenge, which is the failure to understand lectures delivered in English and textbooks written in English. Students that study in a language they do not understand tend to engage less with their learning material and learn by memorization. This view resonates with Jayaram (1993) who argues that the preoccupation with English makes students miss the purpose of education, which is to understand what has been learnt and use it in real life situations. While some scholars such as Byun (2011) acknowledge that some students, particularly from the middle class, have registered success through English-medium education, the majority of learners continue to experience challenges. In the context of the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that English-medium education continues to face challenges in Africa and Asia. Most studies seem to recommend a bilingual system wherein both English and local languages are used to facilitate teaching and learning.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is only a review of available literature. It solely depends on data, which is already published on English-medium education in Africa and Asia. This is a limitation and the study could have been richer if empirical data on the two continents had been gathered and included. Therefore, future studies can consider gathering both qualitative and quantitative evidence from the two continents in order to assess the effectiveness of English-medium education.

CONCLUSION

Is English, in fact, a necessity in developing countries? Why should one use English in a local hospital that caters for a monolingual population? These are questions that probe into the relevance of English-medium education particularly in developing countries. The point is that there is a tendency to exaggerate the demand for English to the extent that some people study English only to find that they never use it for functional purposes in their lives. English-medium instruction in developing countries is meant to kill two birds with one stone: the content and the language. While English-medium education in developing countries is designed with the intention of teaching specific content, while at the same time improving proficiency in the language, many studies have shown that the victims of this two-pronged approach are the lecturers and students who facilitate learning and learn in a language they do not understand respectively. In English-medium institutions, learners are thus confronted with two enemies at the same time: the subject matter and the language. In light of the foregoing discussion, one can thus conclude that foreign languages of instruction are in fact languages of exclusion. The idea of shooting two birds via English medium education is indeed double-aged. English-medium education can achieve two objectives at once that is, subject learning and English proficiency. However, it can also in the same breath, incapacitate both the learner and the instructor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the discussion above and the findings of the study, a few recommendations are in order. Firstly, institutions of learning in developing countries should consider teaching selected courses in local languages rather than in English. While subjects in science and technology may continue to be taught in English, it is recommended that social sciences and humanities courses should be taught in local languages in order to preserve the culture and identity of the respective countries. This study also recommends that institutions of learning in the Third World should implement a bilingual education system that recognizes the rights of students to learn in a language they understand rather than enforcing English-medium education. Third

World countries should also pay attention to scientific research when implementing instructional models rather than bow down to the pressures of globalization. Countries in Africa and Asia should invest more money in developing their own languages so that they can be languages of science and technology, which can be used to facilitate instruction and democratize education.

REFERENCES

- Alexander N 2011. After apartheid: The language question. In: Ian Shapiro, Kahreen Tebeau (Eds.): *After Apartheid: Reinventing South Africa*. London: University of Virginia Press, pp. 312-329.
- Basibeka N, Dolmacib M, Cengizc BC, Bürd B, Dileke Y, Karaf B 2014. Lecturers' perceptions of English medium instruction at engineering departments of higher education: A study on partial English medium instruction at some state universities in Turkey. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116: 1819-1825.
- Belhiah H, Elhami M 2015. English as a medium of instruction in the Gulf: When students and teachers speak. *Language Policy*, 14: 3-23.
- Brock-Utne B 2007. Language of instruction and student performance: New insights from research in Tanzania and South Africa. *International Review of Education*, 53(5/6): 509-530.
- Brock-Utne B 2012. Language policy and science: Could some African countries learn from some Asian countries? *International Review of Education*, 58: 481-503.
- Brock-Utne B, Holmarsdottir HB 2001. The choice of English as medium of instruction and its effects on the African languages in Namibia. *International Review of Education*, 47(3/4): 293-322.
- Byun, K, Chu H, Kim M, Park I, Kim S, Jung J 2011. English-medium teaching in Korean higher education: Policy debates and reality. *High Education*, 62: 431-449.
- Fakeye D 2014. English language proficiency as a predictor of academic achievement among EFL students in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(9): 38-41.
- Flowerdew J, Li D, Miller L 1998. Attitudes towards English and Cantonese among Hong Kong Chinese University. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(2): 201-231.
- Hu G, Li L, Lei J 2014. English-medium instruction at a Chinese University: Rhetoric and reality. *Language Policy*, 13: 21-40.
- Huang D 2015. Exploring and assessing effectiveness of English medium instruction courses: The students' perspectives. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 173: 71-78.
- Jayaram N 1993. The language question in higher education: Trends and issues. *Higher Education*, 26(1): 93-114.
- Kirkpatrick A 2014. English as a medium of instruction in east and south-east Asian Universities. In: N Murray, A Scarino (Eds.): *Dynamic Ecologies*. New York: Springer, pp. 15-23.

- Nambissan GB 1994. Language and schooling of tribal children: Issues related to medium of instruction. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29(42): 2747-2749.
- Nomlomo V 2014. Reflections on the use of an African language in science teaching and learning in the intermediate phase: A case study in two Western Cape primary schools. *Alternation* (Special Edition), 13: 209-235.
- Nunan D 2003. The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4): 589-613.
- O'Dowd R 2015. The Training and Accreditation of Teachers for English Medium Instruction: A Survey of European Universities, From http://sgroup.be/sites/default/files/EMI%20Survey_Report_ODowd.pdf (Retrieved on 05 October 2015).
- Roy-Campbell Z M 2001. Globalisation, language and education: A comparative study of the United States and Tanzania. *International Review of Education*, 47(3/4): 267-282.
- Tabaro C 2015. Rwandans' motivation to learn and use English as a medium of instruction. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(2): 78-85.
- Trimbur J 2002. Language policy and normalization in South Africa: Some other lessons. *JAC*, 22(3): 646-657.
- Vu Nha TT, Burns A 2014. English as a medium of instruction: Challenges for Vietnamese tertiary lecturers. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 11(3): 1-31.
- Watkins D, Biggs J, Regmi M 1991. Does confidence in the language of instruction influence a student's approach to learning? *Instructional Science*, 20(4): 331-339.