

**A Study on the perspective of students and faculty towards English as a Medium  
of Instruction**

دراسة حول وجهات نظر الطلاب والهيئة التدريسية باعتماد اللغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة للتدريس

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and my daughters Lamar and Sundos. A special feeling of gratitude is given to my loving parents and my aunt Muna whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. My sisters Suzan and Muna and my brothers Husni, Hosam, Muhammad, and Abdulla have never left my side and are very special.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially Dr. Hasan Toubat for helping me to master the leader dots.

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my wonderful daughters Lamar and Sundos for being there for me throughout the entire masters program.

## **Abstract**

This study examines students' English language skills when they study in classes where the medium of instruction is English in UAE universities, regarding the proficiency of students' language skills during the four years of study. The study examines the effect of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) on language proficiency of students and lecturers' points of view. The findings of the research are used as a basis for recommendations to universities who use EMI with recommendations to improve students' language proficiency. This research is conducted among students whose L1 is not English. In this study, the questionnaire and the interview results indicate that there are various perceptions between the instructors and the students regarding language ability, in addition to difficulties linked with using English as a medium of instruction. For the target population (the students), studying in English is not a problem, and they rank their level in all English language skills from good to excellent. However, lecturers do not find that students' language ability satisfies their expectations as the students are studying using English as the environment of their learning. The lecturers believe that writing and listening are the weakest language skills of their students. In the lecturers' opinion, there should be adjustments to the contents of English courses and assessment criteria to match the language ability of their students. This study suggests that to develop the learners' English language skills, universities have to enhance students' language proficiency through setting clear instructional goals and adapting support systems for lecturers, in addition to giving courses through the entire studying period ( 4 years) and not only in the preparation year.

يناقش هذا البحث مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية لطلاب يدرسون في إحدى جامعات دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة ، والتي تستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة معتمدة في عملية التدريس ، كذلك يعرض هذا البحث وجهات نظر وآراء المدرسين والطلاب فيما يتعلق بتطور المهارات اللغوية الخاصة بالطلاب خلال أربع سنوات من الدراسة ، ثم دراسة تأثير استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة تدريس على مهارات الطلاب اللغوية من وجهة نظر الأساتذة ، وأيضاً من وجهة نظر الطلاب أنفسهم ، وكذلك ناقش البحث قضية ضرورة توفير دعم لغوي للطلاب بعد أن يتم قبولهم في برنامج الدراسة ، بالإضافة إلى دراسة محتوى المادة وطرق تدريسها للطلاب . استخدمت نتائج البحث لتقديم توصيات للجامعات التي تستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة للتدريس ، بالإضافة إلى تقديم اقتراحات لتطوير مهارات الطلاب اللغوية.

تم إجراء هذا البحث على طلاب ليست اللغة الإنجليزية هي لغتهم الأم وكانت نتائج الاستبيان والمقابلات الشخصية قد أعطت مؤشرات على وجود اختلاف في وجهات النظر والآراء للطلاب والأساتذة فيما يتعلق بمهارات الدارسين اللغوية ، بالإضافة إلى وجود عراقيل وصعوبات ترافق استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة تدريس.

من وجهة نظر الطلاب الذين شاركوا في البحث لم تكن الدراسة باللغة الإنجليزية مشكلة لهم ، حيث قيّموا مستواهم تقييماً ذاتياً في مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية المختلفة بين جيد و ممتاز . أما بالنسبة لوجهة نظر المدرسين ، فهم لا يعتقدون بأن قدرات الطلاب اللغوية تتماشى مع التوقعات المتوخاه من طلاب يدرسون مادة تخصص مستخدمين اللغة الإنجليزية . وأكدت وجهة نظر المدرسين بأن مهارتي الكتابة والاستماع ، هما أكثر المهارات ضعفاً عند الطلاب . لذا يجب تعديل محتوى مادة التدريس ووضع مقاييس للتقييم لتتماشى مع مستوى قدرات الطلاب اللغوية.

و لتطوير مهارات الطلاب اللغوية توصي هذه الدراسة بأن تقوم الجامعة بوضع برنامج ، وتحديد أهداف ، لتزويد الطلاب والمدرسين بالدعم اللازم ، بالإضافة إلى عقد دوات إضافية خلال فترة الأربع سنوات من الدراسة .

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## List of Abbreviations

UAE	United Arab Emirates
EMI	English medium instruction
ESL	English as a Second Language
USA	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
MOHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

# The perspective of students and faculty towards English as a Medium of Instruction

## **Chapter 1**

### **1 Introduction**

Using English as a medium of instruction might have implications on culture and policies in regions where English language is not the first language. Education internationalization and the desire for national development have led to an increased tendency to use (EMI) around the world. One of the implementations of the educational policies that call for using English-medium instruction says that learning a language can be increased through being taught the academic subject in the target language. Language instructors agree with a suggestion that a second language can be effectively learned when it is used to deliver content relevant to the learner and in which he/she is interested.

Programs such as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and immersion used for young learners who are acquiring a second language can be categorized as successful, especially in countries such as the UK, Canada, and the USA, but little research have widely investigated using English medium instruction in programs of higher education where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Therefore, English medium instruction that is used to deliver subject matter content does not concentrate on teaching the target language although using EMI inevitably focuses on improving learners' language skills while delivering the subject content.

Theories that are based on the rationale of using EMI as a means of learning a foreign language during the class sessions of a material supports the hypothesis that the acquisition of a foreign language is similar to the acquisition of a first language. The rationale of EMI in higher education is instrumental and supported by acquisition theories. This situation enhances a natural language learning process, which is similar to the acquisition of first language where learning occurs automatically and effortlessly as the learners is adequately motivated and sufficiently exposed to the target language. Hypotheses that say EMI will enhance students' language skills usually investing human and material resources needed for English medium instruction in regions where English is not the first language, although the evidence of the effect of EMI on language improvement is little.

According to a previous study English language is rapidly spreading in the world and English speaking population has increased from 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion in year 2006 (Crystal, 2006). The main reason behind the expansion of English language is globalization and expansion of the education (H. Coleman, 2011). English is increasingly gaining position as language of instruction where it is not the language of majority of the population. According to some estimates, English language courses has increased in Europe by 340 percent from 2002 to 2007 (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & SIERRA, 2011). English language is gaining important position internationally as it increases employability (H. Coleman, 2011).

One of the previous studies has stated that using EMI where English is not a first language creates problem for both teacher and students (Mwinsheikhe, 2009). According to Meganathan (2011) EMI creates social differences in the society. Another study has stated that governments are putting attention on EMI but the ground realities are quite different as in African countries where EMI face issues such as student are not really prepared for EMI so EMI put negative impact on educational learning (Hamid, Jahan, & Islam, 2013). On the other hand, another study has stated that bilingual education system has positive impact on academic learning (Krashen & Biber, 1988).

According to Dearden (2014) EMI is use of English language as medium of instruction where English is not the first language of majority of population of the country. According to a study, EMI has increased in the last few decades as now most of researches are conducted in English. Most of the graduate programs worldwide are offered in English language (Morell et al., 2014).

Most of the governments in the world support the EMI, but some of the governments showed their concern about EMI as these governments believe that EMI have negative impact on national identity. The other problem identified in the study is that there is shortage of qualified linguistic teachers in most of the countries which creates problems for EMI (Dearden, 2014). According to Owu-Ewie and Eshun (2015) countries where English is not first language are trying to facilitate EMI by developing and supporting bilingual education systems to eliminate communication gap. But it is observed that teachers do not follow official EMI policy which is set by governments, and this trend has created problems for EMI. In some countries EMI fails because policy maker do not consider and interact with stakeholders at micro level such as with teachers and students and do not provide adequate funds for EMI (Hamid et al., 2013). Kaplan

(2009) has also stated that policies related to EMI needs to be developed with consultation of micro level with consultations of teachers and students who are major stakeholders of EMI policy implementation.

Previous literature has identified the major problems faced by the teachers during the teaching process. These problems are in:

- Linguistic competence of teachers
- Appropriate methods of teaching
- Student language proficiency and lack of resources

Moreover, the study revealed that the lack of EMI knowledge among teachers results in negative impact on course completion and ultimately on the adequate academic performance of students. (Vinke, Snippe, & Jochems, 1998). Competent English speaking teachers put positive impact on student teaching (J. A. Coleman, 2006). One of the previous studies stated that one of the major barriers in EMI is that teachers believe that their students perform well in EMI when they are not (Sum, McCaskey, & Kyeyune, 2010).

### **1.1 Significance of English in the United Arab Emirates**

English has been a language which is widely used in technology and commerce to compete the global economy (Estes, Biggs, & Phillipson, 2003). Since the seventh century, the Gulf region has been unified by Islam and Arabic language. During the last two centuries, the presence of the British colonizers provided the rule of the English language (Charise, 2007). The nation's multinational and diversified culture has promoted the usage of English. The local population of Emiratis in UAE is estimated at around 11.4 %, and the remaining population is comprised of foreigner (Alnuaimi, 2011).

In 2009, higher academic institutions were directed by the Federal National Council (FNC) to ease the English language requirements and instead consider Arabic language to teach some subjects. Accordingly, the response of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research was: English Proficiency is advised as critical factor for development of our national progress for sustaining in the global environment. The parents and youth of UAE reflected similar persuasion. According to a study, Dubai would not have been excelled without English as our country depend on external experts and foreigners (Vrabie, Pastravanu, Abu-Khalaf, & Lewis, 2009).

Most of the international companies operating in gulf region have setup their headquarters in UAE as investors believe that in UAE they can operate quite easily as there is no problem of language barrier to start financial activities. English in UAE has not only improved the trade and business environment but also attracted the international tourists as tourists can travel all around UAE without any language barrier.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

The study attempts to reveal the impact of English as a medium of instruction on learners' language proficiency in the area of higher education in the UAE. It examines one of the local universities to study the change of students' English language proficiency over studying for four years in their undergraduate study using EMI.

Programs such as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) that is used for young learners who use a second language can be categorized as successful especially in countries such as the UK, Canada, and the USA, but research has not widely investigated English medium instruction in programs of higher education where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Therefore, EMI focus on conveying the subject content, although the essential principle for using EMI is to develop learners' linguistic skills during delivering the content.

Theories of EMI as a means of learning a foreign language are essentially based on an assumption that the acquisition of a foreign language is similar to the acquisition of a first language. This rationale for using EMI in higher education would boost a natural language learning process to be automatically and effortlessly accomplished.

## **1.3 EMI in UAE**

UAE has a strategic location for trade and tourism and the multiplicity in the use of languages. The government established higher institutions and considered using EMI as one of the core concepts. In the 1970s, the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research stated that the language of instruction will be English and accordingly competent and qualified faculty will be employed (Aladwan & Qutaishat, 2007). The desire of the UAE government is to educate their citizens and encourage them to learn English by using EMI in higher education. This decision can be justified by the necessity to meet the competitive global requirements. English is considered the language of tourism, economics, and politics, in addition to medicine, education,

and science. The ministry argued that English is the language of technology and science, and that the young generation will not be denied and they have to be given the opportunity to interact with the outer world using the language of the globe (Reinhardt & Zander, 2011). Accordingly, the Emirati students must demonstrate a level of proficiency in English language supported by the results of internationally recognized exam and make deliberation on an acceptable English proficiency level and benchmark level that is adequate

A study by Aladwan and Qutaishat (2007) stated that EMI is to maintain or improve learners' language proficiency. This goal might not be fulfilled as using EMI is not enough to develop students' language skills. UAE and the Gulf region, the instruction takes place in regular classrooms that contain learners whose first language is Arabic, and the lecturer who delivers the content frequently is a native English speaker but not usually trained to teach second language students. This study investigates the perceptions of the learners' language development during the period of study according to the faculty and the students. One of the questions that will be investigated in this study is the expected development of learners' English language proficiency that over the four years of study using EMI.

#### **1.4 Language Proficiency**

According to Bachman (1990) language proficiency is traditionally used to refer to the ability, general knowledge, or aptitude in language. The individual's language proficiency is set of vocabulary and general rules leading to the use of language, but it cannot be examined as are not clearly observed. According to Latane, Williams, and Harkins (1979) communication means the learner's ability to create and receive messages from other speakers. Interaction can also be reflected as a primary language module.

Bolitho et al. (2003) defined proficiency as having adequate command of the language to be used for a particular purpose. This definition is in line with that of Bachman (1990) who said that the ability of language communication for any user should include language knowledge in addition to the capability to use it in an linguistic environment.

Previous literature has identified the major problems faced by the teachers during teaching are teacher language ability, appropriate method of teaching, student language proficiency and lack of resources. Study has stated that teachers with lack of EMI knowledge

result in having negative impact on course completion and as a result of it ultimately student could not perform well academically (Vinke et al., 1998). Competent English speaking teachers put positive impact on student teaching (J. A. Coleman, 2006). One of the previous study has stated that one of the major barrier in EMI is teacher perceive that their students are well in EMI when they are not (Sum et al., 2010).

This study will investigate the reasons behind the deficiency in students' English language proficiency from the instructors as well as of students.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study can be summarized in the following points:

- It investigates different perspectives of language ability according to the universities, instructors and learners. The difference between the two perspectives can solved out in order to resolve various discrepancies.
- The research findings can be considered as significant as many Arab-speaking countries especially in the Gulf area offer EMI in high education to their citizens at significant expense. Hopefully, our study will enhance the cognition of using EMI in higher education, and its effects on language proficiency in countries where English is not an native language.
- It is expected that the findings of the research will focus on improving the practices of university instructors in EMI domains that will be advantageous to the learners in learning English language in environments where the purpose behind using EMI is to enhance learners' language proficiency.

## **1.6 The Research Questions**

This research aims at exploring the perspectives of the universities, faculty, and learners in the UAE higher education context. This study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the perceptions of the university faculty in terms of their learners' English language ability?
- What are the perceptions of the learners regarding their language abilities as a consequence of studying in a university that uses EMI?

- What is the difference in perceptions of faculty and students' about English language proficiency?

## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

Countries where English is being used as a second language offer many studies that scrutinize EMI and its execution relation with the socio-cultural politics (Airey, 2004). Mouhanna (2010) claimed out that “using English language serves as an obstacle that the learners face to understand the content of a course and it needs additional assistance and time period to understand the given information, but it is significant in terms of employ-ability. Some of the previous studies have pointed out that finding up-to-date information is easy in classes using EMI (Coster et al., 2007). Airey and Linder (2006) stated using EMI in the Swedish universities has enabled the students to meet overseas learners and international academics, to contend in the job market”. But little research has been conducted on the impact of EMI on students’ learning.

English language is spreading rapidly in the world. In one of the previous study according to their estimates English speaking population has increased from 1.2 billion to 1.5 billion in year 2006 (Crystal, 2006). The main reason behind the expansion of English language is globalization and expansion of the education (H. Coleman, 2011). English is increasingly gaining position as language of instruction where it is not the language of majority of the population. According to some estimates English language courses has increased in Europe by 340 percent in Europe from year 2002 to 2007 (Doiz et al., 2011). English language is gaining important position internationally as it increases employability and international mobility (H. Coleman, 2011).

English is widely used in the world as medium of instruction firstly we need to define English as medium of instruction EMI According to Dearden (2014) EMI is use of English language as medium of instruction where English is not the first language of majority of population of the country. According to a study EMI has increased in last few decades as now most of the research is conducted in English so most of the graduate programs are offered in English language globally (Morell et al., 2014).

Most of the government of the world supports the EMI but some of the governments showed their concern about EMI as these governments believe that EMI put negative impact on national identity. The other problem identified in study is in most of countries there is shortage of qualified linguistic teachers which create problems for EMI (Dearden, 2014). According to Owu-

Ewie and Eshun (2015) countries where English is not first language are trying to facilitate EMI by developing and supporting bilingual education systems to remove communication gap. But it is observed that some part of the teachers do not follow EMI policy issued by government which create problems for EMI. In some countries EMI fails because policy maker do not consider and interact with stakeholders at micro level such as with teachers and students and do not provide adequate funds for EMI (Hamid et al., 2013). Kaplan (2009) has also stated that policies related to EMI needs to be prepare with consultation of micro level means with teachers and students who are major stakeholders of EMI policy implementation.

Some studies have examined the implementation of EMI by including teachers' and learners participation in policy decisions. For instance, Rogier (2012) observed that some instructors ask questions in national language than in English. It is observed that questions asked in English were less understands able as compared to questions asked national language.

Coleman (2006) stated that government tends to change their countries' motivation for studying English in the Arabian Gulf area. Troudi (2007) investigated EMI implementations within the system of education in the UAE and concluded that the lecturers have to realize some issues to ensure the suitability of education and whether it meets the learners' needs or not.

In this research, the learners' language ability after four years of EMI instruction and language improvement during this period will be analyzed. The learners are not directly learning the language; they are learning another subject by using English language.

Their baccalaureate program includes courses for learning English language concentrating on developing learners' language. This research examines the development of language proficiency of the students during a period of study using English on content delivery rather than on language development. Therefore, the course materials expose the target population to the language, but the lecturers do not focus on language teaching. The theory is that learning a language take place when the learners are exposed adequately to it.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes have an essential effect on the teaching and learning process as institutions where they work are considered as sites of identity organization, refinement of values, and production of society (Wright, 1987). However, the knowledge that is used by teachers in their practices is complex and can be summarized by knowing facts, applying facts,

and some general language conceptions. Strauss (2001) stated that “we need to move away from folk psychology conceptions of the mind to produce quality research on the qualifications of language teachers in applied linguistic courses to get an advanced view of language knowledge, language acquisition, and language use”. A great variety of research methodology will be necessary to broadly investigate what kinds of knowledge language teachers need.

## **2.1 Teacher Training**

According to Richards and Farrell (2005) the scope of teacher’s education is identified by two broad kinds of goals, training and development. Training concerns with activities that focus on the present responsibilities of the teacher that typically aim to achieve short-term and immediate goals. It can be defined as initial preparation for a first teaching experience or as an activity to encounter a new teaching responsibility. Training includes recognizing fundamental concepts and principles as a requirement to apply them in teaching process and demonstrate these principles and practices in the teaching and learning environment. In addition to that, teachers’ training includes examining new pedagogical strategies in the learning environment with observation and supervision and getting feedback from observers on someone’s practice. Thus, development is referred to future growth of teachers for meeting long term objectives.

Training is usually considered as preparation for an orientation in the novice teaching position or training for a new teaching task. Training includes preparation of elementary notions and ideologies as an essential for practicing them into teaching and classroom. However, teacher training includes carrying out innovative strategies in the classroom under the supervision, feedback and observation of experts. The training content is normally formulated by the experts, and is comprised of standardized training pedagogy. The expected goals of a training program can be many, but few are listed below

- Lessons related to operational strategies to start a topic
- Adjusting textbook owing to the class requirements.
- Learning on how to conduct group activities in a class
- Learning questioning tactics
- Learning techniques to provide appropriate feedback.

Experts usually determine the content of training that often available in standard formats or through methodology books' prescriptions such as: using strategies effectively to start a topic, adapting a textbook that matches learners' level, using group activities in the learning environment, applying questioning techniques effectively, using aids and resources in the classroom (e.g., video), and feedback techniques on learners' performance.

Previous literature has identified the major problems faced by the teachers during teaching are teacher language ability, appropriate method of teaching, student language proficiency and lack of resources. Study has stated that teachers with lack of EMI knowledge result in having negative impact on course completion and as a result of it ultimately student could not perform well academically (Vinke et al., 1998). Competent English speaking teachers put positive impact on student teaching (J. A. Coleman, 2006). One of the previous study has stated that one of the major barrier in EMI is teacher perceive that their students are well in EMI when they are not (Sum et al., 2010).

According to Hawkey (1995) the job of preparing teachers for their desired role to be performed as instructors is very complex and challenging. While designing the content for teacher training programs the teacher educators have to be vigilant enough to understand the nitty-gritties related to decision making, structure and content of training course. Therefore, there are various factors that need to be taken into account when action is taken to bring innovation in teacher education plan e.g. redesigning the course content, restructuring the time agenda to increase school experience, hiring specialized experts for teacher training, focusing subject matter content instead of methodology. Researches in the field of education have recognized variety of factors that could possibly affect the development of teachers. The most influential factors that have been outlined from the student teachers perspective are college instructor, the counselor or supervising teacher. Whereas, student teachers may feel cautious to share some of their issues and ideas with the groups that possess authority status contrary to the peer group that is more likely to be supportive in its role. In short, it can be concluded that research has a pivotal role in recognizing and addressing the issues of student teacher training and ongoing development to the next stages of teacher education.

This study is an attempt to understand instructors' different needs at different times during their career, in addition to the needs of the university where they work to enhance learners' English language proficiency.

## **2.2 Teacher Development**

Teacher Development is slightly a different concept from Training. It is actually related to general growth and advancement not pertaining to a specific job. It refers to a long-term goal, and aims at attaining growth and development of teachers for future performance indicators. The objectives of a classic development plan are as following.

- Understanding the process, and procedure of second language development
- Addresses the need of changing role owing to the demand of learners
- Improving the ability of decision making during classroom lessons.
- Revising the teaching methodology and ideologies of language teaching
- Learning various teaching styles
- Assessing learners' insights of classroom events.

Teacher development is not just based on an event; rather it is a continuous process. The role of leadership is also critical in creating such learning environment, and the importance of teacher's attitude and belief. Moreover, she highlights the need of institutionalizing a professional development program for teachers that will lead to a new teacher's behavior and improved student's performance. Further, the researcher states it is not possible to bring change in learner's performance, if we are satisfied with what teachers do. However, in order to improvise change, there is a need to bring reforms in teaching pedagogy through high-quality teacher professional development. The major problem in such development programs is their inconsistent quality, and unfortunately there is no agreement on the description of this quality (Harwell, 2003).

One of the known learning approaches is constructivism that states people develop their understanding and awareness by their own life experiences, and reflecting on these practices. According to the traditional view of teacher development, it tends to focus on what teachers must know, and how they can be trained instead of what they already know, and how that knowledge is learnt (Bolitho et al., 2003). Basically, the aim of these programs is to bring empowerment and autonomy in the learning methodology of teachers. There are many other studies that follow the

constructivist view of teacher development. A learning theory suggests that teachers must develop technical, team building, and analytical skills. Moreover, it also highlights the need to inquire and reflect critically along with understanding their necessities to support change on the way to development (Fung, Hau, Hawkins, McGrath, & Peterson, 2000).

The teacher awareness is originated and shaped by distinctive social and communal events in which they participate. Moreover, the teacher's knowledge, intellect, skills, abilities and beliefs are mainly fabricated through the ways of talking, acting and thinking in the society in which they engage (Johnson, 2009). This study will help in improving the teaching profesionaloim and quality of education.

### **2.3 Action Research**

Action research denotes a classroom research or investigation conducted by teacher in order to sort out the issues, and problems in the teaching practice. The word action research is comprised of two dimensions first, the word "research" refers to inquiry or examination of difficulties in the classroom, whereas the word "action" means resolving the issues identified by taking a concrete step towards it. Therefore, it is quite obvious from the definition of action research that the process takes place within the class, and it contains a series of activities e.g. recognizing an issue, gathering data or information about the problem, planning a strategy to overcome the issue, implementing the intended strategy, and at last evaluating the results of change. The nature of action research denotes that the process is time taking and requires collective effort of the members involved in the cycle of detecting, investigating, planning, and evaluating (Freebody, 2003). The significance of action research is not just limited to the problem solving, but it can help teachers develop and improve their research skills. The basic features of action research are

- The process of action research is carried out during routine classroom practice, so its main objective is to bring improvement in teaching.
- The purpose of action research is to resolve problems rather than only undertaking research.
- It is a small scale activity
- It can be undertaken by a teacher solely or in partnership with other teachers.

The critique of action research approach says that adding another dimension for the teachers is like adding to their burden, but actually the advocates of this theory say that action research is a form of research based activity into the normal practice of teaching. In the words of (Sagor, 1992) By shifting the role of teachers, the teaching and learning system in schools can be greatly changed". Hence, by applying this technique of action research into the task of teachers they can redefine their role in order to bring improvement in their teaching style with self-detection of errors and loopholes (Richards and Farrell 2005).

Burns (1999) states the process of action research in a cycle of eleven events.

- Exploring: detecting a problem to examine
- Identifying: discovering the issue in great detail to understand it more closely
- Planning: determining the kind and ways of data collection required to solve the issue
- Analyzing/ reflecting: investigating the information
- Hypothesizing/speculating: reaching at an understanding as a result of analyzing the data
- Intervening: revising the classroom practice as a result of hypothesizing
- Observing : assessing the changes
- Reporting: reporting your final observation.
- Writing: documenting the results
- Presenting: presenting the facts.

Whereas the concept of action research presented by Tucker and Donato (2003) states that it is an organized research activity conducted by teachers in order to collect information and discover the means that their institute works, teaching pedagogies and learning abilities of learners are evaluated. The overall objective is to gain insights about the ground realities in order to improve the students' performance. Jackson and Masters-Wicks (1995) argues that there are four different subjects within the definitions of this phenomenon i.e. "empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge, and social change".

## **2.4 Reflective Teaching**

In the words of Dewey (1910) reflection is the persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the ground that support it and the future condition to which it tends. Another researcher Dumitru, Joergensen, Cruickshank, and Altmann (2013)

has defined reflective teaching as the teacher's thinking about what happens in classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims; he sees it as a means to provide students with an opportunity to consider the teaching event thoughtfully, analytically and objectively.

The term reflective teaching is comprised of two words; reflection means thinking or focusing on the routine activities of the teaching practice along with the organizational structure, whereas teaching is a collaborative process of learning or seeking knowledge. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) argue that reflection is a basic constituent of teacher improvement and advancement. Further, he states that self-efficacy and critical thinking is the key for teachers' career progress in order to shift to a level where teachers can act pro-actively by relying on their instinct and intuition. The research to date has used modified terms for reflection teaching i.e. "technical rationality, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, action research and reflection-for-action."

The term technical rationality approach in teacher education refers to the transfer of wisdom or knowledge to the teachers in training from the experts in the field. Moreover, technical rationality is a transfer centered approach where the main goal of teachers is to direct the instructional plan devised by the university (Longenecker & Fink, 2001). Schon (1983) states that reflection-in-action refers to thinking or reflecting about the present activities undertaking in the classroom while teaching that tends to reshape the way of teaching.

According to another study, Lo (2010) states that this type of reflection is an ongoing process that occurs during the act of teaching when teacher monitors his performance or detects the errors on the spot in order to change the pattern of teaching instantly.

Another perspective on reflection is 'reflection-on-action'. This kind of reflection occurs after or before a lesson, as it deals with reflecting back on the action done in order to determine the area of improvement. This generally involves thinking over your actions. The fourth concept of reflection as stated by Farrell (1995) is 'reflection-for-action', and this approach is different from previous concepts of reflection. It is the ideal result of the previous two categories i.e. reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This type of reflection is carried out to address the future actions, and it does not move around past or meta-cognitive process. The fifth concept of reflection teaching is action research. In the teaching practice action research is a vital source of

advancement. Action research is a classroom research or investigation conducted by teacher in order to sort out the issues, and problems in the teaching practice.

Reflective teaching has many advantages for teachers of EFL.

- It helps the teacher to overcome the routine behavior and impulsiveness.
- It prepares teacher for participating in classroom in a deliberate manner.
- Reflective teaching makes a teacher intellectual person as a result of active consideration.
- Continuous reflection makes a teacher grow rapidly in their career path, as excellence comes from restoration of experience. Hence, reflecting on the classroom experiences can make a teacher renovate his educational outlook (Farrell, 1998).

According to Chacon (2005) there occurs a strong bond between reflective teaching and teacher development. As a teacher of English or a foreign language as a second language, they have to conduct an acceptable argument in the classroom in order to express their decisions and beliefs. Reflecting on the teaching experiences can take a teacher to the level of such assertive judgment. This study will improve quality of education by increasing the professionalism in teachers.

As a researcher, I think more research into our classrooms is needed to improve and develop our teaching skills. Instructors need to recognize what learners are thinking, what classroom aspects they have to concentrate on to effectively develop their teaching, and how they should change these aspects with understanding the effects of such a change. As a result, reflective teaching considers as an important learning source for the instructors. It informs them about their practice in the class and enhances their teaching skills to lead their students directly to the required goal.

## **2.5 Teachers and Learners Mismatch**

Language play important role in educational development. Language and education are dependent on each other as education is gained through language (Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015). According to Mwamwenda (1996) language on instruction play important role in academic success. According to Qorro (2009) language play important role in education if the student has language problem than in class room they will face communication problem as a result of it they will perform poorly in class room. This is also confirmed in another study which states that language and education has significant correlation (Owu-Ewie, 2012). According to Wolff (2005) although language is not everything in education but language play important role in

education in multi-language societies. Language play important role in educational development for the reason government make three kinds of language policies which are official language policy, educational language policy and general language policy (Owu-Ewie & Eshun, 2015).

One of the previous studies has stated that using EMI where English is not a first language create problem for both teacher and students (Mwinsheikhe, 2009). According to Meganathan (2011) EMI create social differences in the society. Another study has stated that government put attention on EMI but the ground realities are quite different as in African countries EMI face issue as student are not really prepared for EMI in prepare manner so EMI put negative impact on educational learning (Hamid et al., 2013). On the other hand another study has stated that bilingual education system has positive impact on academic learning (Krashen & Biber, 1988).

Second language proficiency is the ability of a person to use another language for communication and educational purposes likewise. The definition of language proficiency as stated by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages ACTFL, (2012) is, The proficiency in foreign language is a depiction of what individuals can do with language with reference to language skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) in real-world situation.” so, it indicates that proficiency of English language is way more than seeking knowledge and skills in the required language, but it is more related to the application and practical impact of that knowledge. The research conducted in the field of second language acquisition shows that the attitudinal and motivational factors are of core importance for learning second language in a classroom setting. Gardner and Crew also supported this notion and stated in their study that there are various internal and external factors that influence the acquisition of second language for learners and, among them motivation is a major factor that affects this process (Jahin & Idrees, 2012).

In the present era, it has been seen that students come up in a state where they can have an open communication with teachers. This creates a glass ceiling between them and tends to make them believe that some of their teaching methodologies and strategies are not preferred by students. In some cases, teachers have to face impassive attitude on part of students due to lack of open communication between the two parties. Therefore, there is a dire need to provide the students with an anonymous evaluation system where they can voice their opinions, and provide all kind

of positive or negative feedback to the teachers. Various studies have been conducted on this notion to remove this gap in order to improve the classroom practice and teaching behavior.

A research study carried out by Kumaravadivelu (1991) states as the gap between their perceptions is contracted it tends to increase the chances of ideal learning outcome for learners. Therefore, there is greater probability of successful learning outcome, when there is more cohesion between teacher intention and learner interpretation. The study further shows the possible sources of mismatch between teacher's intention and learner interpretation. Based on the results of study he identified ten sources of mismatch. They are as follows

- Cognitive mismatch:
- Communicative mismatch
- Linguistic mismatch
- Pedagogy mismatch
- Strategic mismatch
- Cultural mismatch
- Evaluative mismatch
- Procedural mismatch
- Instructional mismatch
- Attitudinal mismatch

A previous study has focused on the connections and differences between learners and teachers insights. The research results highlighted that learners communicated about the assessment task mainly, that was not essential from the perspective of teachers. Moreover, the research revealed learners were unaware of the chief objective of the lessons held in class. Yet, there was a difference between the perception of teachers and learners in regard to classroom events (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

## Chapter 3

### 3 Methodology

The research design of this study is based on integrated methodology that provides an opportunity to contribute in different hypotheses, various world views, and different methodologies, in addition to various phases of collected data and analysis (Richardson & Ice, 2010). This study greatly depends on quantitative data in order to derive the answers along with a combination of qualitative techniques. As per the needs of research qualitative data collection comprises of open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires for conducting interviews however, in quantitative method the researcher will rely on structured and close ended questionnaires in a survey method to seek answers for research questions. The purpose of using these data collection techniques is to get evidence required to convincingly answer the research questions i.e. what happens to the learners' ability during their baccalaureate study with English medium instruction? This is a research methodology designed in order to get a complete response required to meet the research objectives.

- What are the perceptions of the university faculty in terms of their learners' English language ability?
- What are the perceptions of the learners regarding their language abilities as a consequence of studying in a university that uses EMI?
- What is the difference in perceptions of faculty and students' about English language proficiency?

#### 3.1 The Formulation of the Survey

In this study primary data is collected through survey analysis. The survey that is conducted to collect the data in this study includes questionnaires and interviews; however data collected from questionnaires is quantified. Some of problems associated with survey research are minimized by collecting data from different perspectives and sources, hence reducing the effect of the researcher biases, and by using various approaches to collect the data. The proposed method is undertaken as it helps us answer the research questions.

## **3.2 Aspect of Study**

This study will investigate what is happening within universities. Hopefully the results will lead to suggestions about how to improve teaching English programs. At the time of working in a case study research, it is important to realize that definite characteristics are within the case boundaries, within the organization, and other outside characteristics (Kohlbacher, 2006). Finally, drawing generalizations and comparisons is left to the reader, which will be supported by their own cognition of different situations.

## **3.3 Target Population**

There are two groups of participants in this study: university students and professors; both are from the same university in the UAE.

### **3.3.1 The Students**

The participants in this research are 32 students, aged 20 – 25, who are in their final year of study in a private university in the UAE. These students are exposed to English language in classes only, hence they are given required content by the instructors, and the interaction is done between teacher and students. The students involved in the study were given questionnaires and interviews were conducted on voluntarily basis. The administration was involved to get our target respondents. There were several visits made and respondents were personally handed the questionnaire for their responses.

Their language proficiency is intermediate. Their mother tongue is Arabic. They have exposure to English only in class. All of these learners have studied the same programs in the first two semesters, until they chose the subject field of their study.

### **3.3.2 University Faculty Members**

There were seventeen professors participating in this study. Nine instructors are from computer science department, eight professors from business department, and eight professors from IT department. All of them teach English to third year and fourth year students. These professors have degrees in Education or in TESOL. Fifteen of them have been teaching English in the UAE for more than twelve years and two of the instructors have been teaching English for seven years in the UAE.

### **3.4 Collecting Data**

The email was sent to 32 students of final year on the basis of their academic record, whereas interviews were conducted from volunteers. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, and 35 were interviewed to discuss their experience, while studying in a university that uses EMI. Additionally, the teaching faculty was also asked to participate in a similar questionnaire, and they answered the questions about their perception of the language ability of their learners. The e-mail was sent to 17 instructors in all university departments, and major colleges.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaires as a Means of Measuring Self-Perceptions of Ability**

In this research design, quantitative and qualitative data is collected by developing questionnaires for learners and faculty members that clarified the perceptions of students and faculty about learners' English language ability. The questionnaire designed for this study covers questions that have been used in other studies as well to measure the instructors' perceptions about the ability of their learners who are taught using English language (Pate, Mitchell, Byun, & Dowda, 2011).

The questions focus on the ability of English language, and development, in addition to the ability to accomplish tasks connected to learners' academic study using English language. The faculty members' questionnaire contains questions connected to their adapted materials, and delivery when teaching learners a second language. Questionnaire that contains various scales give possibility to look at the collected data from various sides. Closed questions are useful for generating frequent response information that can be analyzed statistically.

Dehaene and Cohen (2007) stated that rating scales offer an opportunity for responding flexibly with an ability to consider some quantitative analysis forms such as frequencies and correlations. Moreover, they enable the researcher to tap attitudes, points of view, and perceptions. Apart from its benefits, rating scales have limitations such as tendency to avoid extremes, the scale items meaning may vary for various respondents and it restrains the participants to given choices. But various methods and sources in collecting the data overcome previous limitations. Consequently, survey's open-ended questions give an opportunity to explain the choices, and a chance to put some issues into consideration.

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews of students, and faculty were conducted in order to take their complete response related to perceptions of language ability. According to Wilkinson and Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) Interviews give the research more of an insight into the meaning and significance of what is happening in the time when other instruments focus on the surface elements of what is happening. These types of interview enables the researcher to direct his/her attention towards interview structural framework to cover the main questions, and it provides him/her a kind of flexibility to elaborate questions that makes him/her explore issues that may take place during the interview (Freebody, 2003). In this study interviews are used to formalize questionnaires' responses, and to fully understand the perceptions of the instructors and students about the research problem.

The interviews explore the following issues:

- Perception of language skills improvement during study years.
- Linguistic problems and how these are coped with.
- The perceived support types.

## **3.5 Study Limitations**

The limitations associated with the research have to be considered while designing a research study. The limitations in this study have two phases: the first one is the context-bound nature, and the other one is the number of participants.

### **3.5.1 The Context-bound Nature**

The main purpose behind this research is investigating the impact of using EMI in the UAE higher education institutions. But, due to exploratory nature of the research, and the time limits to finish this study, it is not feasible to look at other universities to collect data. Hopefully, the results of this research will enable researchers to understand similar issues in higher education, where learners have academic experience similar to the population group in this research.

### **3.5.2 The Number of Participants**

32 students and 17 faculty members are selected as sample in this study so the total numbers of participants in this study are 49.

## **Chapter 4**

### **4 Results**

This study compares the teachers' perceptions of their learners' language proficiency and the learners' perceptions of their own language proficiency. The previous chapter introduced research tools and outlined research procedures, while this chapter, aims to present the data collected in teachers' and students' questionnaires.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section displays the teachers' perceptions of their learners' language proficiency and improvement they have made. The second section shows the learners' perceptions of their own language proficiency and progress they have made. The last section compares the perception of teachers and students about their English language proficiency. The qualitative analysis discusses the following i.e. the teachers' perceptions of their learners' language proficiency reveals what the teachers believe to be the causes of their learners' weak language proficiency, the progress made over the period of education program and some solutions from the teachers are presented here too. It also shows the learners' perceptions of their own language proficiency and their views about the problems they have faced while teaching is university that uses EMI.

#### **4.1 Instructors' Perceptions of Learners' Language Proficiency and Language-Related Issues**

The questionnaire, distributed to 17 instructors who teach EMI, asked about their perceptions of their own students' language proficiency and language-related issues, English language improvement, progress, development, and solution. Each of these elements is presented below.

##### **4.1.1 Instructors' Perceptions of their Learners' English language Skills**

Teachers do not think that the general language skills of their students meet the required expectations as they are studying in an environment where EMI is used. Most of the participants added an explanation when they answered this question.

Eleven teachers pointed those students' speaking skill is satisfactory, with explanations such as '*the majority of the students can verbally communicate well but their reading and writing skills are poor*'. On the other hand, five teachers indicated that some students have also have not

communicate properly when they gave comments such as: *many students have demonstrated a deficiency to express what they want to convey either spoken or written*. A member in the university faculty who is teaching business reported that *“the listening and writing ability of the majority of my students is below the standards”*.

The table below displays what the EFL teachers thought about their students’ language performance.

<b>English Language Skills</b>	<b>Percentage (N=17)</b>
Overall English ability	60
Listening ability in English	58.8
Reading ability in English	68.2
Writing ability in English	37.6
Speaking ability in English	65.8
Reading course material	81.2
Listening and understanding lectures	63.6
Taking notes from lectures	58.8
Taking part in formal oral presentations	58.8
Writing reports	70.6

**Table 1: Instructors’ perceptions of their learners’ English language skills**

According to Table 1, the overall English proficiency is rated by the majority of the instructors with 60 which is slightly above 50 percent of the teacher perceive their students’ language skills are problematic. Reading course material is indicated as being the strongest of all skills areas with 81.2, while teachers view learners’ writing ability as their weakest skill with 37.6. Listening ability, taking notes from lectures, and taking part in oral presentation is rated at the same rank with 58.8. Writing reports skill is seen as stronger than reading skill. From teachers’ point of view, students’ speaking skills with 65.8 is better than listening and understanding lectures with 63.6.

The results shown in the above table illustrates the teachers’ perspective that shows the weakest language skill of students is writing skill whereas the strongest is the reading and speaking ability of the students. This part has done through using quantitative analysis.

#### 4.1.2 Instructors' Perceptions of their Students' Improvement of English Language Skills

The seventeen EFL teachers were asked not only to evaluate their own students' performance but also express their ideas on their students' improvement. The table below reveals such information.

Improvement of English Language Skills	Percentage (N=17)
Listening ability has improved over the period of education program.	70.6
Reading ability has improved over the period of education program	70.6
Writing ability has improved over the period of education program	65.8
Speaking ability has improved over the period of education program	64.8

*Table 2: instructors' perceptions of their students' improvement of English language skills*

The questionnaire also takes response of faculty on the level of improvement in students' language skills, i.e. listening, reading, writing and speaking. According to this table the responses are as follow, About 70 per cent of the teachers suggest that their students' listening skills have improved during their study in the EMI program, this is also true for their reading skills, reading ability of student as well with the mean score of 70.6 percent, writing ability of the students is calculated 65.8 percent and speaking ability of the students is rated at the score of 64.8 percent. Data indicates that the learners' English language proficiency does show much progress despite of learning in a program where EMI is used. This part has been done using quantitative analysis

#### 4.1.3 Causes of Low Proficiency

In this level, students are unable to meet the necessary writing and listening requirements in terms of comprehension and speed. The students need many startup activities that bring down what teachers actually cover in the classroom. The writing ability of the students is poor in terms of synthesis and critical thinking. Teaching and learning of course content is taken away at the time of dealing with these issues.

The instructors reported that they feel language proficiency of students was incompetent for the undergraduate program admission. One teacher said that *'it is obvious that the students were not trained adequately, although their informal English ability is satisfactory'*.

Another teacher stated that “it is insufficient to get a score of 5 on the IELTS test although the students by the time may acquire some linguistic skills especially in the last year of their study, but it is believed they lost a lot because of their poor writing and listening skills”. Additionally, two teachers said that they feel the context affects the students, which mean that they have the same mother tongue which is different from the language of instruction. These instructors noticed that “the students switch back to their first language out of the classroom, and this is considered as a problem in the process of their learning”. The teachers’ comments indicate a larger issue that is outside the center of this study i.e. decisions regarding the course content and the used materials and methodologies are made by a group outside the Emirati culture and community.

#### **4.1.4 Progress**

Sixteen teachers pointed out that the students’ language improvement was due to regular exposure to English in their classes and due to assignments that are supposed to be done in English. The dominant idea that rose up from the teachers’ comments is that regular exposure to language increases learners’ proficiency. While one of the teachers believes that “*I think the students’ language proficiency improved, as they constantly use it in the classroom*”, a physics teacher gave a comment in which he claimed that “*learners’ linguistic skills develop due to their existence in an environment where they receive significant training in an academic scope*”. A biology teacher feels if accuracy did not occur, it does not mean that there is not language improvement: “*students are obliged to work using English language, so as a result their language proficiency becomes better, regardless some grammatical mistakes and sometimes errors*”. A computer teacher believed that:

*Students’ language proficiency improved as they started to speak, think, and write in English for courses, which means that they are using the English language more than they ever had before. Most of the students show a progressive effort to develop their linguistic skills, and most of their teachers try to support them.*

Thus, they exist in an environment where English language development is facilitated. A teacher of social science reported that students show improvement in language usage: “*As they go through the program, they become better writers and more critical readers, in addition to improvement in their confidence and speaking ability*”. Four instructors claimed that students’

English skills will not improve with mere exposure to the language. Another faculty member pointed out that:

*This question is very complex. The students' language proficiency improves if they aggressively work on their language. But, if they get relaxed, and it is not difficult to get relax because in the upper level, we focus on the subject content material more than second language acquisition. So as a result, if they did not regress, they will remain the same.*

Many instructors give students poor marks on their assignments, and they do not agree that improving their students' English language is part of their job. However, other instructors partially consider the language requirement in every assignment”.

Throughout the comments on improvement, it is noted that there is a need for awareness while input to enhance students' improvement, in addition to focus on the output. Improvement will be negligible if students are not held accountable for what they produce or are required to do. From previous information, a general situation can be understood from teachers' views regarding their students' English ability. For instance, in speaking it seems to be satisfactory, but other skills there should be an improvement, especially in listening, writing, and reading skills with 53% of instructors rated the students indicates that teachers do not think students' English language ability meets the necessary expectations to study in an environment where English is used as a medium of instruction. It also shows that approximately 60% of the instructors feel that their students improve in their language proficiency during studying EMI environment.

According to institutional and faculty perspectives, students' linguistic skills at graduation time are still not satisfactory. During an interview, one teacher noted that “there is an improvement from the time of admission till the time of graduation, but it is not the improvement level where it can be said that their language proficiency is developed. Their speaking skills are noticeably improved; therefore most give an incorrect impression especially during jobs' interviews. All the rest of it collapses when they are asked to write a report or a letter for the company, lots of grammatical and spelling mistakes are found”. The perspectives of the institution and the faculty indicate that the English language ability of the students does not meet expectations. Investigating the second study question will diversify the outlook of this issue. Progress has interpreted in this section by using qualitative analysis.

#### 4.1.5 Solution/ Development

The teachers suggested that the language ability of the students when they enter the university is insufficient to fulfill the requirements of studying in English. Accordingly, it is essential to have language support and development during the four years of study. One faculty member who is teaching chemistry said that “some students need language development when they enter the majors”. Deans and administrators give little focus on language development, and the majors’ faculty is supposed to assess the university core academic skills, and the outcomes of students’ discipline. Another teacher stated that “the administration should design a plan to improve students’ weakest skill -which is writing- across the curriculum, and there is a need to focus on language for both teachers and students especially in the final year of study”. According to the questionnaire, many instructors believe that “developing students’ language proficiency is not their responsibility”. One teacher stated that “my duty is delivering the content without providing language assistance or development”. The table below presents the responses of the teachers to the question that investigate their perception regarding their students’ language development after four years of study using EMI.

In your opinion, does the students’ English proficiency developed after studying for four years using EMI?

Response	Response Percent
Yes	59%
No	13%
I don’t know	28%

**Table 3: English proficiency development**

According to the table, 59% of the faculty members who participated in the questionnaire reported that their students’ language skills were improved, while 28% said that they do not know whether their students’ language skills were improved or not, and just only 13% instructors reported that they did not notice that the language skills of their students is improving during their study time. During the interviews, the faculty members were asked why they felt that their students’ language ability did or did not develop during their undergraduate program. In their answer, they focused on the degree of English exposure and language development expectations within the offered programs.

The teachers' comments during interviews and on the questionnaire suggest that it is the department of study decision whether there will be a focus on language skills or not and this will be a factor that assess its development. Many instructors think that students should focus on the project work rather than reading or writing, and such learning environment leads the students to regress. In addition to that, it depends on students' skill areas and required usage to improve the students' proficiency. A teacher noted that "students' reading and speaking skills usually develop, but their writing skill diminishes because they are not supposed to concentrate on English writing in the majors. Students' listening skill is poor because it is not underscore, and as a result, it remains poor". On the questionnaire, a communication teacher noted that there is a lack of systematic concentration on language development throughout the program and within a department. In this section analysis is done using interviews as qualitative tool.

## **4.2 Students' Perceptions of their Language Ability**

Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire and attend the interview. Questions used in the questionnaires and interviews are the same as those used with their instructors. This section is divided into several subsections as follow: Learners' perceptions of their English language skills, learners' perceptions of their English language improvements, causes of low proficiency, progress, and solutions/ development.

### **4.2.1 Learners' Perceptions of their English Language Skills**

The data in 4.1 came from the teachers' questionnaires. However, the participants in this study also included their students, who were asked to complete the questionnaire. The table below presents how these students perceived their own language competence.

<b>English Language Skills</b>	<b>Percentage (N=32)</b>
Overall English ability	75
listening ability in English	71.8
Reading ability in English	78.2
Writing ability in English	33.8
Speaking ability in English	73.8
Reading course material	84.4
Listening and understanding lectures	66.2
Taking notes from lectures	72.6
Taking part in formal oral presentations	74.4

Writing reports	80.6
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**Table 4: Learners' perceptions of their English language skills**

In this section, the students are asked about their perceptions regarding their English language improvement and ability during studying in an environment where English language is used as a medium of instruction. For this purpose, the collected data from interviews and students' questionnaire was used. The students' questionnaire asked the similar questions to those asked by teachers such as: how would the students rank their own language ability and did they feel their language skills had improved since the start of their study.

Quantitative data were collected from the questionnaire. These data were used to investigate the students' view regarding their English language ability in all language skill areas i.e. overall English language ability, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The questionnaire asks how students' will rate their own English language ability in the four language skill area along with other dimensions.

According to the results in the table shown above, overall English ability as per the student's self-assessment is 75 percent which is satisfactory. English reading ability of the student according to their self-assessment 78.2 percent is also satisfactory, listening ability is rated as 71.8 percent. English writing ability is given a mean score of 33.8 percent that is not satisfactory, and English speaking ability of the students as per their self-assessment is 73.8 percent. English reading ability of course material of the student is calculated to be 84.4 percent that is highly satisfactory. Listening and understanding lectures ability is scored as 66.2 percent. Taking part in formal oral presentation ability of the student is rated at 74.4 percent. Writing proposal ability of the student is 80.6 percent that is also satisfactory, but a little on higher side. The results show that according to students' perception of their language ability they have maximum grip in reading language ability, while they rated writing and listening as the weakest among all other skills.

As per the interviews conducted, according to students their strongest language skill is reading and the weakest is writing and listening skills. A student called Ali pointed out that *"we face language issues while writing reports, and during exams due to lack of vocabulary and comprehension skills the chances to score distinction becomes less."* Except 4, all students in the interviews commented positively on the reading abilities, they consider themselves proficient in

speaking and reading skills as it requires minimum critical thinking and complexity. According to another comment, a student takes the writing and listening skills as least polished, because listening skills requires them to pay attention to teachers, but due to lack of listening abilities and vocabulary, they do not understand the lectures well.

#### 4.2.2 Learners’ Perceptions of their English language Improvements

This section also measures the response of students on the level of improvement in the language skills over their period of education in the university using EMI. However, the table below shows the mean values on the improvement in language abilities of students from students’ point of view.

<b>Improvement of English Language Skills</b>	<b>Percentage (N=32)</b>
Listening ability has improved over the period of education program.	89.4
Reading ability has improved over the period of education program	86.8
Writing ability has improved over the period of education program	86.2
Speaking ability has improved over the period of education program	91.8

*Table 5: Learners perceptions of their improvement of English language skills*

The questionnaire also takes responses of students on the level of improvement in their language ability i.e. listening, reading, writing and speaking. Writing is indicated as being the weakest of the four skill areas with 86.2, while students view their speaking as their strongest skill with 91.8. Listening ability is seen as stronger than reading ability.

#### 4.2.3 Causes of Low Proficiency

During the interviews, the students were asked about the problems in the courses, and they gave comments such as: studying in schools before institution entry, communication inability, and relying on memorization. In the questionnaire, students said that understanding the context materials was a problem that attributed to vocabulary, in addition to grammar problems especially in the time of speaking or writing. Students having speaking problems noted that expressing their points of view and finding the suitable words were problematic for them. Additionally, many reasons are given for having problems in English such as shyness and dealing with instructors using English language.

Maitha, a student in Business College said that speaking was a problem for her because “*I studied in a government school, and there, nothing was taught in English, everything was taught in Arabic*”. Accordingly, language proficiency of students who studied in private schools is considered as better by both students and teachers.

According to the interviews some students pointed out that their linguistic ability is part of the problem as they also lack academic study skills and schemes. Prior to their entry into higher education, students received public education which mostly depends on rote learning. For students, memorization is playing a significant role in the learning process as comments indicated that the way they are being taught reinforces it and assess at university study. Ali, a computer student commented that “*we do not have exams in my major; and if we have in some subjects, we usually memorize the study guides and that’s it*”.

Previous literature has identified the major problems faced by the teachers during teaching are teacher language ability, appropriate method of teaching, student language proficiency and lack of resources. Study has stated that teachers with lack of EMI knowledge result in having negative impact on course completion and as a result of it ultimately student could not perform well academically (Vinke et al., 1998). Competent English speaking teachers put positive impact on student teaching (J. A. Coleman, 2006). One of the previous study has claimed that one of the major barrier in EMI is teacher perceive that their students are well in EMI when they are not (Sum et al., 2010).

#### **4.2.4 Progress**

Students gave some explanations for believing that their language skills have developed from the time of entry such as language exposure and usage, and in this part their responses were similar to teachers’. One student stated:

*I practice English language more from the time of entry because I have various courses that are taught in English. Studying in English was something new for me because I studied in public school. I am in my fourth year now, and I noticed the improvement in my language skills.*

Another student said that “*My English language skills are surely improved because I have to use English to deal with foreign people every day as I study in a university that uses English to teach the subjects. And as a result my English language skills are noticeably improved*”. Only three

students do not think that their language skills improved and this was attributed to the declined chances to use the language because they withdrew from the program of English language foundation and started their degree programs.

One respondent reported that his English become worse *“because the chances of English usage have decreased. My speaking ability in the foundation program was better than now”*. 52.4% of students participants reported that their English language proficiency does not cause problems in their courses, they understand that language can be problematic if it is connected to their academic achievements. Marwan, a communication student commented on this issue by saying that *“my academic level is good, but it is not like what I wished because of my English. Of course my English language has been improved from the time I entered the university, but it is still not like native speakers”*.

#### **4.2.5 Solution/Development**

Students believe that their language skills need to be developed during the educational program along with this a special attention should be given to improve the English language proficiency of students. In order to improve the overall English ability students suggested a training program for weak students should be initiated in the education program to help students develop their English language skills along with this mentor can be appointed for students for any kind of help or counseling to survive in such an environment where English is a second language. Moreover, another student states an interactive session in the beginning of class can boost the student's confidence level and motivation for speaking English, and it can keep the student engaged while enhancing their listening skills. A student named Fahad reported that *“There is a need to revise the course content, examination system, and students must be encouraged for creative thinking and writing other than memorizing the course books”*.

### **4.3 Difference in Perceptions of Faculty Members and Students Perception**

The last research question examines the variation in the perception of faculty and students. Therefore, the table below is designed to show the difference in mean scores of the two parties involved i.e. faculty and students. Moreover, the table also includes t-test in order to examine whether this difference is significant or not. When researchers want to compare the mean score for two different groups of participants and determine whether there is a significant difference between the groups, they usually conduct a t-test. The results of this test which is conducted to

examine the responses of the faculty members and the students indicate that the scores for students and faculty regarding their perceptions related to English language ability in every skill area significantly varied mostly. In the table shown below, independent- sample t test means there are two groups in the research framework, and we are comparing the means of two groups

<b>t-test for Equality of Means</b>						
<i>Assessment Comparison</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>
Overall English ability	Student	32	75	2.78	.01	.75
	Teacher	17	60			
listening ability in English	Student	32	71.8	2.78	.01	.65
	Teacher	17	58.8			
Reading ability in English	Student	32	78.2	1.97	.05	.49
	Teacher	17	68.2			
Writing ability in English	Student	32	33.8	-1.09	.28	-.19
	Teacher	17	37.6			
Speaking ability in English	Student	32	73.8	1.45	.15	.39
	Teacher	17	65.8			
Reading course material	Student	32	84.4	0.85	.40	.16
	Teacher	17	81.2			
Listening and understanding lectures	Student	32	66.2	0.62	.54	.14
	Teacher	17	63.6			
Taking notes from lectures	Student	32	72.6	2.93	.01	.68
	Teacher	17	58.8			
Taking part in formal oral presentations	Student	32	74.4	1.99	.05	.50
	Teacher	17	58.8			
Writing reports	Student	32	80.6	1.99	.05	.50
	Teacher	17	70.6			

**Table 6: Comparison between instructors' and students' perceptions of the students' English language skills**

According to the table shown above it shows how the responses of both participants vary from each other while responding to the same questionnaire. Overall English ability of the student as per teacher assessment is 60 percent and student self-assessment is 75 percent. But the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Listening ability of the student as per teacher assessment is not satisfactory 58.8 percent and as per student self-assessment 71.8 percent. But the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. English reading ability of the student as per teachers' assessment is 68.2

percent and students' assessment is 78.3 percent which is satisfactory, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. English writing ability of the students as per teacher assessment 37.6 percent and student self-assessment 33.8 percent is not satisfactory, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly same. English speaking ability of the students as per teacher assessment 73.8 percent and student self-assessment 65.8 percent is satisfactory, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different.

English reading ability of course material of the students as per the teacher assessment 81.2 percent and student self-assessment 84.4 percent is highly satisfactory, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Listening and understanding lectures as per teacher assessment 81.2 percent is neutral and as per student self-assessment 72.6 percent is satisfactory, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Taking part in formal oral presentation ability of the student as per teacher assessment 74.4 percent is satisfactory and as per student self-assessment 58.8 percent is neutral, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Writing proposal ability of the student as per teacher assessment 70.6 percent is satisfactory and as per student self-assessment 80.6 percent is also satisfactory but little on higher side, whereas the average assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly almost different.

The table below shows the assessment comparison of the instructors and students. Hence, it shows the responses on the improvement in language abilities of students.

<b>t-test for Equality of Means</b>						
<i>Assessment Comparison</i>	<i>Category</i>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>
Listening ability has improved over the period of education program.	Student	32	89.4	3.90	.00	.94
	Teacher	17	70.6			
Reading ability has improved over the period of education program	Student	32	86.8	2.76	.01	.81
	Teacher	17	70.6			
Writing ability has improved over	Student	32	86.2	3.97	.00	1.02

the period of education program						
	Teacher	17	65.8			
Speaking ability has improved over the period of education program	Student	32	91.8	6.23	.00	1.36

**Table 7: comparison between instructors' and students' perceptions of the students' improvement of English language skills**

Listening ability of student as per teacher assessment has improved and satisfactory 70.6 percent and student have same assessment as well but on higher side 89.4 percent. The assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Reading ability of the students as per teacher assessment has improved and satisfactory with score of 70.6 percent, and student has same assessment as well but on higher side 86.8 percent, whereas the assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Writing ability of students as per teacher assessment has improved and satisfactory 65.8 percent, and student has same assessment as well but on higher side 86.2 percent whereas the assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different. Speaking ability of student as per teacher assessment has improved and satisfactory 65.8 percent, and student has same assessment as well but on higher side 91.8 percent, whereas the assessment of teacher and student is statistically significantly different.

According to the results shown in the above discussion and comparison done, it has been concluded that the perceptions of both the parties vary greatly. As per the faculty, the speaking language skills of students are given highest mean scores while the writing skills are ranked as the lowest skill category, on the other hand students rated their reading ability as the most proficient skill whereas writing skills get rated as the weakest ability by both the participants. However, the improvement in the English language proficiency scores were greater by students than teachers, though it showed that students believe that their language ability improved while studying in the university more than teachers by giving an average of 4 score for each category though teachers rated an average of 3 mean score for improvement in skills.

The variation of language proficiency is not only in students and teachers perceptions, but also in the data that was collected from online survey. It shows that the difference in students and teachers perceptions is due to problems that students face in their study which is due to their language proficiency,

Do English Language Proficiency is considered as a Problem for Students in their Courses?\*

Response	Students		Faculty members	
Yes	40.625%	(13)	82.35%	(14)
No	59.375%	(19)	17.64%	(3)
Total Respondents	(32)		(17)	

\* Questionnaire questions

**Table 8: English Language Proficiency as problem**

For students: do you think that your English proficiency causes problems in your course?

For teachers: Do you think that your students' English proficiency causes problems in your courses for your students?

The table shows that only 40.8% of student participants think that their English proficiency causes problems in their courses, while 81.7% of the faculty participants noted that their students' language proficiency causes problems in their courses for students. This significant variation in students and faculty perceptions regarding whether English language proficiency causes problem in courses for students is attributed to various factors such as: adapted materials, grading, or English language exposure in a broader context than only in UAE.

One teacher, during an interview, reported that "*shyness prevents my students to express themselves. I have a big number of students who have shyness problem to a degree that makes them unwilling to raise their hands and ask a question*". Students' communication problems are often attributed to studying in governmental school system.

From the faculty members' point of view, students face problems in understanding the written and verbal instructions which is attributed to problems in listening, writing, and vocabulary. Understanding issue could be connected to problems in academic skills such as motivation and critical thinking skills. One of the faculty members noted that "*writing and understanding high level text is problematic for them. As a result, they lack motivation to do research*". Another professor commented that "*not only students in this university have problems with writing and listening, but also, reading skill is considered as one of the region's major problems as noted by*

*Arab Human Development Board*". This would lead to conclude that inability to comprehend the course materials is due to poor reading skills and understanding vocabulary problems. When he was asked about how students cope with materials, a computer teacher answered that "*they simply depend on memorizing the material instead of thinking and understanding the concepts*". Whereas students believe that the causes of low proficiency can be due to the flawed education system in universities which only requires them to memorize the course content and does not focus on improving the language skills.

If we compare how teachers present content and assess work to what they really expect in terms of English ability, we will find that there is a big gap which is considered as another possible reason for perceptual differences. The adapted materials that suite students' language proficiency were investigated in the online questionnaire. The collected data indicates that university teachers usually select materials that enable their students to succeed. When the teachers were asked about the materials' delivery, content, and assessments, approximately 90% of them said that they selected material because English is not their students' first language. In my opinion, the selected materials give students incorrect judgments about their language proficiency. One of the teachers noted that:

*In our first language, the degree courses are very difficult, and the process of learning and writing assignments is harder if it is done in a second language. Because of that, I always adjust all final grades to reflect the reality that says: this is much more generous than would otherwise be the case.*

While 80% of university teachers under investigation saying that students do face problems in their classes due to English, more than half of the students' participants saying they do not, so, we have to investigate the causes of this disconnection. In a positive manner, one of the students during an interview noted that "*teachers do not care about their students' language proficiency, because for them the content is more important than the language*". In some cases, the marks' adjustments that the teachers do motivate the students to understand the content materials, but it end with restricting the development of the students' language proficiency. .

## **Chapter 5**

### **5 Discussion**

This chapter gives a brief overview on the basis of results and findings. It discusses the research questions after reviewing the analysis, mismatch between the teachers and students is assessed and its significance is discussed. However, in the last part different ways are recommended in order to overcome the language issues.

#### **5.1 Research Questions**

Data have been analyzed and interpreted in the chapter 4. The survey has been conducted along with interviews from the students and faculty of the university. Owing to the results of this study the findings have duly answered the research questions that were identified in the research. Along with the results regarding teachers and students perspective, the causes of low proficiency have been inquired in the survey and, solutions are inferred from the interviews.

According to the teachers, they do not think that the general language skills of their students meet the required expectations as they are studying in an environment where EMI is used. The results shown in the table 2 illustrate the teachers' perspective that shows the weakest language skill of students is writing skill whereas the strongest is the reading and speaking ability of the students.

As per the results shown in the table 5 according to the students' perception of their language ability they have maximum grip in reading language ability, while they rated writing and listening as the weakest among all other skills.

#### **5.2 Mismatches between Teachers and Students**

The third research question inquires the difference in perceptions of faculty and students' about English language proficiency. The variation in perception between students and faculty regarding English language proficiency has been investigated in this section.

Therefore, the findings have shown a slight mismatch between the perception of students and teachers. Both the parties have consensus over writing skill as the weakest ability whereas the differences lie in the strongest skill which is speaking. According to teachers the students have maximum grip on speaking skills and students believe that they have proficiency in reading

skills. The mismatch between the two parties could be due to lack of communication, or ineffective evaluation system. The research has identified the potential areas of mismatch in the language ability of students. Moreover, the teachers would pay special attention in improving the writing skills of students, as it is marked as the weakest by both the parties.

This mismatch has brought a new dimension for improvement in the language proficiency of students; therefore the teachers can better understand the perspective of students regarding their deficiencies. It could facilitate the teacher's effort in developing the language skills of students. On the other hand, the consensus of teachers and students about writing skills shows the need for improvement in the prescribed area.

### **5.3 Reducing the Mismatch**

#### **5.3.1 Use of Tests**

Owing to the results discussed in the above discussion the teachers have to design preliminary tests that assess the writing abilities of students and early detection can help them work on the discrepancies in a better way. There is a need to focus on each language skill of the students with a motive of continuous improvement in order to make them proficient in the second language. However, execution of continuous tests during the education program can allow students and teachers to better understand the performance status. Moreover, inception of formative tests is likely to engage the students in an ongoing examination system that will assist them in detecting and improving the weak areas.

The administration should design a plan to improve students' weakest skill -which is writing- across the curriculum, and there is a need to focus on language for both teachers and students especially in the final year of study. This initiative will bring a positive change in the student's language abilities.

The teachers can implement a special scoring system that is not solely based on the content and learning of a specific course, which examines the language abilities of students i.e. writing, speaking, listening and reading.

#### **5.3.2 Reflective Analysis**

Generally, the study results show students' positive attitude regarding the level of their language proficiency and the improvement degree that they have made during four years of study at a

university uses EMI. However, the attitude of the teachers regarding their students' language proficiency is not positive and according to the amount of exposure to English, they feel that the degree of improvement that the students' have made is not much satisfactory.

The results of this research indicate a significant development in participants' English language skills during their undergraduate study. Although the result indicates the development was mostly in reading skills, it can be concluded that the development was made in each language skill areas. The results of teachers and students' interviews and survey indicate that the perceptions of the faculty members and students regarding language proficiency are varied and there are some problems associated with using EMI. From students' point of view, they do not think that using English language to deliver the content is problematic for them and rank their proficiency in each English language skill areas as good to excellent. However, faculty members do not think the language ability of their students meets the requirements to study in an environment where English is used to deliver the content materials and believe writing are their students' weakest skills and the strongest are speaking skills. Teachers and students think that citing exposure to the language over a course of four years of EMI is one of the reasons behind the improvement in English language skills. In addition to that, both teachers and students have a strong belief that it is necessary to use EMI at universities in the UAE to enable the students to globally compete in the world.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Conclusion

This study is to investigate the research questions. It is a practice to discover how students who are studying in the universities in UAE that use EMI evaluate their English language skills, along with comparing the perceptions of teachers and students during the four years of study regarding the language proficiency of students. The findings and results of the research specify that the student's language proficiency has improved over the period of 4 years while studying in the university using EMI. Listening ability of the students as per the teacher's assessment has improved and satisfactory, whereas the data that is collected from the university indicates that the learners' English language proficiency does show much progress despite of learning in a program where EMI is used. On the contrary the findings from the student's perspective indicate a distinct improvement in the language skills of students. According to the results there is a mismatch between the view point of teachers and students regarding the language proficiency and some problems are detected with using EMI. According to the student's perspective, they don't consider EMI an issue for understanding the content and course material. Furthermore, they rank each of the language skills as good to excellent. However, faculty members do not think the language ability of their students meets the requirements to study in an environment where English is used to deliver the content materials and consider that listening and writing are the students' weakest skills. The duration of four years of study using EMI is considered one of the reasons behind the improvement in language proficiency. Moreover, both teachers and students have a strong conviction that it is necessary to use EMI at universities in the UAE to enable the students to compete in the world.

After reaching to the conclusion of this study there are some practices recognized i.e. clarifying the language goals, the attitudes of responsibility of language learning have to be changed, supporting both teachers and students continuously, and improving the support services that is offered by university.

#### 6.1.1 Change of Attitudes

Teachers and students' perspective presented in this study is that language development deficiency can be determinate with a prescription like an illness, instead of addressing the problem with an awareness of how students' language development occurs and the necessity for

continuous feedback. Feedback should take place in the time of studying the content material in English, and it should not be separated from the instructors teaching materials and concepts. This separation isolates language development concepts and content learning from each other.

In the interview, instructors pointed out that helping students to develop their language proficiency is not their responsibility. When asked “What kind of role you play in students’ language development, if any?” an instructor in the IT department answered “*my only concern in the classroom is to deliver the content which is challenging enough without providing language assistance*”. This opinion is echoed by another participant when he noted “*I am a science teacher ... not an English teacher*”. One of the instructors in science department sees a connection between English language development and teaching in English, but thinks teachers were not trained adequately to handle their learners’ language problems. He stated “*I do play a role since I teach them reading, understanding the content material, and writing reports. These actions definitely students knowledge about writing different forms, however, I am not an English teacher who is supposed to be trained to do this job*”.

The teachers and students’ attitude is that students has to learn English language before starting their undergraduate studies and once the students start their major study, it becomes difficult to improve their language proficiency. However, if a student wants to improve his/her language skills, he/she has to work on it by him/herself. Therefore, some teachers quoted they are not responsible for developing the language skills of students, and if they have language or writing problems, they send them to a writing center to resolve their issues. The facet observed here is that instead of providing appropriate guidance to the students by giving continuous practice and feedback the problem is alienated from the content material. When the faculty members were asked about their role in developing students’ language, most of them responded by saying that their role is delivering the content material which contains a lot of challenges without providing assistance to develop students’ language proficiency. However, developing language skills while teaching content is considered as one of the key reasons that universities purport to have EMI at the tertiary level.

### **6.1.2 Clarifying the Goals of Institution**

The institution has to confirm the transparency of language development goals for every employee in the university. If the institution is expecting language development during the course of content delivery, there is a need to set clear guidelines for expectations, the points of learning, and language assessment. Faculty members in different department have to cooperate with each other to ensure that they deal with language issues in a proper way and also to ensure the continuity of language development and solve any problem related to this issue. If this applied, the expectations across courses will be clear and as a result the students will be aware of what they are required to do and it will not be left to the individual teacher's to care or not about students' English language skills. Because language development throughout four years of study is a significant issue, it becomes something essential to work toward.

### **6.1.3 Supporting Teachers and Students**

Universities using EMI need to make a central framework for language support with a specific end goal to guarantee the progression of language improvement over the span of study. The organization sends an opposing message to both students and educators when they concede students at one level and afterward anticipate that they will be at a more elevated amount at graduation without supporting dialect advancement and giving clear assumptions about the obligation regarding enhancing understudies' dialect aptitudes all through the project. The university needs to prepare its employees on the best way to present and educate the content materials in ways that can upgrade language advancement. The foundation ought to gather analytic data about student's language capability and circulate it to the instructors. Workshops ought to be offered regarding language capacity of the students. Educators who have expertise in English language need to cooperate and work together with content instructors to guarantee a smooth move from the courses of English dialect to the courses of substance, and accordingly, the improvement of the dialect will be nonstop amid the entire time of study.

### **6.1.4 Responsibility of language Development**

Language advancement is everybody's obligation and there ought to be a sort of coordinated effort between the concerned individuals to improve it. One of the employees noticed that "here we have accusing culture. The university accuses the employees, the employees accuse the English project personnel, the English system workforce accuses the students, and the students

accuse the whole government funded educational system. We don't have what is called self-reflection to convey part of the obligation. This means, it is teachers' responsibility to create teaching methods in order to offer students high quality learning regardless their levels. In fact, few teachers during the course of this study said that everyone is responsible about providing the required aids to develop learners' language.

Most of the government of the world supports the EMI but some of the governments showed their concern about EMI as these governments believe that EMI put negative impact on national identity. The other problem identified in study is in most of countries there is shortage of qualified linguistic teachers which create problems for EMI (Dearden, 2014). According to Owu-Ewie and Eshun (2015) countries where English is not first language are trying to facilitate EMI by developing and supporting bilingual education systems to remove communication gap. But it is observed that some part of the teachers do not follow EMI policy issued by government which create problems for EMI. In some countries EMI fails because policy maker do not consider and interact with stakeholders at micro level such as with teachers and students and do not provide adequate funds for EMI (Hamid et al., 2013). Kaplan (2009) has also stated that policies related to EMI needs to be prepare with consultation of micro level means with teachers and students who are major stakeholders of EMI policy implementation.

It is important to admit from the results of this study that the encountered problems of students are not unusual in this environment. On the survey, one of the instructors noted that *“the written English standard as a whole is poor. The academic writing is dreadful everywhere. For example, students have poor critical writing skills. I noticed this problem here, in Japan, in Sri Lanka, and in South Africa”*. As a conclusion, the development of the language has to be scrutinized whether in the native language or a foreign language during the academic experience.

#### **6.1.5 Language Skills Concern across the Curriculum**

In general, instructors participated in this study repeatedly emphasized that they are not trained to handle students' language problems especially in writing and they do not know how to deal with it. The instructors do not have experience how to deal with second language learners and they are not sure what to expect from their learners. To solve this problem, they quickly seem to adapt the fact that they have to slow down their rate of speech. A science instructor explained:

*Nobody gave me the students' typical level or their distribution or what to do with their language problems. I was not given any of these. I do not recognize that it is so terrible because I found their English language pretty good. But actually I have not had technical or professional training in it. In my class, my students have language problems such as critical thinking, vocabulary words, or not knowing the content material... So to solve this problem I used to slow down and say the explanation in different ways with repeating many times. But in fact I do not know whether this is the best way to teach foreign language learners or not.*

Another business instructor pointed out “ *each term my expectations get lower and lower ... I usually try to simplify the content material ... I divide the students into groups and assign them to go through the content material and then they present it orally*”. In other words, teachers change the written assignments into group projects which are presented to the class verbally instead of assigning the students individually and giving written feedback and correction.

As teachers, we recognize that students may not be aware of their language problems if there is not a focus on error correction or accuracy by teachers. Fatima, a Science student, reported that “*in general our teachers are not concerned about our language. We actually have to solve our language problems before starting our majors*”. Mariam , an IT student, agreed with Fatima by pointing out that “ *the main concern for our teachers is how to deliver the content material than our language ability although they understand that our first language is not English*”. Salama who is studying business administration thinks that instructors should not consider students' language when they mark learners' work. Teachers have to mark the content and ignore spelling and grammatical mistake when they grade students' assignments.

In fact, the university should give more emphasis on students' language skills, so, the students are obliged to discover their errors and correct them, and as a result it will become part of their implicit knowledge system.

Speaking is the skill area that has shown the most improvement during the four years of undergraduate study. And while students generally do not see this as one of their more developed skills, teachers rate this skill area as more developed than the other areas. The participants' responses in the questionnaire and the interviews show that speaking is the most emphasized skill during the four years of undergraduate study as many courses concentrate on verbal discussions and presentations in class. When the teachers were asked about ways of helping their

students to develop their language skills, they noted that the students are forced to speak in class and teachers consider this action a kind of help to develop learners' linguistic skills.

Moreover, Focusing on speaking skills offers the learners a constant feedback. There may be little focus on language usage if a percentage of the mark on a writing assessment does not deal with language. Also, if students ignored the feedback related to language, they would think that correction is not required.

#### **6.1.6 Cultural Perceptual Differences and Learning Expectations**

Education in the UAE involves learners from one culture while the teachers are from a different one. And accordingly, we find multitude differences for teaching and learning expectations that interact with each other which would lead to boost or hinder the process of learning. The variations in students and teachers perceptions regarding learners' language ability are worthy to be explored in future studies. It would offer an opportunity to learn more about institution expectations and culture in addition to developing the practices to promote the process of learning.

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## 8 Appendix

### 9 Survey Questionnaire

#### Rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Highly Dissatisfy	Dissatisfy	Neutral	Satisfy	Highly Satisfy

1. Please specify your category
  - i. Student
  - ii. Teacher

2	Overall English ability	1	2	3	4	5
3	Listening ability in English	1	2	3	4	5
4	Reading ability in English	1	2	3	4	5
5	Writing ability in English	1	2	3	4	5
6	Speaking ability in English	1	2	3	4	5
7	Reading course material	1	2	3	4	5
8	Listening and understanding lectures	1	2	3	4	5
9	Taking notes from lectures	1	2	3	4	5
10	Taking part in formal oral presentations	1	2	3	4	5
11	Writing reports	1	2	3	4	5
12	Listening ability has improved over the period of my education program.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Reading ability has improved over the period of my education program	1	2	3	4	5
14	Writing ability has improved over the period of my education program	1	2	3	4	5
15	Speaking ability has improved over the period of my education program	1	2	3	4	5

Would you be willing to participate in an interview in order to discuss your responses to the above questions? If yes, please include your contact information:

Name:

Email:

Mobile Number

### **Interview Themes and Questions Interview Schedule**

Interview will be open-ended with questions developed, and based on extending and explaining responses from the online survey.

The general issues to be explored will be:

- Perception of proficiency in English language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking).
- Ability to cope with material presented in English during the time of study.
- Perception of improvement in language skills throughout 4 years of study.
- Problems faced due to learners' language ability.
- Variation in perceptions of faculty and learners about English language proficiency.

### **General Interview Themes (Students)**

Explore the reasons behind the answers given in the online survey:

- Do you face any problems in your courses due to your English-language ability? If yes, what are they? How do you deal with these issues?
- What services does the university provide to help you with your English? Do you take advantage of any of these services?

Explore ability to cope with course delivery in English:

- What is the general format of your courses? (lecture, group work, course materials, handouts)
- How do you study for your courses? When you study with friends do you use Arabic or English to discuss the course content? Do you take notes in Arabic or English?

### **General Interview Themes (Faculty)**

Explore the reasons behind the answers given in the online survey:

- Do you feel that your students' general language skills meet the expectations required of undergraduate students studying in an English- medium environment?
- Do you think that students' English proficiency improves during their 4 years of study for an undergraduate degree?
- What are the most persistent language-related problems your students face?
- Do you adapt the materials, delivery, or assessment in anyway because English is a second language for your students? If yes, how?
- Do you feel your students' English proficiency is adequate to study at the undergraduate level?
- What kind of role you play in students' language development, if any?