

The Perspectives of UniSZA Students on English Medium Instructions (EMI) Practices in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

English has attained the status of a global lingua franca, a phenomenon significantly shaped by historical factors, including British colonialism. In Malaysia, the role of English in education has been a subject of ongoing debate marked by shifts in language policy as well as gaps in scientific research studies. While previous studies focused on the lecturers' teaching strategies in English Medium Instruction (EMI) classrooms, there is a dearth of studies that prioritize students' personal perspectives. Hence, this study has employed a descriptive case study, providing an in-depth examination of EMI within UniSZA. Purposive sampling was used to select students from diverse academic backgrounds (science & technology, law, and business) enrolled in EMI programs. Focus group discussions (FGDs) served as the primary data collection method, allowing for rich qualitative data on student perspectives. The FGDs explored student experiences with EMI, including their satisfaction with the program, the challenges they faced and their suggestions for improvement. The discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Gardner's Socio-educational Model of Second Language Acquisition provided a theoretical framework, particularly in relation to student motivation, attitudes, and perceived aptitude in EMI contexts. This study concludes that while EMI offers opportunities for English proficiency development and access to international resources, its effectiveness hinges on addressing student challenges. The student-identified needs highlight the importance of robust language support services, pedagogical adjustments emphasizing interactive learning and scaffolding, and a focus on developing academic language skills.

Keywords: English Medium Instructions; student perspectives; language policy; higher education

INTRODUCTION

The English language has gained a firm foothold in the international arena, becoming a current global lingua franca. Surprisingly, the number of non-native speakers exceeds those of native speakers worldwide. The number of non-native English speakers in the world has now reached about 1 billion, meaning more than twice the number of native speakers (Dyvik, 2024).

This phenomenon is due to various historical and social factors, including the colonial past of many countries, the influence of American popular culture, and the rise of the internet and digital technologies (Ruff, 2023). Despite many said factors, the historical perspective of language imperialism seems to be the most crucial. The result of the global use of the English language should be due to its use as the medium of instruction during the British colonialism era. According to Corradi (2017), British was the major superpower back until the 19th century, and their violent imperialism paved the way for the cultural and language pandemic where they established schools which taught English language and Western culture to locals who, in their opinion, needed to become 'modernized'.



Although the world has now changed for the better, where democracy is the key to politics, most people may still associate English as the language of those in power. Individuals lacking proficiency in English will inevitably become victims of the system, contrasting sharply with those possessing genuine mastery of the language, who predominantly belong to the ruling elite, business sector, academia, comprador class, and, in various nations, the media (Budairi, 2019; Fairclough, 1992). Ultimately, in today's world, the English language has been dominating the central stage of many fields, and many people have begun to utilize English on a daily basis, both for professional settings and for communication purposes (Tejashri, 2022).

This situation also applies to various countries' educational systems, including Malaysia. A practice where students are taught using English as a medium of instruction is widely implemented, known as EMI. EMI is defined as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro, 2018, p.19). The effort to introduce English to students in various universities is likely done to internationalize their education as a strategic process as well as to attract international students (Sookping, 2024). In Malaysia's context, the main reason may be to develop higher English language proficiency in students as well as to boost the economic status of the country (Sanjana, 2023). The exact uprising of this trend cannot be traced specifically, but many countries' universities have begun to implement EMI from the late 20th up to the 21st century. Hence, this practice has come to the surface as a new, recent phenomenon and, therefore, should be considered significant to the contemporary issue where it emerges from one country to another (Kirkpatrick, 2017).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Malaysia has long acknowledged the bilingual education system ever since the Cheeseman Committee Report 1946 suggested balanced or full bilateral bilingualism in Malay, Chinese, and Tamil language elementary schools in British Malaya following World War II (Mostafa, 2016). According to the report, English was to be the second language of instruction in all three schools under this scheme. To counter this situation however, the National Education Committee in 1956 drew up a strategy plan known as the Razak Report, which was the first to suggest the switch from English as the medium of instruction (EMI) to Bahasa Melayu and other languages as an effort to cultivate Malay as a national language post-independence.

In the beginning of the 20th century, a new attempt to introduce English as the medium of instruction for science and technology was introduced by then Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad in 2003 (Isa et al., 2011). This is a joint effort following the Malaysia Education Blueprint where it coincides with the second of the eleven shifts in the education system, aiming to ensure every child is proficient in Malay and English language by 2025. The project is called the Policy of Teaching Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI). The policy may appear promising but it did not last long because in 2009, the cabinet announced its abolishment. Selamat et al. (2011) explained that the reversal of this policy happens due to the highlighted issues of the difficulties faced by students in following the lessons in English, the troubles dealt by the teachers in adapting to the changes, and the effects of national language mastery on students, especially at school level. In addition, the rolling of the policy has actually upset a lot of Malaysians where they refuse to let their children study in English while disparaging their mother tongue (Zool et al., 2010). The real catalyst forcing the government to abolish this education reform ultimately comes from widespread opposition from many quarters and empirical studies that show where PPSMI disadvantages certain groups of students, widening the gap between urban and rural schools' performance up to more than 40% (Lai & Lai, 2012).

Nonetheless, the higher education system in Malaysia has taken it as their own responsibility to implement EMI in major science, law, and business courses (Del Campo et al., 2023; Huang, 2019). This may be due to the urgent calling of globalization, where they need to equip students with the necessary knowledge to compete internationally (Majid et al., 2012). However, not every university has chosen to implement the EMI practices and the real reason behind it has remained vague. Despite that, more research suggests that it may be due to insufficient resources, lack of English proficiency and training, or the absence of much needed push from relevant stakeholders (Md Yunus, 2017).

Hence, it is imperative that this study examines this situation closely and find out the real opinions of EMI students.

Apart from that, there has been a lot of research done on EMI in many countries such as China and Japan (Shi & Kaur, 2024; Aizawa, 2018). These studies respectively focused on the lecturers' teaching strategies of EMI and the relationship between policy and management in the classroom. Comprehensive research on Malaysia was also conducted but was more focused towards teachers' qualifications and attitudes, as well as educational policy (Rahman, 2022; Nyoni et al. 2023). There is little research done to investigate from the students' personal perspectives considering they are the ones undergoing the practices. Understanding the students' experience is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of the programs. While previous research has focused on institutional and pedagogical aspects, this study prioritizes the perspectives of UniSZA students to gain insights into their challenges, experiences, and overall satisfaction with EMI. Hence, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of EMI on student learning and development.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the aims of this study, several research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the perceived satisfaction of UniSZA students towards EMI practices in higher education?
2. What are the challenges faced by the students currently undergoing the EMI practices?
3. What are the students' suggestions to improve the practices of EMI in higher education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study investigates the perceived satisfaction of UniSZA students with EMI practices, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. EMI, as defined by Dafouz (2021), refers to the use of English for teaching academic subjects beyond English language courses themselves. This shift in the medium of instruction, as noted by Rose et al. (2019), has implications for both students and institutions. While Dearden (2023) highlighted the potential benefits of EMI for attracting international students and faculty, enhancing global visibility, and improving institutional rankings, the realities of EMI implementation are more complex. As acknowledged by Smit (2023), factors such as geographic location, educational levels, and the specific context of each institution significantly influence the success and challenges of EMI implementation.

To understand the student perspective, this study draws on Gardner's Socio-educational Model of Second Language Acquisition. This model emphasizes the importance of both integrative and instrumental motivation in language learning (Gardner, 2010). Integrative motivation, characterized by a desire to connect with the target language community (Gardner, 2001), may influence students' satisfaction with EMI if they perceive it as a way to engage with English-speaking cultures. Instrumental motivation, driven by practical benefits such as career advancement (Gardner et al., 1959) may also play a role in student engagement and satisfaction. By analyzing students' responses through these motivational orientations, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives on EMI, including their challenges and suggestions for improvement.

EMI in Global Contexts

In the highly competitive market challenge, Japan is not an exception in expanding and broadening their universities' global operations. They have also seen an increase in EMI programs and this rapid expansion has been aided by changes in their higher education legislation over the past ten years (Bradford & Brown, 2017). In 2014, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology announced a large-investment initiative which was the Top Global University Project (TGUP), to internationalize higher education that implicitly signaled increased emphasis on EMI at Japanese universities (Aizawa & Rose, 2018). According to MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2014), the aim of this policy is to improve Japan's higher education system's competitiveness and international compatibility while giving top priority to supporting the world-class institutions of Japan's universities. Many academic studies attempt to assess the probable impact of this policy on the English language education and anticipate potential difficulties related to the application of EMI behind the TGUP program in Japan (Curle et al., 2023). Thus far, research evidence (Bradford, 2018; Rose & McKinley, 2017) generally indicated that different stakeholders

such as students, lecturers, and policy makers interpret the administration of the TGUP initiative created by MEXT inconsistently in different case study contexts, indicating underlying difficulties arising from the provision and dissemination of EMI.

Aside from Japan, the majority of schools in the People's Republic of China (PRC) use Standard Chinese as their medium of instructions. However, the English language is especially important for emerging economies like China, which is becoming more involved in international politics (Li, 2020). In 2001, the PRC Ministry of Education released recommendations to support the spread of English usage and to raise the calibre of post-secondary education. The Ministry of Education has given a national directive to increase EMI undergraduate programs from 5% to 10% at all state university programs by 2013 (Hu & Wu, 2020). There are a lot of academic studies done in order to assess China's implementation of EMI practices and the scope includes a wide range of contexts from elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. The studies' goals are not limited to EMI but also touch upon teaching English, policy, and pedagogy practices in classrooms. For instance, there are studies focusing on teachers' use of explicitness strategies in EMI, English language learning in tertiary EMI contexts, and also international students' perception of EMI challenges in China (Yu & Kaur, 2024; Hu & Wu, 2020; He & Chiang, 2016). The results found from these research form a number of critical analyses and reviews that help to suggest improvement and suitable processes of EMI in China.

EMI in Local Contexts

According to Hiroyuki (2002), language contact often takes place in various political situations as imperialism, colonialism, annexation, and occupation where the language of the ruled meets that of the ruler and even after these political forms end, their effects may persist remarkably among the speakers of the dominated. In the 19th century, Malaya (refers to Malaysia) consisted of a plural society where each community existed side by side without any real integration but in a state of mutual accommodation. The Malays, Chinese and Indians basically lived separate lives with their own languages, cultures and religious practices and the British policy regarding education perpetuated this divide (Zakaria & Leinbach, 2019). The British administrators commenced the establishment of educational attempts as a result of their ethical approach as they aimed to educate all classes of people by founding English schools and Malay vernacular schools for Malay people (Ozay, n.d.). These initiatives were the very first steps of the developments of English and Bahasa Melayu as national and official languages in modern days.

During independence, a bilingual system was later adopted where Malay was used for the arts subjects and English-medium was utilized for science and technology. The goal was for the bilingual system to become completely monolingual, using only Malay where this resulted in the local races to focus solely on their own languages while slowly renouncing English (Hassan, 2004). In 2002, the government decided to use English as the language of Science and Mathematics subjects at the primary school level to the matriculation known as Policy of Teaching Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI). This policy was successfully implemented for nine years. Rashid et al. (2016) stated that the main aim behind the policy is to also enable the students to learn Mathematics and Science in its most significant lingua franca to prepare them to compete in the era of globalization, hence improving the standard of human capital in the country. After the abolishment of PPSMI in 2012, the reversion to Malay language for Science and Mathematics subjects took place in stages (Hassan, 2004). However, the Education Ministry was fully aware of the importance of the English language where a policy of dignifying Bahasa Melayu and strengthening English language usage (MBMMBI) was implemented at the same time. The MBMMBI policy aims to ensure the use of Malay language as a medium of communication in all schools, and to ensure that each child can master both Malay and English languages well.

METHODOLOGY

A case study research design was utilized in this research. A case study is a type of research methodology used to produce a comprehensive understanding of a complicated problem in its actual setting (Crowe et al., 2019). A descriptive case study is an in-depth analysis of a single bounded system, such as classroom, program, or school district (Merriam, 2010). Hence, this case study was used to provide detailed justifications of EMI as a significant higher education program in Malaysia. This study gathered qualitative data via purposive sampling, selecting samples based on specific criteria. In this instance, they must be engaged in EMI practices within their higher education studies at UniSZA and are now enrolled in courses pertaining to science, technology, law, or business. The samples were not restricted to a single faculty. They were selected from many disciplines to enable the synthesis of outcomes within a broader framework of knowledge. In this study, a semi-structured interview was used to gather data from the samples. A semi-structured interview is a combination of structured and unstructured interviews where some of the questions are planned, but some others are not (George, 2022). Apart from that, the interview was conducted in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session. FGD is a type of qualitative research method and data gathering approach where a moderator leads a carefully chosen group of people in a thorough discussion on a particular topic or issue in the process of interacting with various participants' attitudes, perspectives, knowledge, experiences, and behaviors (Van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). To add, the session was audio recorded fully in the course of discussion as evidence to ensure accurate translation of data when transcribing.

This study was conducted for the duration of three months from October 2024 until January 2025 according to the stipulated time of the Final Year Project (FYP) for undergraduates UniSZA. The samples were approached in November for an FGD session. A date was locked according to their availability. However, the session was done online through Webex due to the unfortunate circumstance of flood befalling the area of Terengganu and Kelantan, where the respondents were not advised to come back to campus at the time. The data was collected in a one-and-a-half-hour session, complete with a transcription of text. After that, potential codes and themes were brainstormed. The codes and themes are essential to the making of initial statements that will be refined into a final model of thematic analysis (Chawla & Wood, 2021). Thematic analysis is a type of analysis that is employed to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data (Caufield, 2023). This analysis includes a series of steps, including keyword and quotation selection, coding, theming, interpretation, and model development (Naeem, et al., 2023). In addition, the data was analyzed inductively. In thematic analysis, an inductive approach is a data-driven exploration that begins with a set of empirical observations, seeking patterns in those observations, and then theorizing about those patterns (Delve & Limpaecher, 2024). The thematic analysis process explains the findings categorised into several codes and themes and provides discussion according to their pattern of observation. The respondents include four speakers who are currently undertaking law, business, and science related courses in UniSZA. They will be representing their respective faculties which are Faculty of Law and International Relations (FUHA), Faculty of Business Management (FPP), and Faculty of Innovative Design and Technology (FRIT). Crucial transcriptions from the respondents will also be put as evidence to serve as clear examples. The findings are categorised according to three sections as followed from the interview; (1) satisfaction of UniSZA students towards EMI, (2) challenges of UniSZA students in learning content knowledge with EMI, (3) students' suggestions of improvement towards EMI.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Satisfaction of UniSZA Students towards EMI

A. Students' General Understanding on EMI

This question centers on the respondents' understanding of EMI. All respondents admitted that they have a general understanding of EMI. However, their understanding borders on unconscious practice and conscious discovery. This means that they are experiencing EMI without knowing its details. They speak in English during class, without actively thinking about the corresponding linguistics skills. Two respondents stated;

“For EMI, I didn't have any idea what it is, but I believe I experienced EMI without even knowing the terms.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

“Actually, this is my first time hearing about EMI. But I think EMI is something that we use in the classroom.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

These answers lead to the ideation of two themes respectively which are implicit learning and tacit knowledge. Learning that takes place without conscious knowledge or purpose is known as implicit learning and it is similar to learning things ‘under the radar’ without making an effort to commit rules to memory or comprehend how they operate (Seger, 1994). Meanwhile, a person's experience-based knowledge, skills, and abilities that are frequently hard to express verbally or in any other way are referred to as tacit knowledge (Oragui, 2024). In this case, the respondents admitted to having a tacit knowledge regarding EMI although it barely scratches the surface and they also revealed that they are experiencing an implicit language learning process throughout their studies all the while acquiring the content information.

B. Students' General Perspectives on EMI

In regard to the respondents' general perspectives on EMI, it is imperative to say they all agreed that the use of EMI is justified due to several benefits it can bring. First, a respondent stated that learning their course content in English can help them access the global knowledge and resources;

“Overall, I think it's justified even for the fact that it comes from outside countries. Because in the end it can add to our knowledge.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

Another respondent reported a specific example of her situation in FUHA, saying that the Law of Malaysia is actually an adaptation from a global source, reinforcing the previous speaker's idea;

“Actually, Malaysia's law is adapted from Common Law, which originated from the western powers. So that's why I said for certain cases, they have English original versions, and the judgements and court decisions are actually in English.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

Another respondent gave a detailed example of the situation in another faculty. She stated that as a student of Bachelor of Business Administration (Risk Management & Takaful), learning in English is crucial to help them in building their own business in the future due to the intricate relationship between local and global finance. This is in line with Abdedaim (2024) who supported this point by saying that EMI is viewed as a means of fostering critical movements to oppose linguistic and cultural isolation as well as transforming students into global language users. The main point that can be cross-checked here should be the essential preparation for international engagement;

“In order to grow the business, we have to learn English, our growth will have to do with the interactions with the other countries, so English is very important.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

From the data above, it can be said that the general perceptions of UniSZA students towards EMI is good. In regard to Gardner and Lambert's hypothesis on motivation, the respondents generally have a practical reason as to why they think so. Their instrumental orientation borders on the benefits that EMI may offer in terms of managing upcoming business engagements and learning new, worldwide information. In this way, their language behaviour is predicted to be initiated with the intention to acquire clear-cut goals. According to Gardner (2001) language behavior is initiated by the *intent* to communicate information and reinforcement occurs when the responses produce a *desired* end. In the end, the respondents do have a good perception towards EMI as they can use this medium of instructions to reach long-term pragmatic aims.

C. Students' Specific Opinions on EMI

The students' specific opinions on EMI differs in range of positive to negative according to certain situations. Firstly, most agreed that EMI practices can help in language enhancement. This is a positive opinion regarding EMI since all respondents stated that EMI can help improve their English

proficiency. Moreover, another respondent explicitly mentioned that her English speaking skills are greatly enhanced by the EMI practices along with her own knowledge of vocabulary;

“I think, when I learn in English, I can improve my English.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

“The positive side is that when we use English in class, it can improve our skills to communicate with people in English. We can also learn about new vocabulary.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

In addition, another positive opinion regarding EMI focuses on the fact that it is one of the most important foundations for future success. One respondent from FPP admitted that having learned her subjects in English makes her confident for the preparation of future challenges like careers or studies. This is synonymous with research findings from Huang & Curle (2021) where they found that having more job options either in terms of the companies they can work for or the ability to work in fields unrelated to finance is another advantage of EMI aside from improving English proficiency;

“It's good because it might help me practice English and prepare for other situations where English is important, like in a job or further studies.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

From the above data, it can be said that the respondents have a very explicit perspective that EMI can help them through practical adjustments such as improving personal language skills and preparing for future careers or studies. These instances of motivation fall under instrumental orientation where they basically have reasonable goals and reasons as to why they think EMI is essential. However, there was a respondent from FRIT who admitted to having a positive impression on English personally and claimed that EMI is a very good approach to enhance language proficiency. He clearly exhibited himself as one of those of who are integratively motivated;

“For me, I really do love the language. I always talk with my parents and family in English so I don't think it's difficult for me, personally. Everything is good enough and my proficiency also improves over time with EMI.” – (Speaker 4: FRIT)

In contrast to the positive instances above, some respondents also remarked that EMI practices can also be negative. For example, one respondent admitted that while learning her subjects in English does help her master the language, it can also potentially hinder her understanding in content knowledge. Another respondent also echoed her by adding that EMI in the classroom can make some students who are not confident in their language skill to be withdrawn from content acquisition;

“Sometimes in the class, there are words that we don't understand no matter how we try to think about it. Like new words, for example, we hear them for the first time. So it's hard for us to understand the lecture.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

“It could be bad, hard I mean, if the English is too advanced or if students are not confident in their language skill.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

Additionally, there was an astounding experience by the respondent from FUHA who recounted her own experience when undergoing EMI practices. In her specific circumstance, she shared that she has faced some challenges in bridging theory and practice during and after her internship programs. She mentioned that as a law student who interned twice in between semesters, the theory learned through EMI and the practical application in the court (first internship) and law firm (second internship) bear huge gaps in the language use. She contended that the Constitution of Malaysia allows only the use of Malay language when presenting a case in court as it is the highest and honourable first language in Malaysia;

“Somehow it brings us confusion because we learn all of our subjects in English. But in practice, because we already had internships twice, we used Malay during these internships. Even, like, within our Constitution, we put Malay language as the highest and the most common practice. So in our

Malaysian court, we must use Malay. Even if you read all of the decided cases, they have judgments and so on, they are mostly in Malay.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

Challenges of UniSZA Students in Learning Content Knowledge with EMI

A. Difficulties of Learning Subjects in EMI

According to the respondents, all agreed that the most challenging struggle in learning their subjects in English is the fact that their personal understanding of the language itself is lacking. Some respondents admitted to having poor mastery of English grammar and another respondent mentioned her own limited knowledge of English vocabularies;

“Our own understanding is the problem.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

“I have limited vocabulary and my grammar is bad.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

“But sometimes there are words that are very hard to pick up. There are even words that we've never heard before.” – (Speaker 4: FRIT)

Due to this glaring difficulty, the respondents' learning progress in the classroom becomes much harder and slower. This is due to the effect of linguistic challenges such as English vocabulary, grammar, listening, and reading skills being not up to par to handle the academic content delivered in English, resulting in the struggles to understand lectures, readings, and assignments (Zhou et al., 2023). According to Hull (2018) vocabulary gaps are lacking knowledge of repertoire of important phrases and ideas related to the subject matter leading to difficulties in reading, writing, and overall comprehension. Grammatical errors on the other hand, are parts of a text that do not follow standard grammar rules including errors involving parts of speech, word order, subject/verb agreement, and verb tense consistency (Calderwood, 2023). Due to the influence and combination of these two, the respondents will also face problems in both listening and reading comprehension when learning their subjects with EMI. One evidence that supports this statement is a recount from a respondent where she mentioned having taken much time and effort to translate documents and assignments;

“For us to interpret or translate some kind of document or terms is a bit hard to do in real life. It's not that hard. But it takes time.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

B. Internal and External Factors Influencing Students' Difficulties

According to Mirhadizadeh (2016) the elements that exist within and outside of every individual are commonly referred to as internal and external factors. Internal factors originate from within a person and are under their control such as ideas and feelings (Martinez & Shaker, 2021). Meanwhile, things that come from a person's environment are known as external factors such as expectations from friends and family, gender or cultural norms, family duties, and teaching practices (Martinez & Shaker, 2021). Most of the respondents agreed that they are influenced by internal factors a lot more times than external ones. They agreed that they have poor self-confidence when learning their subjects in English, especially in a setting where public speaking or presentations are involved. This factor falls under affective and motivational challenges where they are associated with the attitudes, sentiments, and emotions of a student towards education and can be seen as a 'filter' that prevents or impedes learning (Bao & Liu, 2021). Another respondent mentioned that apart from public speaking, doing the drafting or assignments is also a cause of concern. Furthermore, one added that she is not motivated to learn English, resulting in a lack of effort made. Another respondent mentioned having felt frustrated when she was not able to follow the lesson;

“It's more to do with internal factors like self-confidence, actually. Because, we might know the word in Malay, but when we want to deliver it's kind of stuck. Maybe because we're too used with the phrase in Malay.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

“Even, like, not in regards to public speaking, we have to do the drafting and everything. We find it difficult to proceed and we might be thinking, does it sound legal? Is it appropriate enough?” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

“I feel like my English is not strong enough. Especially in technical terms. Sometimes, the language is too advanced and I become lost. It makes me feel frustrated with my studies.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

“Sometimes it's because of ourselves and our thinking. Maybe we are too lazy to learn English, especially outside the classroom, we don't practice enough.” – (Speaker 4: FRIT)

On the other hand, in regard to external factors, the respondents agreed that inconsistent language exposure can cause them to have a hard time learning subjects in English. The respondents stated that their lecturers sometimes are not strict with themselves and their students where they inconsistently use English, Malay, and even the form of colloquial English-based creole Manglish during the lesson. According to Yusof et al. (2023) Manglish has changed from pidgin to creole as a result of British colonialism's historical influence and is not a standard language in Malaysia. The respondents found this situation hard to adapt to since what they learn is content knowledge that is standardised and fixed;

“Sometimes they teach in English, sometimes in Malay, but most of them use English.” – (Speaker 4: FRIT)

“They use English most of the time, and Manglish also.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

“Manglish, they speak in Malay too.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

In regard to language inconsistency, there is one specific recount from the respondent from FUHA. She mentioned that apart from herself, her other classmates who are currently final year students are having a hard time following their theoretical lesson plans. According to her, final year law students are taught by practicing lawyers who are already working in the industry. These lawyers are those who abide by the Constitution where they commonly use Malay in court. Hence, they practically also utilize the Malay language when teaching, causing huge confusion to this respondent and her classmates since they have been taught in English from very the first year;

“Yes. Inconsistency. And then recently, we had a quiz, but during our final year, we are taught by practicing lawyers. All of them. They all use Malay and very rarely use English but we're already used to EMI right? So, from here there's a glitch in transition. We learned from them in Malay but then the quiz was in English. It was so confusing.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

Inconsistent exposure in the target language can cause a learner to have insufficient input to store inside their cognitives. This is related to research done by Kozhevnikova (2019) where she mentioned that one of the biggest challenges a learner faces is expanding their vocabulary hence, it is important for learners to reencounter words in original contexts. Thornbury (2002) asserted that in order to organize students' mental vocabulary, they have to actively participate in the process of gaining an understanding of meaning, where students require specific assignments whereby they must be exposed to words on several occasions consistently on multiple exposures.

Besides that, some respondents also mentioned the importance of clear and simple explanations from the lecturers. They contended that they sometimes cannot follow the lesson when the lecturers use a complex form of language construction and speak too fast when explaining the content knowledge. According to Chugani (2024), making teaching and assignment instructions simpler will improve student comprehension and engagement with the materials and their cognitive load may be reduced by utilising language that is clear, concise, and straightforward;

“So, I find it hard to understand when the lecturer is teaching. Like what happened today, when my lecturer used complicated words and spoke too fast. It makes it harder for me to catch up.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

“When the lecturer uses complex sentences, they don't explain them in simple terms. For example, like what happened in our Risk Management class, our lecturer was a particular person. When he used complicated words, he re-explained them in simple terms so this is actually good. He provided us with explanations.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

Students' Suggestions of Improvement towards EMI

A. Enhance Bilingual Resources and Accessibility

Through the discussion with the respondents, most of them agreed that the most anticipated improvement that can be done with EMI is by enhancing bilingual resources and accessibility from the educators' side. In regard to resources, most respondents welcomed the access to bilingual resources like textbooks, notes, and slides to facilitate bilingual education. The term “bilingual education” as used by Cambridge, describes the use of two or more languages as teaching languages for content subjects like history or science (Cambridge Assessment International Education, 2017). This can emphasise the need for resources and teaching strategies that can bridge the language gap and facilitate comprehension for the students. For example, providing bilingual resources in both the mother tongue language as well as English can help students connect new concepts presented in English to their existing linguistic knowledge. This is synonymous with Benson (2002) where he mentioned that students can learn subject disciplines and build literacy skills by using their mother tongue in the classroom, which lays the foundation for developing their second language proficiency at the same time;

“And then, maybe some of the lecturers or the practitioners can provide bilingual resources like notebooks. It's like if they want to provide English ones, they have notes with certain terms that are commonly used in Malay. We can add the translation as well at the bottom so we'll be familiar with it as we go through the lessons.” – (Speaker 1: FUHA)

On the other hand, bilingual accessibility here has a deeper meaning which leans towards language accessibility, a term that exists to cater to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) people (Marco, 2023). According to the United States' Federal Coordination and Compliance Section (2011), LEP people include those for whom English is not their first language, students who lack proficiency in the English language, and adult immigrants with poor English proficiency. In the specific case of this study, bilingual accessibility specifically refers to students who lack English proficiency and should be given access to talk, learn, and do something in their mother tongue in a situation where they cannot communicate well in English. For instance, students can be given a website link that can be redirected to translate the page of the content to any chosen language (Myers, 2023). This suggestion is especially critical in regard to courses related to law which have many professional terms, codes, and jargons that are hard to understand through simple lesson plans.

B. Promote Effective Language Practice and Application

Another suggestion of improvement is to promote effective language practice and application in the classroom. Some respondents believed that educators should enforce English-only speaking practice during class, especially in regard to courses related to finance and science. This discipline is crucial as it can help students become immersed in the target language so that they can get used to it swiftly. Immersion here involves exposing students to the language in real-world situations where it can help students improve their language speaking skills and cultural understanding (Baklazhenko, 2024). According to Galloway (2017) the reason why the mother tongue is not restricted to be used in an EMI setting is because many faculty members are of the opinion that EMI is just a means of teaching the material as the primary objective, not the language itself. Lecturers especially, do not consider the occasional use of the students' mother tongue to be harmful to their learning. However, the respondents believed otherwise. They think that their lecturers should be stricter with the use of

English during classes so that they can become motivated to put it into practice inside and outside of the classrooms;

“In regards to my course, maybe in class, everyone should use English fully. It doesn't matter outside of the class because that can be fostered over time. Instead, we should focus on practicing speaking in English so that we can improve our speaking skills.” – (Speaker 2: FPP)

“Between friends and lecturers, or when we want to ask questions, we ask them in English only. We put restrictions on other languages apart from English.” – (Speaker 3: FPP)

Aside from that, educators should also promote the application of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The CLIL approach incorporates content into language instruction where students are also gaining knowledge of other subjects because it allows them to acquire both language and subject-area expertise (Le & Nguyen, 2022). The major difference between CLIL and EMI lies in the outcome of the approach, where CLIL focuses on both content and language acquisition while EMI solely focuses only on content acquisition (Lee et al., 2023). According to research by Sudarso et al. (2024) incorporating CLIL can bring many benefits towards students' learning which include language proficiency enhancement, content knowledge improvement, motivation and engagement, and cognitive skills. Thus, it is imperative to implement CLIL along with EMI as it can bring advantages to students in regard to intercultural and communication skills. To do this, lecturers should refrain from the idea that teaching content knowledge with EMI stays within the boundaries of content acquisition. Instead, they should prepare themselves to become highly sufficient as qualified educators who have a complete set of knowledge in English and other subjects.

C. Adapt Pedagogy and Assessment for EMI Students

A teaching approach known as pedagogy involves instructors imparting knowledge both theoretically and practically where their teaching views and their knowledge of culture and various learning styles influence their pedagogy (University of Minnesota, 2023). Simply said, pedagogy is related to teaching strategies from educators' side aimed towards their students in order to facilitate deeper understanding and comprehension. There are many ways for educators to adapt pedagogy suitable in EMI settings. One best way is by focusing on pre-teaching strategy. Shrouder (2023) mentioned that this teaching method is used to expose students to new concepts before they are covered in detail in class. This is especially beneficial in EMI where students can get used to some vocabularies that are subject-specific before they encounter them (Beck et al., 2013). For example, educators can provide glossaries and summaries as support materials to aid comprehension before a lesson begins. Another strategy is interactive learning where educators encourage active participation in the classroom between students. This is beneficial in improving students' soft skills where they encounter problem-solving exercises that encourage them to apply critical thinking abilities to resolve academic problems (Blyznyuk & Kachak, 2024). Another strategy is to provide question-and-answer sessions. It is essential for educators to regularly investigate students' understanding in EMI practices and find out if they have any questions that need to be addressed. By putting ideas into words that would otherwise go unspoken, questions aid in students' retention of the content (Cornell University, 2024). In the case of EMI, questions can also become a medium of practice for them to speak in English and improve their proficiency in the language itself.

Aside from that, assessment is also important in EMI practices. According to Winna and Sabarun (2023) language assessment is the practice of using standardized exams and observations to gauge a person's level of language proficiency as it allows both teachers and students to obtain insightful feedback and track a student's progress. Assessment can be utilized in EMI with several approaches such as formative assignments and oral presentations. Formative assignments can help students develop their capacity for self-regulation by helping them take an active role in their education by following several steps in adherence to a specific timeline (Xiao & Yang, 2019). Oral presentations allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and serve as a reference instructor based on their understanding (Tsang, 2020 as cited in Ati & Parmawati, 2022). In this way, educators can predict students' level of understanding in content knowledge as well as their language proficiency. Both

assessments should be implemented by qualified educators who have both content and English mastery so that the objective of EMI learning can be truly assessed.

CONCLUSION

This study seeks to investigate the perspectives of UniSZA students towards EMI practices in higher education, especially in regard to their perceived satisfaction and the difficulties they face during the lessons. This study also recommends several improvements that are suggested by the students themselves as the ones undergoing the practices, making this study critical and essential to be taken into consideration in terms of pedagogy and strategies by faculty members. This study is especially conducted with different faculties in mind, so as to gather a wide range of details and situations according to students' differing experiences. There are four respondents currently undergoing EMI practices that are interviewed, which respectively represent the faculties; FUHA, FPP, and FRIT. This study is conducted in a qualitative approach, with a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session. This approach is done with the intention to dig deeper into the thoughts of the students to understand their opinions and justify their perceptions towards EMI on a personal level.

To specify, the first objective of this study is to understand the perceived satisfaction of UniSZA students towards EMI. In doing so, this study will be able to shed light onto the students' point of view. They will be able to express what they truly think about the practices in general. Furthermore, the students can recall specific circumstances of EMI that are memorable and essential. This study can also take note of some positive and negative codes regarding EMI from the students' recount for detailed distinctions. The second objective is to find out the difficulties experienced by the students when they are undergoing the practices. With this, the challenging aspects of EMI can be dug out to be examined thoroughly. Accordingly, different faculties exhibit different situations so the contexts of difficulties vary from each student following the courses they are taking. Lastly, the third objective is to find out some suggestions for improvement that can be implemented. These suggestions are ones that are expressed by the students and can be taken into consideration for long-term pedagogical purposes. The suggestions can be used amidst all EMI settings but there are specific ideas that some students are hoping to experience, with their respective courses and faculties in mind.

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