A Qualitative Account of Iraqi EFL Teachers' Perspectives of English as a Medium of Instruction at Secondary Schools

Sameerah Salman Abdulrasool, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

samirabaghdady3@gmail.com

Javad Gholami, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

j.gholami@urmia.ac.ir

Abstract

Internationalization and globalization have gained popularity during the past 20 years in a variety of educational settings. English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has been one of the primary strategies for addressing these developments. Iraqi secondary schools appear to be falling behind in the face of these worldwide trends. Secondary schools are using Arabic as their practically universal language of teaching. Still, only a few numbers of studies have investigated the possible use of EMI and instructors' perspectives regarding its usage. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine the current state of EMI in the Iraqi setting, providing more insight into the rising application of EMI. To learn more about the attitudes of 150 teachers concerning EMI, pertinent questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to gather the required data. The quantitative results demonstrated that educators' opinions of EMI were overwhelmingly favorable. Most instructors supported both bilingual education and EMI, despite being aware of the detrimental effects of EMI on common official languages and the opposition to its implementation. The participants' views about and preferences for EMI were significantly influenced by their educational background, English ability, and their academic degree. The qualitative analysis's findings showed that although EMI classes provided participants with many benefits, they also faced significant difficulties, the primary reason of which was their poor English ability. The findings also indicated that most of participants blamed administrators for the difficulties in the EMI courses. They believe that educational officials should reevaluate how EMI courses are taught in Iraqi high schools in order to lessen the difficulties associated with them. The conclusions of this study are anticipated to be practical for administrators and other stakeholders in formulating internationalization plans that take EMI into account by identifying potential benefits and/or drawbacks in the educational context of Iraq.

Keywords: English-Medium Instruction (EMI), teachers' perspectives, Iraqi context, secondary schools

1. Introduction

As the language which is widely spoken in the world, English has developed into a more communicative language in commerce, technology, and education. The choice of a language for the classroom's medium of instruction is crucial to the instructors' success in learning and teaching. This is because the teacher, who serves as an education facilitator, is accountable for students' learning outcomes through spoken or written language when elaborating, imparting knowledge, providing feedback, controlling the classroom, and assessing students' progress. English as a medium of instruction (EMI) uses the English during classroom teaching and learning. Because education is spread through language, language, and education are two notions that cannot be separated. Language and education are intertwined and language must be used to achieve education, and for language to survive, and be appreciated, it must be instructed in educational institutions (Dube & Ncube, 2013). The language of instruction has commonly been a source of debate, especially in multilingual countries, due to its impact on student's academic progress.

Worldwide research has shown that English is in demand since it is a flexible language with a wide range of prospective employment options. Similar to this, the rise in EMI practices unquestionably enables students to learn more because of its extensive use across all industries, including those of education, employment, libraries, business, diplomacy, the internet, and the promotion of culture and human rights in the increasingly competitive world of today (Wolff, 2006). However, it is challenging to use EMI in a foreign context like Iraq. Also, the issue of whether EMI is suitable in the Iraqi educational system to deliver high-quality education may come up. Alternatively, how well can the EMI be applied in Iraq, where English is not the primary language? More importantly, it must be considered what issues and effects, if any, future generations may have to deal with due to three linguistic and cultural changes. Only a small number of previous research studies focused on the issues, and no single study was undertaken on the drawbacks of implementing EMI in the educational context of Iraq from teachers' perspectives.

English has been adopted as the primary medium of instruction in some private and public schools in Iraq, particularly in Basrah. This study aimed to learn more about teachers' perceptions of EMI in the classroom, as well as teachers' difficulties with applying it. Therefore, the following questions are addressed:

2. Review of literature

2.1 EMI

In states or nations where English is not the official language and is not the mother tongue of the students—many of whom are of different nationalities and languages—it is recognized as a medium for teaching education-related topics (Jiang et al., 2019). The EMI approach is thus employed as it offers the institution and students a number of benefits. For example, all pupils ought to be able to approach global learning plans more effectively and perform better in the job market in order to encounter the fewest challenges while joining the worldwide educational association. Universities employ this technique to broaden their student body and increase their efficiency in international grading in order to attract more foreign students and make money from them. However, when instructors begin teaching in the EMI format for the first time, they may run into a number of challenges. Teachers' and students' rates of language proficiency are frequently insufficient to support the learning process at a higher level. In addition to the previously

mentioned, students frequently object to the idea of taking classes in English if they can complete them in their native tongue. It should be noted that course preparation takes much longer for both parties but is generally beneficial for both.

2.2.Empirical background of the study

This study and many other research studies conducted in the past are comparable. This section reviews relevant studies, with a focus on issues in EMI-based education and the perceptions of instructors, students, parents, and parents on EMI and practice.

Iraq does not appear to have sufficient knowledge on the use of EMI. Conversely, the EMI policy has been put into effect at all 13 of the governmental colleges in the autonomous Kurdistan Region. Borg (2016) carried out a thorough investigation to collect information about the advantages and drawbacks of EMI in higher education. Based on the findings, most teachers agreed that EMI improved their own and their pupils' English language skills. Within the field of EMI, code-switching is a frequently utilized strategy. Similarly, teachers in this field have occasionally switched to teaching materials in Arabic or Kurdish. The participants acknowledged that the students had trouble understanding the questions in their exams. Majority of teachers confirmed that the pupils' performance levels were far lower than what would have been required for EMI.

Due to parent desire, the majority of public schools that formerly taught in the original tongue have shifted to using EMI in recent years. The main goal of the study was to examine the perceptions of instructors on EMI in the curriculum. The study used a questionnaire to gather data, according to the survey research methodology in particular and the quantitative approach in general (Rai, 2019).

Similarly, the investigator used non-probability quota sampling techniques to gather data from 50 instructors in public schools where EMI had been adopted. The study's key discovery was that instructors' opinions on the application of EMI were found to be favorable. It was also discovered that the instructors encountered difficulties putting the theory into practice in the real classroom. Furthermore, the majority of educators (86%) stated that EMI ought to be used in classrooms to giving pupils a high-quality education. Furthermore, because the application of EMI was the main focus of this study, the majority of teachers were discovered to effectively use EMI by interacting with their pupils.

Thirty instructors from five schools made up the study's sample size, and they were chosen using a non-random purposive selection technique. The main instruments for gathering data were two focus groups, eight classroom observations, and an open-ended and closed-ended questionnaire. The survey found that the majority of educators and learners support the implementating EMI and that both levels employ English and Nepali as their primary languages of teaching. Furthermore, a discrepancy between EMI's policies and practices was discovered (Shrestha, 2018).

Bhusal (2017) investigated how non-English instructors at community schools perceive EMI in the current context. Survey research approach served as the foundation for the study. The study's participants were community school instructors in Kathmandu areas who did not speak English. A questionnaire was one of the key instruments he used to gather information from 33 non-English instructors. His method of choosing the informants was purposive sampling. The

results of the study demonstrate that the absence of rules, reference materials, and qualified teachers has prevented EMI from being implemented properly. In a similar vein, the study shows that instructors have favorable opinions toward the implementation of EMI due to the English language's rapidly increasing worldwide relevance (Bhusal, 2017).

It is clear from examining these studies that English is the language that is most frequently used in all fields, including business, science, media, and education. Owing to its enormous importance, English has been utilized extensively in educational settings. Adopting EMI, however, has a number of challenges in non-English speaking countries like Iraq.

3. Method

3.1. Design of the study

This study benefits from an MMR methodology, wherein QUAL and QUAN data are used in the same study for data collection, analysis, and integration (Creswell & Creswell, 2005). In order to demonstrate the superiority of MMR designs, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) listed seven justifications for using this approach. One justification for using this strategy is complementarity, which states that since both research strands focus on different facets of the same problem, a hybrid design offers a more thorough description of the issue.

3.2. Participants

In this research, the participants consisted of EMI teachers at the public secondary level in Basrah. The selection of participants aimed to provide a representative sample that would adequately represent the entire population. A total of 150 teachers from various schools were included in the study. To ensure a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the research topic, a purposive non-random sampling method was employed. This sampling approach allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who possessed specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the study. By using this method, the researcher aimed to gather highly valuable and informative data pertaining to the issue under investigation.

3.3. Instruments
3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire items were developed by the author through focus group discussions (Stork & Hartley, 2009). She had a conversation regarding the implications of EMI, the rationale for its implementation, and how it affects official languages with five academics. In addition to adapting 16 questions from other research (Koksal & Tercan, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2016; Byun et al., 2011), she generated 14 items based on the group discussion. There were five sections in the questionnaire. Six items in the first section asked participants' personal and demographic questions (e.g., gender, educational degree). The participants were questioned on their views on EMI, the rationale for implementing EMI, the effect of EMI on official languages, and the difficulties associated with EMI implementation in the second, third, and fourth parts (10 items, 10 items, and 9 items, respectively). The participated teachers were asked to rate their opinions on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The final section asked the participants to respond with the language of teaching that they preferred.

3.3.2. Interview

To fulfil the objectives of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Teachers were participated in interview sessions to shed light on appropriateness of the implementation of EMI. The interviews were in form of individual sessions and telephone interviews based on the availability of the participants. Prior to the interview, a number of general questions were prepared with regard to information about EMI, effective learning and teaching, and suggestions for betterment of the procedure in educational context of Iraq. During the interview, upcoming questions based on the participants' opinions and ideas were put forward. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' responses were promised. The interviews which were lasted for 30-35 were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

3.4. Procedure

The selected participants were provided with the self-administered questionnaire. Clear instructions were given on how to complete the questionnaire accurately. The participants were granted sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The completed questionnaires were collected and checked for completeness and accuracy. A subset of participants was invited to take part in semi-structured interviews. An interview guide was prepared beforehand, consisting of open-ended questions that explored participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions related to EMI. The interviews were recorded with teachers' consent.

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis. Qualitative data from the interviews and observations were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis to identify emerging themes and patterns. Data triangulation was employed to integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative analysis

4.1.1. Statistical analysis of the EMI scale

The descriptive findings for the overall scores the questionnaire are demonstrated in Table 1. As the table shows, the Cronbach alpha values is 0.88 suggesting that the responses to the items of the questionnaire enjoy a relatively high internal consistency. Moreover, the values of the KS test is 0.06 illustrating the normality of distribution for the collected data.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of EMI scale

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Alpha	KS Sig.
EMI Scale	1.10	5	3.34	1.03	0.88	0.06

For every questionnaire category, Table 2 revealed Cronbach alpha values greater than 0.83 (Table 2).

Table 2

Value of reliability for questionnaire subscales

Category	Number of questions	Alpha
Attitudes	10	0.88
Reasons	10	0.91
Effects and challenges	9	0.83

4.1.2. Attitudes towards EMI

Teachers' opinions of EMI were examined using descriptive statistics. Teachers have a high favorable attitude about EMI, as evidenced by the overall mean score of 3.4 (Table 3) for participant attitudes. Additionally, more than 87% of respondents said that EMI was required in high schools and that they would be interesting in using it to teach their courses. Approximately 81% and 76% of respondents, respectively, said that EMI was a more dependable and efficient method of training than official languages. The statements asking participants to rate the impact of EMI—including students' improved English proficiency, opportunities for education abroad, access to the most advanced resources, publications and teachers' involvement in international programs—were strongly agreed upon by over 94% of the participants.

Table 3

Teachers' attitudes towards EMI

No	Item	% of agree & strongly agree	Mean
1	EMI is necessary at high schools.	87%	3.32
2	I am interested in teaching courses through EMI.	88%	3.25
3	EMI is more effective than official languages instruction.	76%	3.05
4	EMI is more reliable than official languages medium instruction	81%	3.24
5	EMI helps improve students' English skills.	97%	3.43
6	EMI helps students get a good job after graduation.	96%	3.51
7	EMI provides more overseas educational opportunities for students and lecturers.	94%	3.49
8	EMI increases teachers' and students' access to up-to-date resources.	94%	3.74
9	EMI helps teachers and students publish articles in international journals.	89%	3.46
10	EMI increases teachers' and students' participation in international Programs in future.	86%	3.24

4.1.3. Reasons behind the adoption of EMI

The author investigated the factors influencing EMI adoption in high school settings using descriptive statistical analysis.

Table 4. demonstrates that approximately 92% of respondents said that EMI should be used to assist students become more employable in the country, increase their access to current resources, and raise their schools' national rankings. Conversely, 98% of respondents thought that English should be adopted to help students become more proficient in the language. Furthermore, more than 96% of respondents thought that EMI need to be implemented for global goals including worldwide publishing, international ranking generally, and educating students for global job markets and study abroad. Approximately 84% of respondents said that EMI ought to be used to draw in foreign students.

Table 4

Teachers' reasons for the adoption of EMI

No.	Item	% of agree & strongly agree	Mean
	High schools should adopt EMI to:	91.2	3.22
1	Improve students' English skills.	98.1	3.35
2	Prepare students for national job market.	98.1	3.41
3	Increase students' and teachers' access to cutting-edge resources.	98.1	3.34
4	Improve their national ranking.	98.1	3.45
5	Prepare students for international job market.	98.1	3.42
6	Prepare students for overseas studies.	98.1	3.45
7	Help students and teachers' publish their works in international journals.	98.1	3.45
8	Improve their international ranking.	96.5	3.48
9	Raise Iraqi's academic standing.	98.3	3.48
10	Attract foreign students.	83.2	3.21

4.1.4. The effect of EMI on official languages and obstacles to its implementation

The author examined the effects of EMI on official languages and the obstacles to EMI implementation using descriptive statistics. In Table 5, it is revealed that 42% of respondents said EMI would reduce scientific terms and weaken official languages. 59% of interviewees said that EMI would increase the amount of English borrowed into official languages, while 42% of individuals thought it would decrease publishing in official languages. Less than 10% of respondents, nevertheless, thought that EMI would weaken their sense of nationalism.

Table 5

Teachers' perception of official languages and obstacles to implementation of EMI

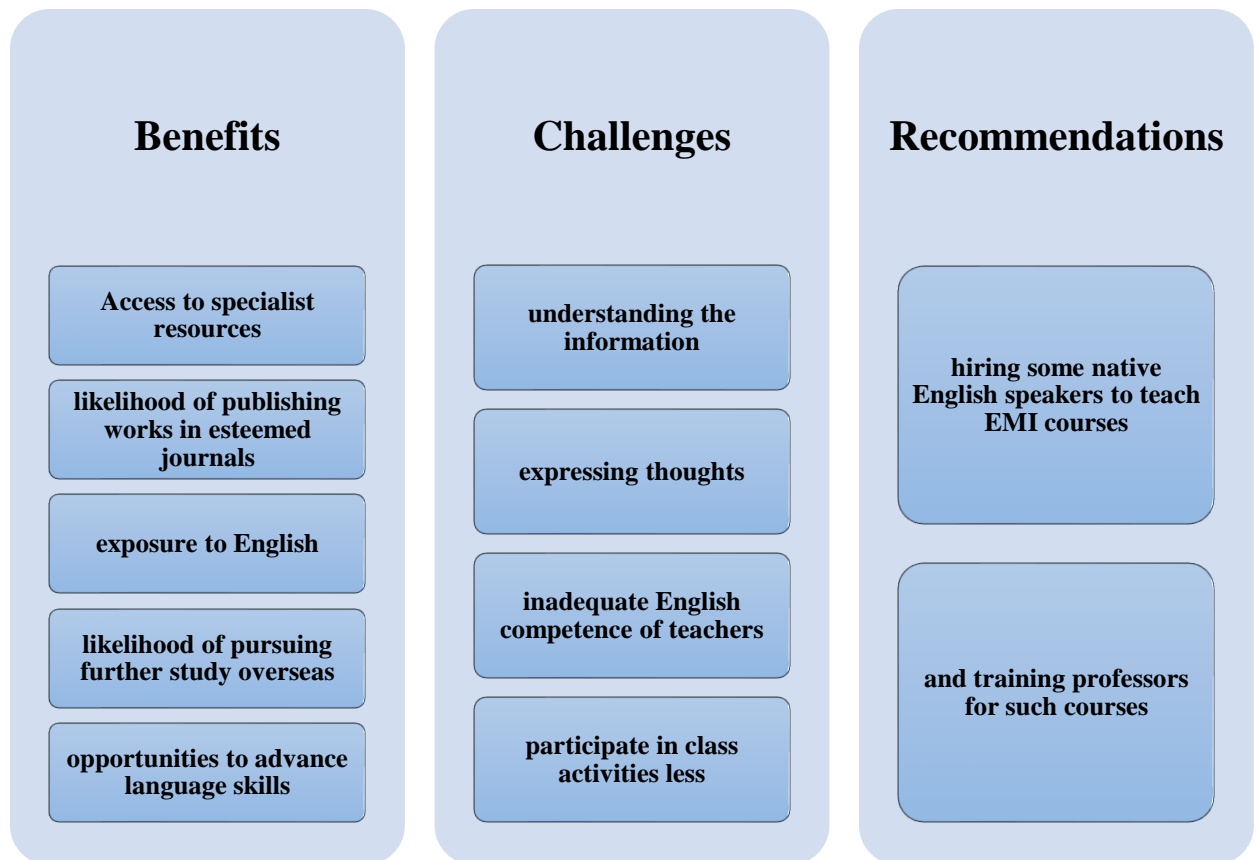| No.	Statement	% of agree & strongly agree	Mean

1	EMI will undermine official languages as a scientific tool at high schools.	42	2.42
2	EMI will decrease the development of official languages scientific vocabulary and terminologies.	42	2.36
3	EMI will cause more borrowings from English to official languages.	59.1	2.64
4	EMI will reduce the publication of articles in official languages.	49.2	2.44
5	EMI will weaken students' and teachers' identity.	8.5	1.32
6	EMI will undermine students' and teachers' patriotism.	5.9	1.22
7	Teachers' low English proficiency will be a challenge against EMI at schools.	88.1	3.28
8	Students' low English proficiency will be a challenge against EMI at schools.	92.5	3.44
9	The public will resist EMI implementation at universities.	46.2	2.63

4.2.2. Qualitative analysis

The present study's findings illustrate the benefits and drawbacks that teachers and students encounter when taking EMI courses. Three broad themes arose from the collected data interview: the benefits and potential of EMI courses, their drawbacks and difficulties, and recommendations for raising the standing of EMI courses. Numerous themes and sub-themes illustrate these tendencies. Every topic is intimately linked to a certain pattern that is connected to a certain study subject. The resultant themes and sub-themes were shown using a few hierarchical models in the sections that followed.

Figure 1

Major themes extracted from the interviews

Benefits	**Challenges**	**Recommendations**
Access to specialist resources	understanding the information	hiring some native English speakers to teach EMI courses
likelihood of publishing works in esteemed journals	expressing thoughts	
exposure to English	inadequate English competence of teachers	and training professors for such courses
likelihood of pursuing further study overseas	participate in class activities less	
opportunities to advance language skills		

4.2.2.1. Benefits and prospects of EMI courses

Teachers were asked to provide their perspectives about the benefits and potential of EMI courses. Five themes emerged from the examination of the written and spoken replies supplied by teachers (Figure 1): *Access to specialist resources, opportunities to advance language skills, likelihood of pursuing further study overseas, likelihood of employment, and likelihood of publishing works in esteemed journals* are all increased.

Greater access to specialist sources is one of the benefits of EMI courses, which relates to the accessibility of resources. The majority of teachers said that students may access a variety of specialist materials through EMI that are not available in their native tongue. They provided an example of how "EMI helps students to access more valuable resources because the majority of reputable articles and specialized textbooks are published in English" (T6). With respect to the second benefit of EMI classes, teachers emphasized how EMI helped their students become more proficient in English. Their explanation was that their English language competence will significantly improve as a result of receiving greater exposure to the language in EMI classes. For example, several of the participants said that

T9*: In EMI classes, students may increase our English skills in addition to mastering the subject topic.*

T12: *EMI increases our exposure to the English language, which helps students become more fluent speakers.*

Teachers mentioned that taking EMI courses also boosts students' chances of continuing their studies overseas. Here are a few quotes that illustrate this benefit of EMI courses:

T8: *EMI provides students with additional chances to pursue our education overseas.*

T9: *I believe that EMI gives students a better opportunity to continue their studies abroad as it is a need for teaching in other countries that a strong command of the English language.*

As a benefit of EMI, teachers also noted the increased likelihood of students' employment. They think that improving their English proficiency will significantly boost their chances of finding work.

T4: *Because more work prospects will be available to persons with strong English proficiency, EMI courses can improve our chances of finding employment.*

In keeping with the second benefit of EMI classes that students brought up, a number of teachers said that EMI gives college students greater exposure to the language, which raises their skill level. To give an example, consider

T2: *Having an English class has the benefit of exposing pupils to the language; as input and exposure increase, so does output.*

T10: *The primary benefit of EMI courses is that, hopefully, more exposure to English will result from the use of English. Students' language competence is likely to be greatly impacted by increased exposure to the language.*

The second trend that emerged from the replies of the teachers on the benefits of EMI courses is the increased likelihood of works being published in esteemed journals. According to their declaration (T6),

EMI helps students publish their papers in journals by enabling them to write in English.

4.2.2.2. The drawbacks and difficulties of EMI courses

Also, participants were questioned about the drawbacks and difficulties associated with EMI courses. Some themes were identified as a result of the data analysis. One of the major issues brought up by teachers is the fact that their students may have trouble expressing their thoughts and opinions. Teachers believed that many students have observed that they have problem in articulating their opinions in discussions. For example, participant 12 stated,

T12: *It is challenging to convey students' views and opinions with others in EMI classes because of their poor English language*.

For the same reason, teachers also indicated that students had problem in understanding the information at times. The following quotes provide as a clear illustration of EMI's issue.

T6: *Because students may have trouble understanding the academic material, they are not really interested in EMI courses.*

P7: *Students find it challenging to completely understand the material presented in specialist textbooks.*

As the third drawback of EMI classes, according to the teachers, is that students participate in class activities less frequently. For example,

T8: *Students are unable to engage in class assignments and activities because they do not possess enough proficiency in the English language.*

Instructor opinions of the drawbacks of EMI courses were inadequate English competence of teachers is the only sub-theme under the subject of instructor-related issues. Teachers claimed that some EMI teachers are not fluent in the English language to convey material.

T3: *I believe that the primary issue with EMI courses is the teachers' limited language proficiency.*

T10: *The most common problem with EMI courses is the lecturers' and professors' limited command of the English when attempting to teach an entire class in a foreign language.*

Three sub-themes emerged from the instructors' replies on student-related factors: students' inadequate English ability, their lack of enthusiasm and drive, and their lack of confidence. Regarding pupils' language competence, several teachers said that

T3: *I occasionally have to explain things to learners in their native language since they don't comprehend what I'm saying.*

T8: *Students with low English proficiency may find it challenging to comprehend concepts and information delivered in English.*

Certain participants stated that "immersion in a foreign language may demotivate some students who are not proficient language users" (T2) in reference to the following sub-theme, which is lack of interest. Lastly, teachers claimed that "due to low English levels, students are not confident to learn content through English language" (T10) for the final sub-theme in this respect.

4.2.2.3. Recommendations for Enhancing EMI Course Status

Teachers were requested to provide some methods for raising the standing of EMI. Teachers suggested two options, as shown in Figure 4.1: hiring some native English speakers to teach EMI courses and training professors for such courses. The subsequent teachers reply elucidate these two pragmatic options, in turn:

T9: *Administrators should offer training programs I courses differ somewhat from other specialized courses.*

T7: *University authorities ought to request that certain English native speakers teach EMI courses to increase the program's effectiveness.*

The answers from the teachers also pointed to two significant solutions: Increase the experience of EMI course teachers and emphasize to students the value of English language proficiency. They said as much.

T9: *The best kind of assistance in this situation should be considered to be experienced educators who are willing to offer EMI courses.*

T2: *I do think that raising student awareness of the value of learning English is one of the finest methods to elevate the standing of EMI courses.*

5. Discussion

The study looked into the opinions of instructors on EMI implementation. Their highly favorable sentiments regarding EMI and their desire in using EMI to teach their courses were shown by the quantitative analysis of the data. Additionally, educators thought that EMI would assist students and instructors in many ways, including as giving them access to more recent information. This may be explained by the fact that most of the participants used EMI to get their greatest degree. Additionally, educators who could communicate well in English had an edge in their schools. For example, fluency in English was a must for all Ministry of Higher Education-funded courses and seminars held abroad. Teachers who weren't fluent in English weren't allowed to attend these foreign workshops. The results are consistent with research conducted by Al-kahtany et al. (2015), Reilly (2019), Zare-ee and Hejazi (2017), and others, which found that their subjects had favorable opinions of EMI and were aware of its advantages for both instructors and students.

The overwhelming majority of participants recommended adopting EMI for a number of international goals, such as enticing foreign students, improving Iraqi academic standing, and preparing students for work and study abroad. It supports the findings of Wysocka (2013) and Ghorbani and Alavi (2014), whose participants suggested EMI implementation in their nation's educational environments for same reasons. The participants in the present study also thought that EMI courses should be implemented at the national level for academic and economic reasons, such as raising students' English proficiency, giving instructors and students greater access to the most recent materials, and raising the standing of universities across the country. This result is consistent with the findings of Kim et al. (2014) and Zare-ee and Hejazi (2017), whose participants suggested that EMI adoption be implemented in their institutions to assist students in enhancing their English language proficiency and securing employment promptly following graduation.

Regarding the impact of EMI on official languages, the participants had differing opinions. Less than half of them thought that official languages would become less useful as scientific tools and that EMI would lead to a reduction in scientific terminology. However, most of the participants thought that EMI would lead to increased English borrowing into official languages, and half said that EMI would result in fewer publications. These results are in line with the study conducted by Al-kahtany et al. (2015), in which participants expressed worries about the detrimental impacts of EMI adoption on their native language.

The results also demonstrated that the instructors were aware of the obstacles to the implementation of EMI. Most of them thought that the biggest obstacles to EMI adoption would be instructors' and students' poor English language skills. It makes sense given that many students lack even rudimentary English proficiency, especially those who come from rural areas of the nation with subpar educational systems (Orfan, 2021). A large number of educators are familiar with the English terminology used in their areas and use it into their regular lessons. By providing them with English preparatory sessions, you may get them ready to utilize EMI in their classrooms. These results are comparable to those of Yildiz et al. (2017) and Salomone (2015), where participants saw lecturers' and students' limited English ability as serious obstacles. Additionally, less than half of the research participants thought that the public may oppose the introduction of EMI. This can be explained by the prevalence of traditional ideas and values as well as the fact that a large number of people are still illiterate. The public can perceive EMI as an imposition of a Westernized phenomenon on the educational system.

The great majority of instructors supported bilingual education preferred EMI over official languages, although being aware of the obstacles to its implementation. It makes sense since

instructors who are proficient in the language may take advantage of the possibilities that come with having English as a major requirement and have access to additional resources. The outcome is in line with studies conducted in 2017 by Zaree and Hejazi, who found that instructors preferred English to Persian even though the Iranian government supported the latter language. It suggests that educators are aware of the value of English for their professional development, the advancement of education in general, and the development of Iraq. The results also showed that the instructors' preferences for the language of instruction and their attitudes regarding EMI were not significantly impacted by their gender. It confirms the results of a research by Ismail et al. (2011), who found no changes in the views of participants about EMI between the sexes. Nonetheless, their opinions of EMI were influenced by their command of English, which also happened to be the language of instruction for their highest degree. Teachers with master's degrees and fluency in English, as well as those who completed their undergraduate studies abroad in English, were more supportive of the adoption of EMI.

The qualitative analysis of data highlighted the benefits and drawbacks of EMI courses for learners. The majority of the aforementioned topics are connected, either directly or indirectly, to pupils' increases in English language competence. Students' English competence will increase as a result of more exposure to the language, paving the way for a better future (i.e., increased likelihood of pursuing further education overseas and increased work opportunities). Therefore, it makes sense if teachers and students list "higher chance of employment" as one of the key benefits. According to Tamtam et al. (2012), "bilingualism is the root of career and studying opportunities," and this conclusion is in line with their theories (p. 1423). They clarified that those with strong English language skills would have more opportunities for employment and advancement. This conclusion is further corroborated by Phuong and Nguyen's (2019) assertion that having a strong command of English might open up job chances due to the increasing presence of multinational businesses in a number of countries.

A few participants also remarked how taking EMI classes gives them access to a variety of English-language specialty publications and articles. Previous investigations (e.g., Diezmas & Barrera, 2021; Soe et al., 2020) also found findings that were similar. Furthermore, some participants in semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires believe that the EMI helps students publish their academic publications in prestigious journals by teaching them how to write in English. This might be because English is the primary language of many peer-reviewed journals. Therefore, one has to be proficient in English writing in order to get their work published in these esteemed publications.

The results showed that EMI courses have five main themes and four sub-themes that highlight their drawbacks and difficulties: students' poor English proficiency, instructors' difficulty understanding the material, low participation, instructors' difficulty expressing their ideas and opinions, and students' lack of motivation, interest, and confidence.

The first two difficulties raised by the students make sense given that university students' English language skills are insufficient for them to understand English-written materials or articulate their thoughts in the language. This result is consistent with that of Phuong and Nguyen (2019), who found that most EMI course participants have some trouble understanding specialist English-language texts and communicating their thoughts to others. Less engagement in the most recent challenge that the students reported could possibly be related to their English language

competence. According to Soe et al. (2020), students in EMI courses seldom ever participate in class activities because they struggle with the English language.

Inadequate English competence on the part of teachers, students' lack of interest, and instructors' lack of confidence were among the difficulties previously stated. Many educators think that teachers' poor English language skills are the primary issue with EMI. This findings are consistent with the findings of Zare-ee and Hejazi (2017), who demonstrated that certain teachers lack the proficiency to convey information in English. Furthermore, a number of educators saw students' poor English language skills as a significant obstacle to EMI courses. They believe that many college students' English proficiency is lacking. Previous investigations (Al-Bakri, 2013; Phuong & Nguyen, 2019) have discovered comparable difficulties. Lastly, a few teachers mentioned that other drawbacks of EMI classes were pupils' lack of confidence, drive, and curiosity. Similar difficulties are also reported in a Ter-Vardanyan research (2021). In the end, the last study question was answered by looking at participants' opinions on how to lessen the difficulties of EMI courses in Iraqi educational settings. The total responses from participants yielded four key recommendations: training for EMI, hire native English speakers, hire experienced teachers for EMI, and emphasize to students the value of knowing English. It can be deduced from the recommended solutions that participants held teachers and university officials accountable for the difficulties with EMI courses; as a result, they offered them some ideas to lessen the difficulties that now exist. It is consistent with Ter-Vardanyan's (2021) study, which showed that students blamed university officials and stakeholders for EMI problems.

6. Conclusion

The current study's findings demonstrated that Iraqi educators were very supportive of EMI and recommended that secondary schools use it for a variety of scholarly and international objectives. The great majority of lecturers supported bilingual education (using both official languages and English) and EMI despite their reservations about the program's potential impacts on official languages and opposition to its execution. Teachers' opinions toward EMI were significantly impacted by variables such as education level, language of teaching at the highest educational level, and English proficiency.

Overall, the results of the qualitative data analysis point to the fact that while EMI courses offered participants many possibilities, they also presented some significant obstacles, the primary source of which was their poor English ability. Along with discussing the benefits and drawbacks of EMI, teachers were also invited to provide some doable solutions for raising the standing of EMI courses. Their recommended fixes show that the majority of participants hold school administration accountable for the EMI problems. These results provide important insights into the opportunities and difficulties faced by the teachers in the EMI courses at Iraqi educational contexts under investigation. To increase the advantages and decrease the disadvantages of EMI courses, educational administrators might want to review how they are being taught. Instructors teaching EMI can also benefit from the current study's conclusions. To achieve more effective education, educators should obviously be aware of the possible benefits and difficulties of EMI.

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