STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION (EMI) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB: LEARNING EXPERIENCES, LANGUAGE CHALLENGES, AND CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

[1]Mohsin Sardar, [2]Bakhtar Khan, [3]Muhammad Irfan

Department of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, IER, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Email: mohsinsardar495@gmail.com
Department of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, IER, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Email: bakhtarkhan380@gmail.com
Department of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, IER, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Email: mi3974760@gmail.com
Corresponding Author Email: mohsinsardar492@gmail.com

Abstract

English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has gained increasing prominence in higher education in non-native English-speaking settings, such as in Pakistan. Although the recommendation of EMI is frequently based on the possible advantages in academic and professional life, the experiences of students in classrooms and the issues concerning language are not well-studied in the local context. This research examines the students' perception of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) at the University of the Punjab and the levels of learning experiences, language difficulties, and academic participation. A mixed-methods design was adopted, from which data were collected from 110 undergraduate students using a structured questionnaire and additional semi-structured interviews with 12 participants. Quantitative data were examined through descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas the qualitative ones were analyzed through a thematic approach. The results show that students have generally cautious-positive views of EMI, as they are aware of its importance in offering academic resources and increasing their chances of success in the future. Nevertheless, it was stated that many students had some problems with listening comprehension during lectures, academic vocabulary, as well as confidence in their ability to use English, which, in turn, affected their classroom behavior. The research identifies the moderating effect of the level of language proficiency in determining the interaction of students with learning opportunities in EMI classes. Findings underline the need for linguistically sensitive pedagogy, institutionalized linguistic support, and institutional processes in order to make more comprehensive and successful EMI practices in higher education in Pakistan.

Keywords

English-Medium Instruction (EMI); Students' Perceptions; Learning Experiences; Language Challenges; Academic Participation; Higher Education.

Introduction

In most of the non-English speaking countries, English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has emerged as one of the important characteristics of higher education as universities attempt to internationalize their educational programs and make global knowledge resources more accessible to students. The increased utilization of English as an instructional and learning language has transformed the practices of classrooms and academic communication and interaction among the students of various disciplines. Although EMI is commonly linked to both academic and professional benefits, it's effectiveness largely depends on Students' experiences are responses to

learning utilizing a second or foreign language. The perceptions of the students, their language competence and participation in the classroom are very important in determining whether EMI enables or inhibits meaningful learning. An appreciation of EMI as perceived by the learners is therefore of paramount importance to the assessment of its pedagogical effects and better classroom practices in institutions of higher learning.

Background of the Study

English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has become one of the major policies and pedagogical practices in higher education in most of the non-native English-speaking nations. Universities have moved towards using English as a means of instruction in a bid to facilitate internationalization, increase the competitiveness of graduates in the global academic and professional market, as well as access to international sources of knowledge. EMI in multilingual societies is usually placed as a bridge on the way to academic mobility and social promotion. Consequently, EMI schemes have been growing at high rates in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, altering the classroom communication habits and learning conditions within institutions of higher learning.

English-Medium Instruction in Pakistani Higher Education

In Pakistan the English language is at the centre of the higher education in terms of the use of the text language, assessment language and the language of scholarly communication. EMI is being used by public universities such as the University of the Punjab in an extensive variety of academic subjects. The linguistic backgrounds of higher education students are however varied with many students having done their schooling in Urdu-medium or regional-language-medium schools. Thus making EMI switch at university level is a major linguistic and cognitive shift among a considerable number of students. Such a deviation can affect the understanding of the academic material among students and their capacity to participate in the disciplinary discourse and their self-confidence to get involved in the classroom interaction.

Students' Learning Experiences and Language Challenges in EMI

The demands in the content and the language influence students' learning in EMI classrooms. Lack of comprehension about lectures given in English and difficulty in reading complicated academic materials and generating spoken or written academic discourse may pose barriers to effective learning. The challenges that may influence the willingness of students to take an active part in classroom discussions may include language-related issues, which are the limited academic vocabulary, the use of unfamiliar disciplinary terms, and anxiety about speaking English. Meanwhile, EMI could expose the students to more English and help them to develop academic language proficiency and communicative competence. Such mixed experiences indicate the necessity to investigate the perceptions of students in regard to EMI and the way, in which these perceptions affect their learning strategies and classroom activities.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Despite the increased interest in the applied linguistics and research in higher education, it can still be said that a significant portion of the existing literature on the topic has concentrated on policy aspects and the experiences of teachers, whereas little has been said about the life experiences of students in the classroom, especially in the Pakistani context. In the University of the Punjab, where the concept of EMI is largely practiced throughout the various faculties, there is a gap of empirical data with specific contextual backgrounds on how students understand EMI in terms of their learning experiences, language difficulties and their academic participation. This gap is significant to fill in with the aim of informing EMI pedagogy, curriculum design, and support

mechanisms to students. The present study will make a contribution to a more proficient view of EMI practices in Pakistani higher education, as well as to provide effective practical hints to foster inclusive and productive EMI classrooms by anticipating the perspectives of the students.

Problem Statement

English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Pakistan has become the most common tool used in higher education to improve the quality of education, to expand the access of students to world knowledge and ensure the competitiveness of graduates on the national and international level. At the University of the Punjab EMI is applied in various fields, and English is the main language used in classrooms, examination, and academic communication. Nonetheless, a high percentage of students get into university with linguistically heterogeneous educational experiences, where previous schooling was medium and in Urdu-speaking or the regional language schools. Such a linguistic shift to EMI on the tertiary level poses a possible difficulty to student understanding of academic material, their ability to feel comfortable with using the English language, and their engagement in classroom learning.

Although the issue of EMI is rising, the empirical data that is well structured in terms of capturing students' perceptions of EMI in relation to their learning experiences, language-related challenges and their level of participation in academic activities are still scarce in the University of the Punjab. Current studies on the Pakistani context have focused a lot on policy discussions and a teacher viewpoint, whereas there is little research on what students go through in classroom settings. Consequently, it is possible that EMI practices are adopted without a due regard to the actual needs of learners and thus could end up causing disengagement, lack of classroom interaction and unequal learning opportunities to students with different levels of English proficiency.

This absence of student-sensitive, contextualized evidence is a great gap in the comprehension of pedagogical impact of EMI in Pakistani higher education. In the absence of information on the student experience of EMI, institutions might have difficulties in establishing effective instructional programs, language support systems and contrasting classroom activities. It is critical to address this issue in such a way that EMI is not only a policy objective, but also a viable and fair teaching and learning tool that can promote meaningful learning and educational involvement among different groups of students at the University of the Punjab.

Research Objectives

1. To explore students' overall perceptions of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) at the University of the Punjab.
2. To investigate the experiences of students in EMI classrooms in various academic areas.
3. To determine the key issues related to language among students when learning via EMI.
4. To examine how EMI affects academic participation and interaction of students in classes.

Literature Review

In this section, the review addresses the existing literature on English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education especially in the student-centered perspectives. The review is thematically structured to point to the main strands of studies associated with the facilitation of EMI implementation, the experiences of students during the process, language-related issues, and the dynamics of academic engagement in EMI classrooms. It is expected that synthesizing international and local studies findings will enable the establishment of the conceptual and empirical background of the current study and help define the gaps in the existing literature which

need further exploration in the framework of Pakistani higher education, especially at the University of the Punjab.

English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education

During English-Medium Instruction (EMI) the academic subjects are being taught using English in an environment where the native language of most members of the population is not English. In recent 20 years, EMI has grown fast in the system of higher education all over the world as a part of the wider internationalization policy. Universities embrace EMI to improve on their global competitiveness, draw international students and make international academic discourse and resources accessible to local students. Studies have suggested that EMI is usually depicted as the means of enhancing the English proficiency and academic capital of students, especially in non-Anglophone environments. Nevertheless, researchers have also observed that the application of EMI is often motivated by policy, institutional objectives, and not always paying enough attention to classroom-based realities and the linguistic readiness of learners.

Although EMI is linked with some advantages, like improved exposure to English and conformity to the international academic practice, research has shown difficulties in pedagogical efficiency, equity, and language provision. The effectiveness of EMI is determined not only by the institutional policies but also the manner of implementation in the classroom and the receiving of the students. This has created an increasing clamor towards contextual research that tries to consider EMI as a situational educational practice and not a policy model.

Students' Learning Experiences in EMI Contexts

The language needs and content learning interact with each other and determine the learning experience of students in EMI classrooms. According to a number of studies, students' express that EMI contributes to the creation of academic English proficiency, increasing the availability of foreign literature, and increasing future employment opportunities. Good learning experiences have been linked to more motivation and feeling of academic power especially to those students who already have relatively strong English proficiency.

Simultaneously, studies have revealed that EMI may pose a new load on the learner who has to work with complex disciplinary material using a second or a foreign language. Lectures, the ability to understand professional terms, and work with academic materials can be a significant impediment to the learning of the content among students, which can be detrimental. The learning experience in EMI setting is thus distributed skewedly where students whose backgrounds were founded on stronger English-media are more apt to access educational opportunities than the students whose backgrounds were founded on non-English-media schooling. This disparity creates the issue of inclusiveness and the possibility of replicating language disparities in university education.

Language Challenges in EMI Classrooms

The problem of language is always regarded as one of the focal points in EMI studies. The problems that students often complain about include the lack of academic vocabulary, the discourse specific to given discipline, the inability to understand lectures orally, and the inability to communicate their ideas in both spoken and written English. These problems can result in a decrease in the level of understanding course materials and decreased beliefs about academic communication. Fear of speaking English, being afraid of making mistakes, and having feelings of being negatively evaluated by classmates and teachers may also work against the participation of students in the classroom.

The studies also indicate that different coping strategies are applied by students to deal with language difficulties in the EMI situations, which may include using lecture slides, peer support, bilingual materials or self-managed language learning outside the classroom. Although these measures can be used to alleviate short-term challenges, they are not always effective in targeting the existing gaps in academic language competence. The continuation of the language-related difficulties urges the necessity of pedagogical scaffolding, overt language guidance, and institutional processes that would help students to cope with the EMI settings.

EMI and Academic Participation

The aspects of meaningful higher education learning are the participation in academic aspects (questioning, making a contribution to discussions, and collaborative work). Language and perceived competence in English relates closely to the willingness of students in EMI classrooms to participate. Research has shown that less proficient students in English are less likely to engage in the classroom interaction, as they tend to take a passive role in order not to embarrass themselves through language. Such diminished involvement can restrain chances of dialogic learning, peer communication as well as co-creation of knowledge.

In contrast, the increased participation can be achieved through positive attitudes towards EMI and favorable classroom climate. By adopting an inclusive pedagogical approach, i.e., giving students a chance to discuss in a small group, clarifying use of first language when suitable, and establishing a low-anxiety classroom, students can feel freer to do academic discourse via English. The connection of EMI to academic engagement therefore shows the relevance of classroom activities to the engagement and learning outcomes of students.

Research Gaps in Student-Centered EMI Studies

Even though the EMI research has grown significantly in number, the body of literature has concentrated often on macro level policy discourses and the attitudes of teachers towards EMI implementation. There is a relatively smaller literature that has preempted the voices of students especially in the south Asian countries like Pakistan. The fact that little has been given to the lived experiences of students in EMI classrooms limits the knowledge on how EMI works at the micro level of classroom interaction and learning practices.

Furthermore, most EMI research works take generalized or cross-national approaches, thus underrepresenting institutional and sociolinguistic contexts under which EMI experiences are being experienced in specific universities. Empirical studies on the perception of EMI among students as it relates to their experiences related to learning, language difficulty, and academic participation patterns are needed in a context-specific evidence. These types of research may offer evidence-based information to support EMI pedagogy, curriculum development, and student support services at local institutions of higher learning.

Theoretical Framework

The current paper was based on a sociocultural approach to learning that considers learning as a socially mediated process that can be influenced by interaction, language, and engagement in classroom activities. In this respect, language is not just a channel through which content knowledge can be transmitted but one of the key mechanisms by which learners build meaning, negotiate knowledge and engage in academic communities. English is used as a means of instruction and a resource that is symbolic in nature that determines access to disciplinary knowledge and participation opportunities in EMI classrooms. Learning experiences and academic

interaction of the students are consequently connected closely to their capacity to utilize and adopt English in classroom interactions.

Besides sociocultural approaches, the research uses the notion of the student engagement as a conceptualization tool in its effort to describe academic involvement in EMI settings. The Student engagement theory identifies the behavioral, cognitive and affective aspects of learning activity participation. Behavioral engagement is defined as classroom participation which can be observed, including question asking and participating in classroom discussion; cognitive engagement is defined as the investment to know course material and, finally, affective engagement is defined as the feelings, attitudes and feelings of belonging in classroom. These aspects of engagement, in EMI contexts, are mediated by the language competence of students and their views of EMI as facilitating or inhibiting significant involvement.

The framework also reflects the findings of second language learning perspectives that emphasize on the success of language proficiency, comprehensible input and chances to use the target language meaningfully in learning. EMI classes subject students to academic exposure to English in content-based environments, which could facilitate language learning. Yet, in case the linguistic requirements surpass the existing levels of proficiency of students, EMI-based learning can cause cognitive load, decreased understanding, and decreased classroom interaction. This tension is an encouragement to study the perceived language problems of students and their learning experiences and patterns of participation.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives have offered a basis through which the perception of students towards EMI at the University of the Punjab can be interpreted. The sociocultural paradigm previews the importance of language mediated interaction in learning, student engagement theory justifies differences in academic participation, and perspectives on second language learning address the linguistic issues that exist in the EMI contexts. This synthetic model puts into focus the discourse of how EMI influences learning experience of students, their language related problems and how they engage in academic activities in classroom in institutions of higher learning.

Research Design

The current study uses a mixed-methods research design in an attempt to understand the perception of students towards the English-Medium Instruction (EMI) at the University of the Punjab in relation to learning experiences, language issues, and academic involvement. To achieve the breadth and depth of knowledge, a mixed-methods methodology was chosen and used to combine quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative component allows establishing the overall trends in perceptions and experiences of the students, whereas the qualitative component allows gaining a profound understanding of the lived experience of the classroom by the students. The study is cross-sectional and the data were collected at one point in time to get current experiences of students with EMI.

Research Context and Participants

The research was done in the University of the Punjab which is a large public-sector university in Pakistan and English is the commonly spoken language of instruction in different academic fields. N= 110 undergraduate students who are pursuing EMI-based programs in selected faculties took part in the survey. A purposive sampling plan was used to conduct a recruitment of the students who had previously attended EMI one academic semester at least so that the participants could be acquainted with the classroom EMI practices. Students with various academic backgrounds were

incorporated in the sample to represent various learning experiences and the language-related issues. Table 1 gives the demographic features of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 110)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	57	52
	Male	53	48
Year of Study	2nd Year	38	35
	3rd Year	44	40
	4th Year	28	25
Prior Medium of Instruction	Urdu-medium	66	60
	English-medium	33	30
	Regional-language-medium	11	10

Note. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

To conduct the qualitative phase, Twelve students were purposively selected from the survey respondents take part in the semi-structured interviews to obtain a better understanding of the student experiences, language-related issues and classroom participation. Inclusion in both stages of the research was voluntary. Demographic data like discipline, year of study, and previous medium of instruction were taken in order to put findings in perspective.

Data Collection Instruments

Two major data-gathering tools that included a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The questionnaire was developed to test the attitude of EMI and learning experience, language problems, and student academic engagement depending on Likert-scale questions. The tool itself was informed by EMI in relation to previous research and a small pilot sample that included students was obtained to establish the state of clarity and reliability. The 12 participants who were selected were interviewed semi-structured so as to get more information on what the students go through, their challenges, and how they coped in EMI classrooms. The interview guide was made up of open-ended questions that enabled the interviewees to explain their perception and experiences in the classroom.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was conducted in one of the academic terms. Questionnaire was conducted either face-to-face or online format based on the availability of the respondents, and the students had ample time to fill out the survey. After the questionnaire stage the semi-structured interviews were held with the chosen participants who agreed to be involved further. The interviews were carried out either in English or in both English and Urdu, according to the choices of participants, to permit expressing the views comfortably and fruitfully. All the interviews were also audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed to be analyzed. Before

the collection of data, the participants were made aware of the study objective and their voluntary involvement.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative information was represented in the 110 questionnaire answers and was analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics to generalize the trends in the perceptions of students, their learning experiences, language difficulties, and their engagement in academic life. Inferential statistics were used where relevant to investigate correlation among the important variables, including perceived language proficiency and classroom involvement. The data that were gathered through qualitative methods (the 12 interviews) were analyzed with the help of thematic data analysis, which was organized in a systematic way of coding, developing the theme, and interpreting the results. The qualitative results were applied to support and contextualize the quantitative results allowing to obtain a more in depth picture of the experiences of students in EMI classrooms.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics was highly maintained during the study. Before the data collection, the participants were made aware of the objective of the research, the voluntary nature of the research and their right to discontinue at any point with no adverse effects on them. All participants were informed and gave consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were attained, by coding the participants and excluding any identifying data in the records. All the data were kept safely and used in the academic research purposes only. The research followed the institutional ethical standards.

Data Analysis and Findings

This part provides the main study findings in terms of the examination of 110 questionnaire survey answers and semi-structured interviews of 12 undergraduate students at the University of the Punjab. The results are systematically arranged according to the overall perceptions of students about English-Medium Instruction (EMI), their learning experience, language-based issues, their involvement in academic activities and classroom learning, and the coping skills and support requirements reported by the students.

Students' Overall Perceptions of EMI

In general, the students reported ambivalent yet rather optimistic-pessimistic concerns about EMI. A large number of the participants considered EMI to be helpful in improving their English language skills, increasing access to global academic materials, and equipping them to take part in future academic and professional prospects. EMI was usually viewed as a symbol of educational excellence and international applicability. But together with the perceived advantages, many students also said that EMI made learning more difficult, especially during their first few years of university. Some of the interviewees pointed out that EMI put them under pressure to achieve in a language where they did not have the confidence to perform, thus they ended up feeling stressed and doubtful about themselves. What was implied by these results is that the students are aware of the returns of EMI in the long-term but their immediate experience in the classroom is usually influenced by linguistic and affective issues.

Learning Experiences in EMI Classrooms

Learning in EMI classrooms was seen as both an opportunity and a limited experience to students. On the one hand, the questionnaire replies revealed that exposure to English in the academic setting assisted students to build a level of familiarity with disciplinary terms and academic language. According to some participants in the interview, EMI helped them to be more active in reading

English-language textbooks, research articles and web-based materials, which they believed helped them in their academic growth. Conversely, quite a number of students complained that they had difficulty in comprehending lectures given in English especially where the lecturers were speaking at a high rate or were using unfamiliar technical language. The difficulties in comprehension were found to have inclusive impact on taking notes, grasping of main concepts and general effectiveness of learning. Some of the interviewees had explained that they, in most cases, had to be very dependent on the lecture slides or other related materials to fill the gaps in their understanding during live lectures.

Language-Related Challenges

The issue of language became a prominent theme in the EMI experiences of students when they were asked to narrate their experiences. The students often claimed that they had some problems with academic vocabulary and discipline-specific terminology and listening comprehension. Speaking English aloud was found to be especially difficult, and many participants of the interview said that they felt nervous about committing grammatical or speech-related mistakes in the presence of their peers. Academic writing in English also came out as a tasking activity especially in regard to organization of arguments and academic form. These language issues were discovered to be a source of cognitive overload because students were forced to process both the knowledge of content and the language requirements at the same time. Consequently, there were some students who said that they did not always reflect their knowledge of subject matter, but the comfort of English.

The most common challenges associated with language that were noted most often by students in EMI classrooms are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Most Frequently Reported EMI Challenges (N = 110)

Challenge	N	%
Difficulty understanding lectures in English	72	65%
Limited academic vocabulary	66	60%
Anxiety about speaking in class	58	53%
Understanding discipline-specific terminology	54	49%
Academic writing in English	47	43%
Note-taking during English lectures	41	37%

Note. Percentages are used to show the number of students who experienced each challenge as a percentage (more than one answer was possible).

Table 2 demonstrates that the most common challenges were lecture comprehension and limited academic vocabulary, and speaking anxiety came out as the third, which implies that oral/aural EMI requirements can be a significant source of participation and learning challenges.

Academic Participation and Classroom Interaction

The confidence of using English in students was closely correlated with the levels of academic participation and interaction during lessons. The outcomes of the survey have shown that the respondents who had a relatively higher level of self-reported proficiency in English showed a higher willingness in asking questions, engaging in discussions and working in the group. Students who felt their proficiency in English were low, on the contrary, claimed they took passive roles in classroom interactions. The fear of causing mistakes, fear of being judged by fellow peers and failing to understand questions were among the most frequently mentioned reasons to reduced participation. Some of the participants of the interview said that they would rather keep quiet during conversations even when they had something to say. These trends indicate that EMI has the potential to influence participation in such a way that privilege students with stronger English proficiency, which may disrupt extensive interaction and fair learning in EMI classrooms.

Coping Strategies and Support Needs

Students claimed to use various coping skills to deal with the issues that were caused by EMI. The pre-reading course materials, bilingual resources or translation, peer consultation, and the use of online aids to help in understanding and developing vocabulary were the most common strategies. Respondents of the interviews emphasized the significance of peer support groups, including study groups, in their struggle towards EMI-related challenges. The participants also indicated that they would require more institutional and pedagogic assistance, such as the explanation of the complex concepts in a clearer way, slower speaking, and using additional materials in a more available language. Some of the interviewees indicated that they would like more language support classes, academic writing workshops and orientation programs aimed at EMI to make their learning experiences and engagement more productive. This is because of the importance of combining systematic language support mechanisms in the EMI programs, which will effectively support various needs of students.

Discussion

The section is the interpretation of the major findings of the research concerning the perceptions of students towards English-Medium Instruction (EMI) at the University of the Punjab with specific references to the learning experiences, language-related problems, and the tendencies in studying. The findings are placed within the theoretical context of the study and the wider research on EMI and reflect on how these findings will inform the EMI classroom practices in higher education.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The results indicate that there is a relatively conservative-positive attitude of students towards English-Medium Instruction (EMI). Even though the idea of EMI is viewed as positive in contributing to improving the level of English proficiency and potentially enhancing students future academic and career opportunities, the direct classroom experiences of students are frequently conditioned by the constraints of the language and the feelings of the students. The fact that it is both beneficial and challenging at the same time is indicative of the duality of EMI as a means of language growth and a possible impediment to acquiring content. The prominence of language-related challenges specifically in the realm of listening comprehension, academic vocabulary, and oral expression, shows that EMI leaves a significant intellectual burden on students that are yet to acquire academic competence in English. Such requirements may lower the

self esteem of the students and decrease their eagerness to actively participate in classroom communication.

Further, there was an obvious correlation between experience of language competence and academic engagement. There was also a tendency that students who ranked higher on confidence in English were much more involved in classroom activities and those who were lower ranked on the same were more likely to embrace passive patterns of participation. This result indicates the mediation status of language in determining access to participation and learning opportunities in EMI classrooms among students. Socioculturally, a decreased level of participation would restrict the possibilities of using dialog and co-creating knowledge that, in its turn, would restrict the learning results of students with less-than-perfect knowledge of English.

Discussion in Relation to Previous Studies

The present study results are in line with prior studies that have indicated the ambiguous and context-specific influence of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) on student learning in non-native English-speaking classrooms. Similar to the previous research, participants had been aware of the instrumental importance of EMI in gaining access to international academic resources and better future employability. Simultaneously, the language-connected issues that have been discovered in the current case are also similar to those commonly found in the literature on EMI, such as the issues with listening to lectures, reading academic literature, and speaking when participating in classroom activities. The presence of the observed link between the lower language confidence and lesser classroom participation also resonate with the previous studies indicating the possibility that EMI developmentally disproportionately benefits students of stronger English proficiency.

Moreover, the coping mechanisms that were found to be used by the respondents, that is, the use of bilingual resources, cooperation with peers, and informal networks, coincide with the prior literature that has indicated that students in EMI actively manage the language requirements of EMI by employing self-initiate coping mechanisms. Although these practices can help to reduce the short-term learning challenges, they also indicate the scarcity of institutionalized support to help overcome the language-related challenges in the EMI setting. The current results thus support the appeals in the literature that more pedagogically informed and linguistically responsive strategies to the implementation of EMI that integrate content learning and structured language support.

Implications for EMI Classroom Practices

The results suggest a number of significant implications of EMI classroom practices at the University of the Punjab and other similar higher education settings. To begin with, EMI teachers need to embrace linguistically responsive pedagogical practices in order to minimize the obstacles to the content learning. These can involve directly defining important vocabulary, briefly summarizing complicated ideas, multimodal, (e.g., visuals, outlines, guided notes) and lecturing at a pace that can be understood. These practices have the potential of assisting students to locate disciplinary material more successfully when negotiating the language requirements of EMI.

Second, it is critical to have a supportive classroom atmosphere where participation is encouraged without any fear of negative judgments in order to reduce anxiety about the use of English in students. The structured interaction time may be utilized to enable more inclusive interaction, in the form of small group discussion, the pair work and low stakes speaking activity in which the learners with different language confidence levels will be engaged in a constructive manner.

Third, language support in EMI courses can be used to offer students improved academic experiences and engagement. This may involve the cooperation of subject teachers with language professionals, inclusion of activities of language development in the subject courses and language support workshops. Finally, the institutional policies should acknowledge languages diversities of students and have a consistent support system so that the full implementation of EMI will be adhered to. A combination of these actions would perhaps help to ensure that EMI is not just a policy statement, but open pedagogical process that may help in meaningful learning process and equitable academic participation.

Conclusion

The study examined how students are perceived about English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in the University of the Punjab, particularly, the learning experience, the problems to address the language and the role to play in the higher education classrooms. These findings indicate that although it is claimed that there is an overall academic and professional utility of EMI, students are exposed to a very large proportion of linguistic and affective load in their day-to-day classroom tasks. It has been observed that EMI is exposing students to increased exposure to academic English and access to international sources of knowledge but the ability to comprehend lectures, academic vocabulary, and a lack of confidence in using English have restricted the learning and interaction of students.

The paper indicates the prominent role of language in access and engagement of students towards learning opportunities in EMI. Those students who mentioned that they felt more confident speaking English were more likely to actively participate in classroom communication, and those whose perceived proficiency was lower in English were played a passive role. These tendencies show that a lack of proper pedagogical coupled with linguistic interventions may reproduce in an unconscious way the classroom participation and learning differences.

This study by preempting the views of students introduces context based evidence to the literature that is currently emerging in EMI in higher education in Pakistan. The results suggest the need to integrate EMI policies and classroom practices which are linguistically sensitive. To transform EMI into a competent and equitable channel of teaching, the supportive strategies must be provided by integrative pedagogical practices and institutional language support procedures. The current study can be extended in the future with longitudinal changes in the EMI experience of students and incorporation of the teacher and administration insight into the research to make the EMI application in higher education a more multifaceted notion.

Implications and Recommendations

According to the findings of the present study, this part gives significant implications and practical recommendations on the best way to enhance the application of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education. The discussion used three interdependent levels, which were classroom pedagogy, institutional and policy practices, and support mechanisms of students. Being a set of recommendations, they are supposed to expand upon the effectiveness and inclusivity of EMI in response to the learning experience of the students, the issues related to language, and how they are engaged in the study processes at the University of the Punjab.

Pedagogical Implications for EMI Teachers

The findings point to the prominent role of EMI teachers in defining the learning process and patterns of engagement of the students in the English-based classes. The teachers are encouraged to undertake educational opportunities to engage in linguistically responsive pedagogical practices

that can promote content learning because the learners may possess varying levels of English proficiency. The practices may include a direct explanation of the key concepts, teaching the key academic words beforehand and using multimodal materials (e.g., pictures, summaries, notes) to support the learning process.

It is also necessary to create a low-anxiety classroom environment that enables questions and values contributions of the students without their fear of being judged. The interactive pedagogical methods involving a small-group discussion, peer-to-peer work, and scaffolding exercises can provide the students with the facilitated process of using English in academic life, and communicative confidence building throughout the course. Lastly, further improvement in the quality and efficacy of EMI classroom practices can be provided by continuous professional growth of EMI teachers in communication strategies in the classroom and language-conscious pedagogy.

Institutional and Policy Implications

The institutional level is the level that the application of EMI should be supported by the coherent policies which will appreciate the linguistic diversity of the student population. The universities must also make sure that EMI implementation is not merely a policy that must be implemented but a pedagogical move that must be properly equipped with resources and planning. The institutional policies can involve the explicit regulations regarding the implementation of EMI, promotion of the design of curriculum aimed at the combination of the language growth with the content acquisition, and the regular monitoring of EMI practices according to the student responses. One should also think of realistic language proficiency standards of EMI entry and progression, without any form of exclusionary behaviors that can favor students with non-English-media backgrounds. The training programs on EMI pedagogy and language-aware instruction should be also invested in order to make the institutional objectives and the classroom reality meet.

Support Mechanisms for EMI Students

The study depicts that it should have structural support systems that assist the students to adjust to the language and the academic requirements of EMI. It is recommended that the institutions of higher learning should provide special language support, such as writing centers, speaking clinics, and language workshops in individual disciplines that would help the students gain access to academic English skills necessary in the EMI environment. Orientation programs can be used to help incoming students to learn the expectations and strategies of studying in EMI by introducing the new students to this learning environment. Pearl mentoring and study support programs may also be used to conduct collaborative learning and also reduce the usage of informal coping in the students. In addition, easy-to-learn learning materials, including vocabularies of key terms and other contents written in a simplified language, can be used to facilitate the understanding and interest. The support mechanisms can be collectively used as a means of offering more justifiable learning opportunities, in addition to boosting the educational involvement of the students in the EMI programs.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the fact that the current study offers rather useful data concerning the perception of students about the English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in the University of the Punjab, there are also several limitations that need to be considered. First, the sample size of a single Pakistani university of the public sector does not allow extrapolating the findings to other universities in

Pakistan or other countries, where EMI policies, culture of discipline, and support systems may vary.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data which is prone to subjective interpretation of participants, recall, and the social desirability bias. This implies that the reported experiences may not portray the role of complexity in the classroom practice or the actual size of the comprehensive experience in the field of language-related issues. Third, the cross-sectional design provides a momentary picture of the perception of the students of the things at a specific moment and does not take into consideration the opportunity of the experiences and attitudes shifting as the students keep studying at their academic programs and get even more exposure to EMI.

Finally, the study did not provide classroom observations and objective testing of language abilities which would have provided a better triangulation of results. Future studies that involve longitudinally research designs, observational and criteria based measures of language competence can provide a more complex and multidimensional view of the EMI experiences in the higher learning environments.

Future Research Direction

Future research can also improve the present study in a number of important dimensions. The longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the essence of the changes in the perceptions of the students of English-Medium Instruction (EMI), language-related issues and academic involvement with time as they progress in their academic studies and experience more exposure to the English language in disciplinary studies. Such designs would give additional information about the long run impacts of EMI on the learning paths and language development in the schools.

This can be done in future studies by undertaking comparative modes of study by examining EMI practices in different universities, disciplines, or even regions in Pakistan to identify how institutions and situational demands affect the experiences of the students. The perspective of students would be a multi-voiced perspective to the comprehension of classroom dynamics of EMI, because of the classroom observations, and the opinions of teachers would be taken into consideration. Besides, the efficacy of pedagogical intervention and the institutional language support programs can be evaluated in the future to enhance the student engagement and learning outcomes in EMI. All these areas of investigation have the potential to lead to evidence-based solutions to EMI policy and practice in higher education.

References

Airey, J. (2012). "I don't teach language." The linguistic attitudes of physics lecturers teaching in English as a medium of instruction. AILA Review, 25(1), 64–79. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.25.05air

Baker, W. (2015). Culture and identity through English as a lingua franca: Rethinking concepts and goals in intercultural communication. De Gruyter Mouton.

Björkman, B. (2013). English as an academic lingua franca: An investigation of form and communicative effectiveness. De Gruyter Mouton.

Coleman, J. A. (2006). English-medium teaching in European higher education. Language Teaching, 39(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480600320X

Curle, S., & Derakhshan, A. (2021). Teachers' psychological well-being in EMI: A systematic review. System, 99, 102498. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102498

Dearden, J. (2014). English as a medium of instruction – a growing global phenomenon. British Council.

Dafouz, E., & Smit, U. (2020). ROAD-MAPPING English medium education in the internationalised university. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hu, G., & Lei, J. (2014). English-medium instruction in Chinese higher education: A case study of internationalization. Higher Education, 67(5), 551–567. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9661-5

Kirkpatrick, A. (2014). English as a medium of instruction in East and Southeast Asian universities. In N. Murray & A. Scarino (Eds.), Dynamic ecologies (pp. 15–32). Springer.

Macaro, E. (2018). English medium instruction: Content and language in policy and practice. Oxford University Press.

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. Language Teaching, 51(1), 36–76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350

Nguyen, H. T. M., & Le, T. T. (2019). Students' perceptions of English-medium instruction in Vietnamese universities. Journal of Asia TEFL, 16(2), 692–707.

Pecorari, D., Malmström, H., Irvine, A., & Shaw, P. (2011). Student use of sources in EMI contexts. Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 10(3), 184–195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.05.004

Pun, J., & Jin, X. (2021). Student challenges and learning experiences in EMI: A case study. International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 24(7), 1085–1099. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1502269

Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019). Global Englishes for language teaching. Cambridge University Press.

Smit, U., & Dafouz, E. (2012). Integrating content and language in higher education: English-medium education in Europe. AILA Review, 25(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.25.01smi

Tatzl, D. (2011). English-medium instruction in higher education: Learning challenges and strategies. ELT Journal, 65(3), 252–260. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq086

Thompson, G., & Sylvén, L. K. (2015). Does English-medium instruction benefit students' English proficiency? Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 36(3), 209–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.918435

Wilkinson, R. (2013). English-medium instruction at a Dutch university. In A. Doiz, D. Lasagabaster, & J. M. Sierra (Eds.), English-medium instruction at universities (pp. 3–24). Multilingual Matters.

Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. M. (2013). English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges. Multilingual Matters.