

Students' Perceptions of English-Medium of Instruction in a Malaysian Public University

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ABSTRACT

For decades, English has been broadly utilized as medium of instruction in teaching and learning in various countries across the world. However, fewer research has been done in Malaysia context, to further identify the students' perceptions with regards to the use of EMI in learning. Therefore, this research is conducted to explore the students' perceptions on English as medium of instruction as well as identifying the influence of personality and environmental conditions towards their perceptions on EMI. This research focuses on investigating the advantages of using EMI in learning and exploring the influence of personality and environmental conditions on learners' perceptions. A qualitative method was used for this study which involves the use of semi-structured and email interviews. The findings of this study have revealed a few advantages on the use of EMI in students learning. Also, the result indicated that personality and environmental conditions are two major factors that influence students' positive perceptions towards the implementation of EMI. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will provide useful insights for future educators and researchers.

Keywords: English-Medium Instruction (EMI), Students' Perceptions, English Language Learning, English Education in Malaysia, Higher Education Policy

INTRODUCTION

In this fast-changing world, English has become more than just a necessity in the field of education today. Chen & Kraklow (2015) claim that English has been perceived as an international language of communication and instruction, especially in the global context of higher education. From year to year, English has always been the language that is used as a means for communication, teaching and learning, business transaction etc. According to Tamtam et al. (2012), English is gaining its popularity as this is the language that monopolizes various sectors including arts, education, culture, and business. Owing to this, a huge number of higher institutions across the world are keen towards implementing the use of English as medium of instruction in their respective universities. This may happen because EMI is very much needed to allow for students' exchange, increase graduate marketability and also to encourage more students and lecturers from all over the world to enroll into the university. Therefore, the implementation of EMI policy is necessary as one of the means to empower the higher education sector.

In Malaysia's context, globalization and internationalization are critical factors that have altered the position of English in this country; hence, influencing the growing need to use English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at the tertiary level. This is because, EMI is regarded as an essential tool in the process of gaining knowledge as well as medium for interaction and communication. To add, Ali (2013) suggests that the driving force that

leads to the implementation of EMI in Malaysia is simply due to its importance in preparing students for the global markets and internationalizing education as it is crucial for economic development. As a university student, it is undeniably true that the use of EMI in teaching and learning has greatly facilitated the process of acquiring the knowledge of a subject matter as most resources use English as the primary mode of language in transferring knowledge. Due to this, it has grown interest in me to explore other students' perceptions on how the use of EMI has influenced their learning and career development. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate further the students' perception and experience on the use of EMI in their courses and how do their identity and social background has shaped their perceptions towards EMI.

Over the years, there have been many previous literatures that have indicated the use of EMI as effective and valuable in elevating the quality of education. Hu (2009) claim that this is simply due to the implementation of EMI will boost the university's reputation in which it will elevate their rankings and indirectly, this will posit more interest from all students across the world to be a part of the university. Therefore, EMI is perceived as a crucial element in enhancing the quality of tertiary education. With regards to this, several numbers of studies also have shown that the use of EMI has impacted both teachers and students positively and negatively in their process of teaching and learning. According to Tsui & Ngo (2016), research conducted in a Hong Kong university has revealed that most students acknowledge the use of English as medium of instruction has greatly improved their understanding of the course content and emphasized on how EMI is needed to empower their career development in the future. This is because, the use of EMI has given more rooms for students discover more dimension of knowledge that are beyond their first language. On the other hand, a study by Evan & Morrison (2011) indicated that some students posit negative perception towards the implementation of EMI as they believed it has reduced their confidence to ask questions during the lecturer. The researchers further elaborate that students were afraid that they might use the wrong English, and some complained that the use of EMI has made the process of learning became even harder and taxing for them. This has shown that there are various perceptions with regards to how students perceived English as medium of instruction in their respective learning institutions.

Despite the abundance number of studies, Civan & Coskun (2016) has claimed that some of the previous literature works were done quantitatively, and there is a growing need for in-depth study as the language policy keeps evolving throughout the years. However, in the Malaysian ESL setting, a limited number of research have been done to explore the students' views and opinions of EMI in a public university. Therefore, this study aims to explore further the perceptions of Malaysian university students on the advantages of EMI towards their learning, career development and internationalization, and how the identity background affects their perceptions towards EMI. By investigating the students' perceptions of EMI, this study's outcome can be used to provide the related agency with more insight on the improvement that can be made to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of EMI in tertiary education.

Research Objectives

The statements below are the research objectives for this study:

1. To identify the university students' perceptions on the advantages of using EMI in their learning, career, and internationalization.
2. To explore the influence of students' personality and social background on their perceptions towards EMI policy.

Research Questions

To further explore the students' perceptions of English as a medium of instruction, the following research questions are developed to guide this study.

1. What are the students' perceptions on the advantages of EMI in relation to learning, career, and internationalization?
2. How do the students' personality and environmental conditions influence their perceptions towards the implementation of EMI policy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section aims to provide a more in-depth understanding on the topic of this research. Therefore, it covers the significant findings from multiple studies, and a brief review will be included of various studies conducted in the past pertaining to the students' perceptions of the use of English as medium of instruction in their learning.

Definition of English as Medium of Instruction

In the field of education today, English language has been broadly used in various disciplines and it has become an essential element that is needed in the process of transferring knowledge and skills. In other words, English is the language that is primarily used in various medium of instruction to convey meaning from one person to another. Throughout the years, the meaning of EMI has gone through multiple shifts due to its rapid development; therefore, the meaning of EMI is still evolving. According to Madhavan Brochier (2016), EMI is interpreted as teaching subjects using English language without creating specific language learning goals and this form of instruction often takes place in a country where English is not the first language. This suggests that EMI is a form of instruction in which English language is used for the learning; however, little emphasis is given towards the language learning outcomes.

Taguchi (2014) posits a similar definition as above whereby EMI is described as an essential tool that is very much needed in the process of attaining knowledge of the academic subjects and there are no specific language outcomes involved. This definition implies that the use of EMI is mainly emphasized to help learners gain content knowledge without having to put too much focus on the language outcomes. According to Macaro et al. (2017), despite the growing development of EMI across the world, we still need a fluid definition of EMI that can be used in all levels of educational setting. This is because, EMI might be interpreted differently depending on the teachers' profile and variation of program offered in the university. Regardless of that, Dearden (2015) has defined EMI as an act of using English language in teaching academic subjects in any countries or regions whereby English is not regarded as the first language of most of the population. This conception of EMI by Dearden (2015) suggests that EMI does not focusing on teaching of English as a subject; instead, he perceived EMI as a notion that emphasizes on using English to convey meaning in the process of teaching and learning. However, in a more current study, Walkinshaw et al. (2017), further claim that EMI should be perceived as "something beyond than just a language used for delivery of content knowledge through lecturing in English". They further stated that EMI encompasses several components, including the language used in textbooks and other forms of resources, the language of teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction, the language used for learning activities, the language for assignments and assessments and lastly, the language used for interaction in English that occurs outside of the classroom. Therefore, the extended version of definition of EMI proposed by Walkinshaw et al. (2017) is regarded as a notion of EMI that more fluid and comprehensive to be used in the current context of learning.

Based on all of these definitions, it can be perceived that most scholars define EMI as a concept or notion whereby English is used as the language for teaching and learning; however, it is imperative to bear in mind that EMI is also comprises of various components including learning resources, assessments and language for interaction. Hence, the definition presented by Walkinshaw et al. (2017) is perceived as the most suitable in the current context of study.

The Implementation of EMI in Higher Education

This section will further discuss the topic of EMI in tertiary level; therefore, we will discover the outcomes of implementing EMI from various countries before narrowing to the Malaysian context. Over the years, English has been implemented in various countries as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning. Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra (2011) state that the driving force that leads to such action is due to EMI as the key to promote students in the global markets and to raise the ranking of the institutions. With regards to this, EMI has been extensively used as an educational policy that help to elevate the quality of education. According to Wachter & Maiworm (2008), there have been more than 400 European universities or higher learning institutions that have adapted English as medium of instruction in their teaching and learning activities. This

implementation is highly influenced by the benefits that EMI could offer for the betterment of the educational sector. Chen & Kraklow (2015) claim that EMI has indeed enhanced language proficiency and brought several successful outcomes for the countries that have implemented the policy. However, Marsch (2006), reveals that there are some countries who have failed to successfully implement EMI which then resulted to high rate of dropout and lack of comprehension among students in universities.

On the other hand, the implementation of EMI programs in several Asian countries such as China and Korea are due to the idea that they do not want the students to be underdeveloped with regards to learning academic subjects in English (Chan, 2007). Thus, this has posited different outcomes in terms of its effects towards students learning as well as on the institutions itself. According to Chan (2007), the implementation of EMI in China has led to positive attitudes towards learning and most importantly, students are more motivated and actively participated in class to improve their learning performance. Additionally, Byun et al. (2011) claim that the implementation of EMI in tertiary level in Korea has enhanced language proficiency among students and teachers; however, there are still a huge number of faculty who cannot use EMI as they have limited proficiency in English. These claims indicate that each country has their own reasons as to why EMI is implemented in their respective countries and most importantly, the outcomes are slightly different as each has their own ways in implementing EMI policy.

In Malaysian context, Saeed et al. (2018) state that there have been a significant number of policies shifts that have taken place in the educational sector since the 1970 and this includes the implementation of English-medium of instruction in our language planning and policy. Initially, Malaysia has gained independence in 1957 and the Malay language is selected as the national language in the Malaysian Constitution. According to Gill (2006), Malay language serves as the national identity, and it is regarded as an important element to symbolize the national unity. Therefore, the Malay language was used thoroughly as medium of instruction in teaching and learning. However, in 2003, there was a change in language policy as English was then introduced as a language that is used in teaching Mathematics and Science in all primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. Omar (2016) indicates that such implementation of policy is perceived as one of the means to resolve the issues regarding the high unemployment rate which was associated with the lack of English proficiency especially among the Malays. In 2005, it was stated by Ali (2013) that EMI was implemented in all public universities; however, this implementation only involved the science and technology-based program. This has left most of the academicians with open interpretations on whether use English at tertiary level as it was not formally enacted in the policy at that particular time. Nonetheless, Kaur (2020) states that Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has introduced a policy named “Internationalization Policy for Higher Education Malaysia” in 2011 whereby it is aimed to increase the number of international students into our universities. With this implementation, Ministry of Higher Education (2011) has addressed a few components that need to be taken into action by all public universities in Malaysia. These components include the use of English as medium of instruction in all managerial and academic sector in higher education; therefore, the universities are required to use English in all course materials and assessments as well as ensuring all documents in relation to academic program to be delivered in English to accommodate the international staff and students. In addition, Ministry of Higher Education (2011) also stated in the policy that English must be used as medium of communication in all platforms including emails, signboards, announcements etc. Therefore, Kaur (2020) claims that this has become an “enabling policy” that further strengthen the need for all universities to use English as medium of instruction and communication in the components mentioned above.

Through this, it can be observed that Malaysia has gradually implemented EMI in their language policy and the driving force that leads to such implementation is due to certain factors. According to Gill (2006), globalization and internationalization are the two major contributing factors which lead Malaysia to incorporate EMI into the teaching and learning. This is because, English is perceived as a language with the highest potential value that could empower both economy and education sector in most developing countries (Gill, 2006). Besides, Kaur (2020) highlights that Malaysia’s own ambitions to become a developed nation as well as center of educational hub are also some of the factors that have prompted the implementation of EMI into the teaching and learning. Hence, it can be indicated that the use of English-medium of instruction is valuable in contributing to enhance the quality of our education.

Students' Perceptions of English as Medium of Instruction

By referring to previous studies, it can be identified that English-medium of instruction (EMI) has been extensively used due to its effectiveness in empowering the students and teachers as well as the quality of education. Therefore, there are various perceptions with regards as to how EMI is viewed by students across the world, and this highly relies on their circumstances in learning. Research by Floris (2014) in Indonesia revealed that nearly half of the students in the university viewed EMI classes as very important to enhance their mastery of English so as not to be left behind; therefore, it is imperative to use English for other subjects and as a means of interaction outside of the classroom. By doing so, students would have more chances to use English in their learning apart from their existing English classes. Additionally, a few students also stated that the use of EMI in non-language classrooms has provided them with more opportunities to improve in their language performance effectively (Floris, 2014). However, these students are of intermediate to advanced level of English proficient; therefore, this may influence their positive perceptions towards the use of EMI in their learning. Other than that, a study by Rowland & Murray (2019) shows that majority of the students in a master's program viewed the process of delivering the courses in English as an effective way to empower their learning experience as it has enhanced their understanding of the course content. This is because, some students acknowledged that they gain better exposure to the technical terms when there are introduced in English; hence, it has greatly improved their understanding of the concepts learned in the course.

Another research by Macaro & Akincioglu (2017) has identified that both female and male students in a Turkey private university perceived the use of EMI as beneficial in developing their career opportunities abroad. In fact, the female students also claim that they are more motivated to learn using EMI as they believe it would have a significant impact on their future. This implies the idea that the use of EMI has not only impacted their learning, in fact, it also has positively influenced their future job opportunities. Apart from that, Wanphet & Tantawy (2017) mention that most students are more inclined towards EMI as they perceived this implementation as valuable in facilitating students to enhance their skills to communicate in English. Also, the students claim that most of the learning resources are in English; hence, this has encouraged them to use more of English in their learning as well as in communicating (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2017). Similarly, Phuong & Nguyen (2019) reveal that almost 70% of the students agree that EMI has made their learning much easier as most information and learning materials are written in English. As a result, it has increased their accessibility to a wider range of learning resources. To add, Phuong & Nguyen (2019) also emphasize that students react positively towards EMI as they believe that EMI classes have further empowered their subject matter knowledge and increase their job opportunities in the future.

Furthermore, a study conducted in Korea by Kim & Yoon (2018) state that most of the university students were supportive and portrayed positive attitudes towards EMI as they perceived the implementation of EMI classes as advantageous for their own personal gains as well as for the university reputation. This is because, the students claim that being in EMI classes has paved ways for them to improve in their speaking/communication skills in English and most importantly, provide more opportunities for gaining major knowledge that might be useful in their future. Also, they believe that EMI classes are useful for the university as this has encouraged students exchange and allowed more international students to enroll into the institutions (Kim & Yoon, 2018). This indicates that EMI has impacted both students and university in a positive way as they gain more benefits by implementing EMI in their managerial and academic sector.

Besides, Rahmadani (2016) mention that students perceived English as medium of instruction that facilitate them to have a better understanding of the subjects that they are learning as certain terms are easier to comprehend when they are introduced in English. Also, the researcher states in the study that majority of the students viewed EMI as a means for them to become more motivated in learning as they are more interested if the teachers use English in teaching the subjects. This gives an indication that students believe that the use of EMI has brought a positive influence towards their learning. However, Kim, Kweon & Kim (2016) has posited that students perceived EMI as detrimental to their learning because some of them have limited English proficiency. Due to this, the students claim that the use of EMI would make the learning process even more difficult and eventually, making them to lose their confidence in using English. Through this, it can be perceived that there are a few similarities and differences in the way students perceive the use of EMI in their

learning. Therefore, it has signified the idea that the use of EMI policy has both resulted in positive and negative responses from the students.

Conceptual Framework

This research is conducted based on the lens of a conceptual framework, known as MUSIC Model, which is proposed by Jones (2018) in identifying how external and internal factors influence students' perceptions of Motivation Component, in which this will affect their engagement, learning performance and motivation towards the L2. Jones (2018) constructed this model with the idea to examine the factors that influence the students' perceptions and motivation. This is because, these components play a huge role in shaping students' perception and motivation in learning the second language.

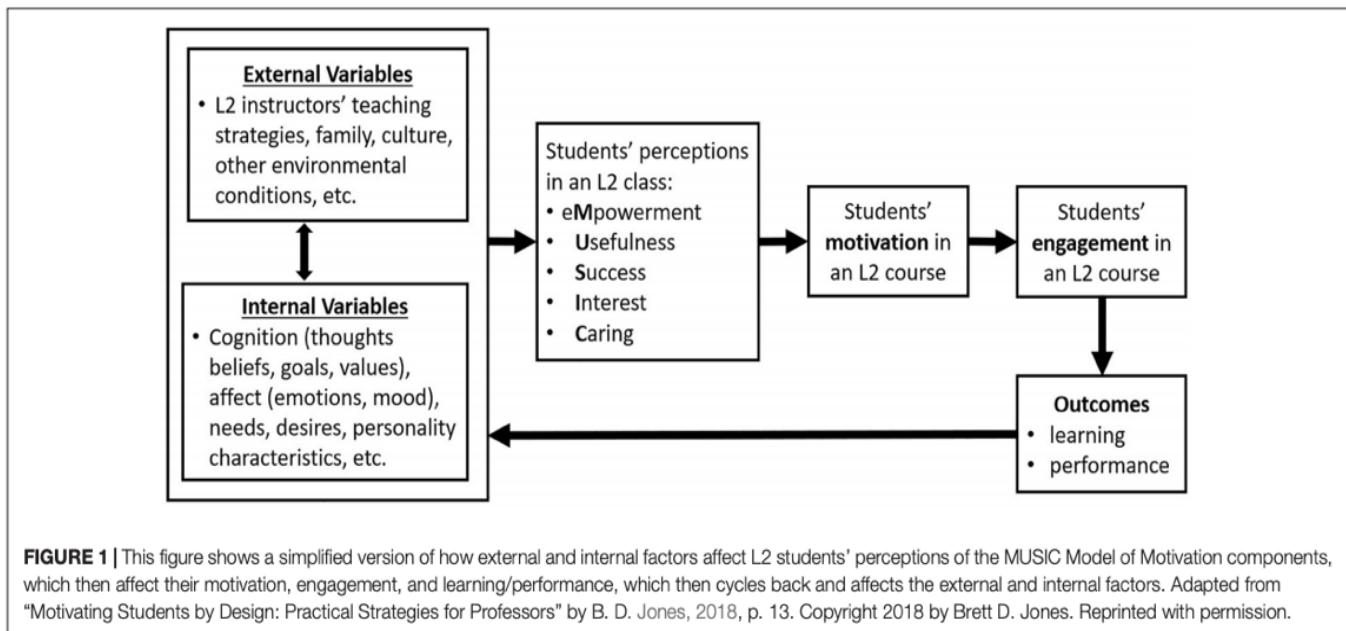


Figure 1 MUSIC Model of Motivation (Jones, 2018)

As seen in the Figure 1 above, Jones (2018) indicated that there are two types of factors that influence students' perceptions of L2: external and internal factors. The external factors include L2 instructors' teaching strategies, family, culture, environmental conditions etc., while the internal factors refer to students' cognition and affect which comprises of emotions, personality, desires etc. In this model, Jones (2018) proposed the notion that students' internal and external factors play an important role to influence their perceptions in L2 and vice versa. This mean that, when the students are motivated and positively engaged, they are likely to have positive perceptions towards the L2. However, all of these rely on the internal and external variables mentioned above.

Therefore, this framework is suitable to be employed for this study as this can be used by the researcher to understand how the factors that influence students' perceptions towards English. In addition, this framework can be used to identify how students' personality and environmental conditions have influenced their perceptions towards English as medium of instruction. Hence, this framework model by Jones (2018) will be used to identify the students' responses towards English and the factors that influence their perceptions will also be able to be identified.

Research Methods

This section discusses the research methods that are used to conduct this research. The research methodology such as data collection techniques, research participants, research setting, research instrument and trustworthiness are some of the items that will be covered in this part of the report.

Research Design

This research is done by employing the naturalistic inquiry approach whereby it is conducted qualitatively to explore the in-depth perceptions of the university students on the use of English as medium of instruction in their learning. With regards to this, a qualitative study method is used to collect the data and findings that are necessary and relevant for this study. Since this research is involved in identifying the university students' perceptions and the data collected will include various opinions and views; therefore, the qualitative study method is perceived as the most suitable to further address the objectives of this study. In this study, the research is done by conducting two semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. To add, all the interview questions are constructed by the researcher and mainly emphasized on the students' perceptions on the use EMI in their learning. Therefore, further explanation on the data and findings are included in the next section of this report.

Research Participants

The selected participants for this study consist of five university students who are currently in their final year of studies in a public university in Selangor. These participants enrolled in different degree program; however, they have been using English as medium of instruction in their learning for a considerable period. The participants are female and male students, age from 22 – 23 years old. The participants were selected based on their experience in using EMI in their learning and since they have been using this for quite some time; therefore, they may have new and more fresh perceptions and experiences that can be utilized for this study.

Research Procedure

In terms of research procedure, the research is conducted by using qualitative method which involve the use of semi-structured interviews and email interviews. All interview sessions were conducted via online platform using the application named Google Meet. Since it was semi-structured interviews, all the interview questions were comprised of open-ended questions that were constructed and prepared by the researcher prior to the interview sessions. Besides, this study is aimed to delve into the in-depth perceptions of the participants; therefore, semi-structured interviews method is the most suitable as the researcher was able to include additional questions to elicit more detailed responses from the participants. Also, it is important to note that since most participants are quite occupied with their current responsibilities as a student, email interviews were conducted as it is perceived as the most accessible way for the students to answer the follow-up questions. The interview questions for all participants are the same for the email interviews.

Data Analysis

As this study employed the use of semi-structured interviews method, all the interview sessions were recorded. Prior to the interview, the participants are briefed about the interview protocol to ensure that they are well-informed about the format of the interview. This is because, such way will ease the process of each interview and participants will become more anticipative to respond to the questions asked by the researcher. Each of the interview sessions are recorded and transcribed before being presented in the form of transcription. After that, the transcriptions are then analyzed to answer the research questions. Furthermore, an email-interview is also conducted for this study. The purpose of this email interview is to probe further into the students' perceptions, and, most importantly, to seek consistency in their response. Also, this was done to ensure the trustworthiness of this research. Lastly, to ensure the anonymity of the participants, the participants' responses are presented using the pseudonyms such as Respondent A, B, C, D and E with the aim to protect their privacy. The results of the findings will be discussed further in the next section of this research.

Research Ethics

In conducting this research, there are a few ethical considerations that need to be considered before conducting the interviews. Firstly, to conduct the interviews, the participants' consent must be attained prior to the interview to ensure that they are willing to participate in the research. Therefore, the researcher prepared a consent form and emailed it to the participants to get their consent before they can begin the interview session.

In addition, since the interviews are recorded and transcribed, the researcher is required to ask permission from the participants to record their responses during the interview sessions. The participants were informed that the interview recordings are strictly used for research purposes only. Also, to protect their privacy and identity, the researchers reassured the participants that their identity will not be disclosed in this study to protect the confidentiality of the participants; therefore, they are labelled anonymously for this research.

Research Trustworthiness

Since this research is done qualitatively; hence, the trustworthiness of this study is very essential. Firstly, to ensure the credibility of this research, the triangulation method is used for this study. The triangulation was done by interviewing multiple participants who are taking different degree program from one another to cross-analyze the findings. Thus, all the findings from the selected participants were cross-checked with one another to establish credibility for this study. To add, an email interview for each participant was done to further strengthen the triangulation of the data given. Through this, the researcher can see the consistency of the responses given by the participants during the interview. In addition, to ensure the dependability of this study, the interview questions were constructed and structured without any biasness to the participants' experience or educational background. This is done to avoid any potential biasness that may arise when developing and asking the interview questions to the participants. The interview questions were also reviewed by a few peers to confirm the accuracy of the questions. Lastly, the confirmability of this study is established whereby all the interview recordings were recorded using an appropriate electronic device that is suitable for this study. All the interview recordings were transcribed manually by the researcher. Also, the interview transcriptions were sent to the respective participants in order to further confirm their responses.

RESULTS

This section aims to present the analysis obtained from the semi-structured interviews session as well as the email interviews. The audio recordings are transcribed, and all the data gathered are analyzed thoroughly by the researcher to further comprehend the responses better. Therefore, the findings are presented in the form of qualitative data and classified based on the following research questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions on the advantages of EMI in relation to learning future career, and internationalization?
2. How do the students' personality and social background of the students influence their perceptions towards the implementation of EMI policy?

Data Findings

To gain credible and reliable data for this study, the individual interviews were conducted to further explore the participants' perceptions of using EMI in their learning. Following that, email interviews were also done to investigate further participants' perceptions and experience in using EMI in their learning process. Through these methods, the data obtained are hoped to be credible for this study.

The Advantages of Using EMI as Perceived by Students

The following section will explain further on the first research questions, which mainly focuses on the students' perceptions on the advantages of using EMI in their learning, future career and internationalization. Therefore, the data presented below are the result for the first research questions. Based on the data gathered, all respondents have agreed that there are several advantages that can be identified based on the implementation of EMI in their respective courses.

Provide More Access to Learning Resources

During the interview, most respondents indicated that the use of EMI has increased their accessibility to a broader range of learning resources. One respondent stated that the implementation of EMI has opened more doors to vast learning resources that might be useful to empower your subject matter knowledge.

“.....the first one is sources are extremely vast, you can easily get any knowledge or any sort of information through the internet or through the book in English that are internationally recognized....and abundance of resources and references are in English. So.. yeah, it definitely helps to enhance a person’s subject matter knowledge.”

(Respondent D)

In addition, Respondent C also claimed in the interview that learning using EMI provides them with opportunity to be exposed to a wider range of topic and opportunities. This is because, she further elaborated that there are a lot of resources that students can find on the internet and majority of them are in English; therefore, it increases their accessibility to abundance of learning materials. This is further proven by Respondent A who stated that the use of EMI has made it easier for them in the university to find more resources in relation to their course content because more references are provided and written in English. Hence, she does not have to put too much effort in finding the materials as everything is written in English.

Respondent B also further added that using English as medium of instruction has greatly helped him in learning because a lot of the external and additional resources are published in English and the sources are much richer when English is used; thus, this has made it easier for him to do external research as the resources are vastly provided in English language.

The answers given by the respondents have suggested that they perceived the use of EMI as beneficial in their learning as it has provided them to better accessibility to the learning resources. Hence, it has paved ways for them to enhance their subject matter knowledge as they have more access to wider range of resources.

Improve Students’ Communication Skills

Furthermore, the respondents commented that the use of EMI is beneficial for their learning as it has contributed to helping them to improve in their language skills.

“...EMI helps to improve my language skills..umm, speaking skills because when the lecturer uses EMI, we are always exposed to the language. It gives us constant practice to ask and speak in English. So, yes we are always using the language.”

(Respondent E)

From this response, Respondent E mentioned that the use of EMI has given them more exposure to use the language; hence, they can practice speaking English even though they are not in their English classes. This gives an indication that the use of EMI in non-language courses has benefitted the students gain more opportunities in practicing to communicate using the language. In addition, Respondent B claimed that when English is used as medium of instruction, this has become a good initiative for them to upskill their communication skills in English. He further elaborated that that EMI does not only delivering course content in English. In fact, it has encouraged students to be able to interact using English without having to put too much emphasis on the grammatical structure. This is further strengthened when he claimed that students are not going to be judged on their grammar when EMI is used in non-language courses.

“....You see, ummm....so EMI promotes upskilling our skills to speak in English. This course being done in English helps me to interact with my friends without you know, afraid of getting judge sbb tak cakap (because they don’t speak) perfect English. “

(Respondent B)

Also, Respondent A and C further clarified that they have improved greatly in their communication skills with the help of EMI. The reason behind this is simply because they have more chances to use the language to speak with their lecturers and friends; hence, enabling them to become better at using the language for communication. Therefore, this suggests that the use of EMI involves beyond the delivery of knowledge as it also comprises the use of the language for interaction. By referring to the responses, it can be deduced that

most of the responses are inclined towards EMI as it has proven to be advantageous in facilitating them to further develop their skills to communicate in English.

Enhance Students' Understanding of the Course Content

Based on the findings, majority of the respondents stated that the use of English as medium of instruction has empowered their understanding of the content in their learning. Respondent B mentioned that her understanding of the course has increased because most of the terms are much easier to comprehend in English as compared to L1.

".....EMI helps with understanding...subject matter because the terms are easily...easier or simpler to understand when it is in English. So it helps me to understand better because you know the terms are more familiar to me when in English."

(Respondent A)

From this comment, it can be observed that Respondent A perceived EMI as a means for her to become better at understanding certain terms in her course. Therefore, it has empowered her understanding of the content. In addition, Respondent C has further proven by commenting that the use of EMI also helped her to better understand complicated concepts in the course. This is because, she claimed that certain jargons and terms are much easier to comprehend when they are introduced in English as compared to when it is written in L1; therefore, the use of EMI has facilitated them to better understand the terms and improve her comprehension of the subject. Furthermore, this is also supported by Respondent E in the email interview as she stated that when English is used during the open discussion with the lecturer, it has further reinforced her understanding of the topic. This is because she further claimed that, when all terms are in English, it is much easier to explain and comprehend the concepts; hence, the discussion will become much easier for the students to convey their ideas or opinions to the lecturer. Based on these responses, it has suggested that the use of EMI has enhanced their understanding of the course content as it is easier for them to comprehend the topic or concepts when the terms used are in English.

Promote Students' Motivation

Besides enhancing students' understanding, most of the respondents also indicated that they are more motivated to learn when EMI is used in their learning. Respondent D stated that she preferred to learn the course in English because she is more comfortable with the language.

"I prefer learning in English basically. So, when the instructor uses EMI, I feel a bit motivated because I'm comfortable with the language, so it does not feel weird for me when learning a subject in that language."

(Respondent D)

This statement suggests that Respondent D felt more motivated due to her familiarity with the language. Therefore, she is more motivated when English is used as medium of instruction. Similarly, Respondent E also stated that she feels more motivated to learn when English is used as the medium because the language has become a norm for her. Owing to that, it has given her more sense of comfortability to learn the course in English as she claimed to have love the language ever since she was in primary schools. This gives an indication that students get more motivated to learn in EMI as they feel more comfortable with the language especially when it is used in their learning. Additionally, Respondent B and C also commented that they feel motivated when EMI is used in class as they have getting so used to the language in her learning. Therefore, the familiarity and comfortability has resulted Respondent C to claim that the use of English is one of the factors that affects her motivation to pay attention during the class.

".... I would definitely say I'm more comfortable and I get more a little bit more motivated to actually learn. It is a factor that drives my motivation to actually pay more attention inside the classroom."

(Respondent C)

“....It’s more like the motivation comes from the comfortable like you’re so comfortable with the language already as a medium of instruction, that you expect emm... it to happen to you.”

(Respondent B)

Based on the responses, it has shown a clear indication that the use of EMI in students’ learning has encouraged them to become more motivated to learn the course. This is because most of them are comfortable and familiar with the language. They have been getting used to learn non-language subjects in English which then resulted them to feel more comfortable and less anxious. Consequently, when English is used as medium of instruction, they become motivated due to their comfortability and familiarity with the language. Therefore, they prefer to learn the course in English as it helps them to become more motivated and stay focus during the lecture.

Increase Future Job Opportunities

Based on the findings, it was found that the use of EMI has also benefitted the students in terms of their career opportunities. Since all the respondents are final year students, most of them perceived the use of EMI in learning may help them to have better job opportunities in the future. Respondent A and B have commented that EMI contributes to expand their chances of getting hired in the future because most employer are more inclined to have employees who are proficient in English. They stated that despite the knowledge and skills become the primary requirements, the employee’s use of English plays a vital role in enhancing their chances to be employed. This is because, there are high chances that fresh graduates will be likely to be judged and evaluated based on their English especially during the interviews or training. Therefore, both respondents perceive the use of EMI as very much needed to help the future graduates in polishing their skills in English.

“.....EMI really helps and I don’t know, but I’ve heard, like my friends – You need to have an English, they will judge you based on your English, like how fluent you are to speak, how fluent you are at writing, how good you are at organizing your points in English...”

(Respondent A)

“...if you wanna secure a job, you have to be good in English, like, it is measured because the interviews will be done in English....so having exposure to EMI, it’s umm, it’s a good exposure because it will then prepare you with communication in English skills, to prepare resume whatsoever.”

(Respondent B)

In addition, this is supported by Respondent C, who claimed that the benefit of English as medium of instruction has exposed students to more opportunities to use English. She further clarified that such exposure is essential to help students become more confident when applying for jobs as they have additional value, which is English. Therefore, it may give them more additional points apart from their technical knowledge. Besides, Respondent E also mentioned that the implementation of EMI policy is crucial for future job employment as she believed that it would help to prepare future graduates as English is in high demand by the employers at the current job market. This suggests that the implementation of EMI is beneficial for the students in both their learning and developing future career opportunities as they can acquire more additional skills that are deemed as profitable and valuable by the future employers.

Encourage Inflow of International Students

Apart from increasing future job employment, it was found that that most respondents perceived the use of EMI as effective and beneficial in attracting more international students to enroll into the university. Respondent A and E claimed that the use of EMI policy has interested more international students to enter their university. They stated that since all course content and delivery are in English, there have witnessed quite a few numbers of international students in their classes. This is because, they mentioned that English is global language that is well-known by most students across the world. Therefore, the use of English as medium of instruction has attracted students to study in Malaysia as the primary mode used in learning is English.

“....So yeah, I think in terms of that, it will definitely attract other international students to study here, as they know the university uses a lot of English...”

(Respondent A)

“.....it definitely interested and attract more international students, I think English would be something familiar for them, so...by implementing this EMI policy, it makes it easier for students to adapt and familiarize and navigate themselves in a new surrounding...so yeah”

(Respondent E)

This implies the idea that university is gaining more interest from students all over the world if they implement EMI policy in their managerial and academic sector. By doing so, the international students would feel more confident to pursue their studies in Malaysia given the fact that English is now used as primary language in teaching and learning. Additionally, Respondent C and D further added that the use of EMI in learning has allowed them to interact with their international friends as English is used as medium for communication especially when it involves group discussion. Both respondents commented that EMI has facilitated them to communicate better with their foreign peers; hence, it may become one of the factors that attract the international students to further study in Malaysia. This is because, they are not outcasted and able to interact with each other during the learning process. As a result, this may increase the rate of admission of international students in which it will help raise the university's image in international level. By referring to the responses, it can be deduced that students have perceived the use of English-medium of instruction as beneficial in their learning, future career as well as internationalization.

The Influence of Personality and Environmental Conditions on Their Perceptions Towards the Implementation of EMI

This section will discuss the findings on how the students' personality and social background has influenced the students' perception towards the implementation of EMI. Based on both interview sessions, findings revealed that the perceptions of the students towards English-medium of instruction has greatly influenced by their own personalities and societal background. In this context, personality is referred to how the participants' feelings and behavior. Based on the findings, majority of the respondents claim that their characteristic has greatly affected the way they perceive the implementation of EMI in their learning. Respondent A stated that her positive reaction towards EMI is due to the fact that she loves the language. This is because, the respondent claimed that the love for English has been developed since she was a small kid through watching various types of English-based movies and cartoons. By doing so, she has become fond towards using the language in her daily life and most importantly, in learning. Additionally, it was also found that this respondent was brought up in the United Kingdom for seven years; hence, her social background has positively influenced her perceptions towards the implementation of EMI. Owing to this, she claimed that she has solid background of English as she was surrounded by the native speaker since she was young. It was found that this respondent was surrounded in an English-related environment; therefore, it has influenced her positive perceptions towards the use of EMI.

“.....I'm very privileged to have gone to UK. To have learnt English at a native country – I picked up the language. I learnt English differently from the others because I was surrounded by all these native speakers. And obviously, I do find EMI is definitely much better because I like English”

(Respondent B)

This gives an indication that the participant's personality and social background has allowed her to have such positive perceptions towards EMI due to the fact that the respondents are brought up abroad and surrounded in an English environment. Therefore, it has influenced her to perceive EMI as an effective implementation in her learning. Similarly, Respondent C and E also indicated that they have positive perceptions towards EMI because they are very familiar with the language since they were young. Respondent C claimed that she was growing up in a very comfortable environment and surrounded by abundance of English-based materials. She

further clarified that her parents often bought her English books, CDs and even tapes for her to listen to. With this supportive background, it has influenced her to build a positive perception towards using English as medium of instruction. To add, Respondent C also stated that she was brought up in a way where her parents have always emphasized the need to be good in English. Due to that, she believed that it was as if it has been ingrained in her mind to have positive perceptions towards English as it will bring more good opportunities for her in the future. However, she mentioned that her parents have created such a supportive environment for English learning; hence, it encouraged her to perceive English in a positive way. Besides, respondent E further supported this by claiming that she grew up with English and was conditioned to it. This is because her parents and siblings use English as their daily language. In other words, English has become a huge part in her life; therefore, she perceived it as a driving force that propel her to become more supportive towards the implementation of EMI policy.

Overall, these responses suggest that the students' personality and surrounding conditions have positively influenced their perceptions towards the implementation of EMI. This is because, most of them have a positive upbringing that were more inclined towards using English; hence, it has influenced their love for the language as well as the way they perceive the language in their learning.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the findings of this research, it was evident that the students perceive the use of EMI as advantageous because it has increased the students' accessibility to a broader range of learning resources and materials. This is because, most easily accessible materials are written and published in English; therefore, with the implementation of EMI, it has allowed more opportunities for the students to reach various sources that are in English and related to their respective courses. This finding is in line with the study by Wanphet & Tantawi (2017) and Phuong & Nguyen (2019) who claim that most students portrayed positive views towards EMI as it has enabled them to have more access to unlimited sources of learning materials that are mostly published in English. Aside from that, students also perceived the use of EMI as a means for them to improve their communication skills in English. According to Kim & Yoon (2018), the implementation of EMI policy has resulted to students' personal gain which includes enhancing their speaking and communication skills. Similarly, Floris (2014) indicated that the use of EMI has paved ways for students to interact in English in which may facilitate to improve their communication skills. These studies are in line with the result of this research where most student perceived the use EMI as an opportunity for them to further develop their communication skills.

Other than that, the result has shown that the use of EMI in non-language courses has empowered students' understanding of the course content and this is because, certain terms and concepts are much easier to be explained and comprehended in English; therefore, enhancing their comprehension of the topic. This finding is supported by Rowland & Murray (2019) and Rahmadani (2016) who claim that some students learned better when certain terms are introduced in English; hence, it has greatly improved their understanding of the course content. In addition, students also portrayed positive perceptions towards EMI as they perceive EMI as one of the factors that increase their future job opportunities. This is because, most employers are keen towards graduates with good use of English; therefore, students believed that this had become an added value for them which will increase their opportunities to be employed in the future. This finding is aligned with Macaro & Akincioglu (2017) and Phuong & Nguyen (2019) who stated that most private university students in Turkey believed the use of EMI as beneficial in developing their future career opportunities. Lastly, it was found that the use of EMI has resulted to university gain in which it has attracted more international students; hence, increasing their inflow rate into the university. This finding is similar with Kim & Yoon (2018) who revealed that the implementation of EMI has paved ways for more international students to enroll into the university as most courses are standardized in English language.

Apart from that, this study also has proven that the students' personality and environmental conditions has positively influenced their perceptions towards EMI. This is because, majority of the students reported that they grew up in a surrounding where the use of English is emphasized. In fact, the parents and family are very supportive by providing abundance of English related materials to encourage them in learning English. Therefore, they have posited positive views towards English due to all forms of encouragement that they

received from their surrounding environment. In fact, the early exposure to English has developed their love for the language; hence, resulting them to being more supportive of using English as medium of instruction. This finding has further validated the framework proposed by Jones (2018) who stated that students will posit positive attitude and perceptions towards English when they are positively encouraged. Also, the findings have proven that personality and environmental conditions as well as family have become the external and internal factor that has greatly influenced their perceptions towards the implementation of EMI.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it is hoped that these findings can be utilized by the education sector and the related agency in order to further understand the students' views and opinions on the use of English as medium of instruction in learning. To add, the research is hoped to provide more insights for lecturers and respective agencies to become more attentive towards how the students view the use of EMI in their respective courses. Lastly, it is hoped that this research would create more awareness for both students and lecturers to use English in their learning as it has proven to benefit them in various ways. Also, future research should involve a greater number of participants to be able to explore various kinds of perceptions as each student may have different opinions on EMI. Perhaps, a quantitative study should be done to obtain a larger number of data pertaining to the students' perceptions. In conclusion, this research has delved into the students' perceptions of EMI in their learning as well as identifying the influence of personality and environmental conditions on students' perceptions towards the implementation of EMI. It is hoped that this research can be used by future researchers to further understand the students' views on using English as medium of instruction.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The approval for conducting the research was obtained from the Ministry of Education. In addition, the permission was gained from each of the participants and the participation of the said participants in this study was voluntary.

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The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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