

**The effects of English-medium instruction on language proficiency of students  
enrolled in higher education in the UAE**

Submitted by

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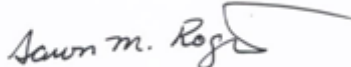
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research seeks to discover what happens to students' English language skills while studying in English-medium classes in UAE universities, and to look at how this compares with what instructors and students think happens to students' English proficiency during the four years of study. This is explored through a retrospective panel study using a test/retest method to investigate score gains on the IELTS exam after four years of undergraduate study. Student and teacher beliefs about how English-medium instruction (EMI) affects language proficiency, the need for language support after admission, and the selection and delivery of course materials are discussed in conjunction with the research findings, leading to recommendations for institutions whose primary goal in using EMI is to increase proficiency. This research continues the exploratory research of Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) and O'Loughlin and Arkoudis (2009) regarding score gains in IELTS after a course of study, but this study is situated in a society where the language of instruction is not the language of communication for the students outside the university and at home.

The research findings indicate that there is a statistically significant score gain in all four of the English-language skill areas that are tested by the IELTS exam after four years of EMI for the participants in this study. The most gain occurred in the area of speaking, followed by reading, writing and then listening. Results from questionnaires and interviews indicate that students and teachers have different perceptions regarding language ability and the problems associated with the use of English for instruction. Students generally do not feel that studying in English causes problems for them, and they rate their ability in listening, reading, writing and speaking as good to excellent. On the other hand, teachers do not feel their students' language ability meets expectations for students studying in an English-medium environment and think that their students are especially weak in the areas of writing and listening. Teachers feel that they must make adaptations to course content and assessment criteria due to students' language ability. The research indicates that institutions whose goal it is to increase language proficiency through EMI need to have clear instructional goals in place for language development along with support systems for teachers and learners throughout the entire educational experience and not just in pre-academic support programs.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **CHAPTER 1 - Introduction**

1.1 Nature of the Problem.....	1
1.1.1 Rationale for EMI.....	2
1.1.2 EMI in the UAE.....	3
1.2 Rationale for the Study .....	4
1.3 Significance of the Study .....	7
1.4 Contribution to Knowledge.....	7
1.5 Aims and Research Questions .....	8
1.6 Key Concepts and Terms Defined .....	9
1.6.1 Contexts for Research Related to English Language Learning (ESL / EFL) 9	
1.6.2 Teaching in a Second Language Terms.....	10
1.6.3 What is Language Proficiency?.....	11
1.6.4 Language Testing .....	12
1.7 Structure and Organization of the Thesis.....	13

### **CHAPTER 2 - Context of the Study**

2.1 The United Arab Emirates .....	14
2.2 Importance of English in the UAE.....	15
2.3 Education in the UAE .....	16
2.3.1 Higher Education within the UAE.....	17
2.3.2 English as the Primary Language of Instruction in Higher Education .....	18
2.3.3 Costs of English-medium Instruction .....	20
2.4 Institutional Context for the Study.....	20
2.4.1 Admittance to Higher Education .....	22
2.4.2 The University's English Foundation Program.....	22
2.4.3 University Learning Outcomes.....	23
2.4.4 Role of IELTS in University Admission .....	23
2.4.5 The Undergraduate Program .....	25
2.5 Conclusion .....	26

### **CHAPTER 3 – Review of Literature**

3.1 Introduction.....	27
3.2 Language Acquisition and Learning Theories .....	27
3.2.1 Meaningful and Comprehensible Input .....	28

3.2.2 Limits of Input in Language Learning Immersion Environments .....	29
3.2.3 Integrating Content and Language Instruction .....	30
3.3 English-Medium Instruction (EMI) .....	32
3.4 Topics of Investigations surrounding EMI .....	33
3.5 Score Gain Research .....	36
3.6 Language Ability in Higher Education Context .....	37
3.7 Perception-based Research in EMI.....	42
3.8 Conclusion .....	46
<b>CHAPTER 4 - Methodology</b>	
4.1 Introduction.....	48
4.2 Research Framework – Combining Philosophies in a Pragmatic Worldview .....	48
4.3 Research Questions .....	50
4.4 Research Design - Mixed Methods: Concurrent Triangulation Design.....	51
4.4.1 Survey Approach .....	54
4.4.2 Retrospective Panel Case Study .....	54
4.5 Research Methods .....	56
4.5.1 Participants .....	57
4.5.2 Review of Institutional Documents .....	59
4.5.3 Test/Retest of Language Ability on a Standardized Instrument.....	60
4.5.4 Measuring Perceptions of Ability with Questionnaires.....	63
4.5.5 Interviews .....	66
4.6 Data Analysis .....	68
4.6.1 Quantitative Data .....	68
4.6.2 Qualitative Data .....	69
4.6.3 Handling of Errors in Participants’ Responses.....	71
4.7 Ethical Considerations .....	72
4.7.1 Informed Consent .....	72
4.7.2 Voluntary Nature of Participation .....	73
4.7.3 Benefits and Risks to Participation in Research.....	73
4.7.4 Privacy, Anonymity, and Confidentiality .....	73
4.7.5 Data Collection and Storage .....	74
4.7.6 Procedural Aspects of Ethics Approval of the Research.....	74
4.8 Limitations of Study .....	74

4.8.1 Context.....	75
4.8.2 Sample .....	75
4.8.3 Validity Constraints.....	76
4.9 Conclusion .....	77
<b>CHAPTER 5 – Results and Discussion</b>	
5.1 Introduction.....	78
5.2 Research Question1: Institutional Perspective of English Language Improvement.....	78
5.2.1 English Language Learning Outcomes.....	80
5.2.2 Percentage of Students Meeting IELTS 6.0 Score Expectation .....	81
5.3 Research Question 2: Faculty Perceptions of Students’ Language Ability .....	86
5.3.1 Language Ability of Students Compared to Expectations for EMI.....	87
5.3.2 Faculty Perception of Students’ Language Ability.....	89
5.3.3 Improvement in English during Undergraduate Study .....	90
5.4 Research Question 3: Student Perceptions of their Language Ability.....	94
5.4.1 Students’ Rating of their Language Ability.....	94
5.4.2 Student Perceptions of Improvement .....	95
5.5 Research Question 4: Proficiency at Exit and Entry as Measured by IELTS Scores .....	99
5.5.1 Cross-tabulation of Entry and Exit IELTS Test Scores.....	100
5.5.2 Paired-samples T-test of IELTS Scores at Entry and Exit .....	102
5.5.3 Score Gain on IELTS .....	103
5.5.4 Improvement in IELTS Scores and Institutional Expectations .....	105
5.5.5 Nature of Improvement .....	107
5.5.6 Summary of Quantitative Test Score Analysis.....	109
5.6 Research Question 5: Differences in Perceptions.....	109
5.6.1 Differences in Perceptions of English Language Ability .....	109
5.6.2 Problems Faced Due to English Ability .....	112
5.7 Academic Task Ability in English.....	115
5.8 Graduating Senior Survey.....	118
5.9 Summary of Results.....	120
<b>CHAPTER 6 – Conclusion</b>	
6.1 Summary of Main Findings .....	122
6.2 Implications.....	123
6.3 Recommendations.....	126

6.3.1 Clear Language Goals .....	126
6.3.2 Changing Attitudes .....	127
6.3.3 Clarity of Institutional Goals .....	129
6.3.4 Support of Teachers and Students .....	129
6.3.5 Marketing and Tracking of Support Services .....	130
6.3.6 Defining Responsibility for Language Development .....	131
6.3.7 Focus on Language Skills across the Curriculum .....	132
6.4 Suggestions for Further Research .....	134
6.4.1 Exposure and Focus on Form in Language Development.....	134
6.4.2 General Exposure and Effect on Language Ability.....	136
6.4.3 Differences Relating to Culture and Expectations of Learning.....	136
6.5 Personal Reflection on Thesis Journey .....	137
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>154</b>
Appendix A: Student Participant Descriptive Information.....	155
Appendix B: Faculty Participant Demographics .....	158
Appendix C: IELTS Structure and Test Components.....	159
Appendix D: Faculty Questionnaire (Perceptions of Student Ability) .....	161
Appendix E: Student Questionnaire about Language Ability.....	164
Appendix F: Interview Themes and Questions.....	166
Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Approvals.....	167
Appendix H: English Language Learning Outcomes Matrix .....	186

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: IELTS Profile of Candidates Abilities Based on Band Score .....	24
Table 2: Guidance to IELTS Stakeholders on Scores for Different Courses .....	25
Table 3: Participants' IELTS Scores at Entry to Baccalaureate Study .....	61
Table 4: IELTS Scores for Graduating Students Reaching 6.0 IELTS Target .....	82
Table 5: Percentage of Students not Meeting IELTS 6.0 Expectation .....	86
Table 6: Do students' language skills meet expectations required of undergraduate? .....	87
Table 7: Faculty Perception of Students' Language Ability .....	90
Table 8: Do students' English proficiency improve after 4 years of study? .....	91
Table 9: Student Perception of Language Ability .....	95
Table 10: Students' Feelings of Improvement of Language Ability .....	96
Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Student Question about Language Improvement .....	96
Table 12: Perceptions of IELTS band improvement .....	97
Table 13: Cross Tabulations Table for IELTS Scores Test 1 and Test 2 .....	101
Table 14: Paired-samples Statistics .....	103
Table 15: Mean Difference Time 1 to Time 2 Test Scores .....	104
Table 16: Percentage of Participants at Target Test 1 (Entry) .....	105
Table 17: Percentage of Participants at Target Test 2 (Exit) .....	106
Table 18: Percentage of Participants with Score Change .....	106
Table 19: Correlation of Improvement from Test 1 to Test 2 .....	107
Table 20: Component Matrix .....	108
Table 21: Comparison of Student and Faculty Perception of Language Ability .....	110
Table 22: Difference in Rating of Language Ability of Students and Teachers .....	111
Table 23: Problems in Courses Due to English Language Ability .....	112
Table 24: Academic Task Ability .....	115
Table 25: Comparison of Student and Faculty Perception of Ability .....	117
Table 26: University Education's Contribution to English Language Skills .....	118
Table 27: IELTS Writing and Speaking Public Band Descriptors for Grammar .....	135

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mixed methods: Concurrent Triangulation Design.....	52
Figure 2: Structure of enquiry: Qualitative and quantitative elements.....	53
Figure 3: Screenshot from Nvivo illustrating coding of interview transcripts .....	70
Figure 4: Screenshot from Nvivo showing a selection of themes .....	70
Figure 5: Model of associated concepts from one student interview.....	71
Figure 6: Institutional results presentation of graduating senior IELTS results .....	85
Figure 7: Contribution to writing clearly and effectively in English.....	119
Figure 8: Contribution to speaking clearly and effectively in English .....	119
Figure 9: Contribution to reading English .....	119
Figure10: Self-perpetuating academic culture that does not promote learning .....	124

## LIST OF ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

ADEC	Abu Dhabi Education Council
ANOVA	One-way between-groups analysis of variance
CBI	Content Based Instruction
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CEPA	Common Educational Proficiency Assessment
EAI	English-aided instruction
EME	English-medium education
EMI	English-medium instruction
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FNC	Federal National Council
GPA	Grade Point Average
GSC	General Secondary Certificate
GSS	Graduating Senior Survey
ICLHE	Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TESOL	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TMI	Turkish-medium Instruction
TOEFL iBT	Test of English as a Foreign Language administered via the Internet
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UAE	United Arab Emirates