

University of Exeter Ed.D in TESOL Thesis

**English as a Medium of Instruction in the
Tertiary Education Setting of the UAE: The
Perspectives of Content Teachers**

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Abstract

This study examines content teachers' perceptions of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in a higher education (HE) context in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study problematises the taken-for-granted assumptions surrounding an exclusive EMI model as it is currently implemented in the UAE's HE institutions, where low English proficiency levels and a limited use of Arabic are characteristic. Based on a critical approach and qualitative methodology, this study draws on in-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews with nine teachers from different faculties at a UAE HE institution. It also analyses government and institutional documents to further contextualise and inform the study. The study contributes to a small but growing body of literature assessing language policy, EMI and the spread of English in the UAE. Furthermore, by focusing on teachers' perspectives, the study gives a voice to a group of stakeholders whose insights are not always fully represented in educational policy decision-making.

Salient findings of the study are supported by other recent Gulf and UAE-based studies on EMI in HE. Teachers were generally supportive of EMI, based on the utilitarian functions of English as a lingua franca in the UAE, and the role of EMI in the process of internationalising HE. However, concerns associated with the implementation of EMI primarily included the disempowering effect on students with limited English language proficiency. Students' struggles with English were identified by teachers as a cognitive burden which negatively affected students' comprehension, quality of work and academic performance. Limited proficiency

in an EMI context also negatively affected teachers' pedagogical practices, as they reported addressing students' limited language proficiency by adapting content, pace, depth and the scope of courses, as well as modifying assessment practices and code-switching in Arabic. Gaps in the university's support mechanisms that targeted literacy and language deficiencies were identified. Based on these findings, it is argued that student access to a tertiary education is compromised. Beyond these concerns, the endorsement of EMI was also found to have a marginalising effect on Arabic, despite institutional support for bilingualism as core graduate skill.

The study acknowledges the value of EMI in a more balanced bilingual language policy, and makes recommendations for future practices to address current limitations. The study recommends an increase in the profile of Arabic through the introduction of more Arabic-medium courses across faculties; through the provision of more Arabic learning materials, and through recognising the role of L1 in supporting student learning in EMI courses. English proficiency levels must also continue to improve at pre-university level, so universities can raise entry standards. Finally, universities must improve academic literacy and language support.

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Abbreviations

ADEC	Abu Dhabi Education Council
AMI	Arabic as a Medium of Instruction
CAL	Critical Applied Linguistics
CEPA	Common Educational Proficiency Assessment
COP	Community of Practice
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GCC	Gulf Cooperative Council
HCT	Higher Colleges of Technology
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IBC	International Branch Campuses
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOHESR	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MOI	Medium of Instruction

MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
NSM	New School Model
PBL	Problem-based Learning
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
TESOL	Teaching English to Students of Other Languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UAEU	United Arab Emirates University
ZU	Zayed University

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Context

The majority of educational institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and other nations in the Gulf region, have been implementing English as the medium of instruction (henceforth EMI) in state tertiary education institutions for a good number of years. The key rationale for this language policy has mainly centred on the creation of a knowledge economy that can more effectively serve the citizens and the future aspirations of the country. Other factors contributing to this policy have been the forces of globalisation, with the perceived benefits of adopting EMI to enable the citizens of the GCC countries to effectively compete in a contemporary globalized economy. In the education context, these rationales have seen the UAE, in particular, attempting to adopt international educational trends to achieve self-realisation, modernisation and development. This includes the adoption of foreign curriculum models from a range of other nations, most notably the US, but also England and Wales, Australia, and more recently Japan and Finland.

However, an extensive body of literature has critiqued the spread of EMI policy as part of the broader growth of English as a global language. This language policy, whether implemented in the Gulf or in other nations around the world, has not met with unanimous approval as it has been called into question by a growing and extensive body of literature. Concerns over this policy are mainly based on its potentially far-reaching effects on individual nations' linguistic

heritage, their culture and customs (Fishman & Fishman, 2000; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999).

In the Gulf region, in particular, extensive research has been conducted which has explored the effects of adopting EMI as the dominant practice in many educational institutions, particularly at the tertiary level. A number of such studies have called into question the outcome of adopting EMI on the role of the native language, in this case Arabic. The ELT profession, in turn, has also been criticised for its role in paving the way for EMI to be universally implemented. Phillipson (1992, p.73) explores the inherent fallacies that underlie the ELT profession, and which contribute to linguistic hegemony of English, which he defines as, “the explicit and implicit values, beliefs, purposes, and activities which characterize the ELT profession and which contribute to the maintenance of English as a dominant language.”

It has been argued that the role of the English language has gradually evolved from that of EFL to ESL (Al Mansouri, 2001; in Troudi 2007), and has more recently been adopted as the medium of instruction (MOI) in many other educational institutions in the UAE. In the context of the UAE, much research has critiqued the use of EMI in the tertiary sector. There has been a growing body of research into the socio-political and cultural effects of the spread of English in the Arab world. Amongst the studies critiquing the role of EMI in the UAE (e.g. King, 2015; McLaren, 2011; Troudi & Jendli 2011; Troudi, 2009; Findlow, 2005 & Karmani, 2005) and other Gulf countries, there has been a call to further investigate the possible long-term effects of this language policy

particularly the manner in which it may be adversely affecting students' native language acquisition. This is particularly related to how the native language of Arabic has, by default come to play a minor role in the education system in preference to EMI. Apart from possible risk to the native language, growing concerns have been raised about the possible threats that English poses to indigenous Arab culture and the place of Islam in these societies. These studies have tended to argue in favour of multilingualism and bilingualism as a way of preserving indigenous language use inside the home while adopting English as an additional language. However, comparatively less research has been conducted on the effects of EMI and its possible impact on curriculum and pedagogy in the tertiary education system. This should, essentially, also be at the heart of the policy debate.

Some national media reports, in particular, have raised concerns about students who complete their schooling in the UAE, but who are nevertheless unable to communicate at sufficiently proficient levels in their native Arabic (Salem, 2014; Naidoo, 2011), and in some cases in English. This has been witnessed anecdotally in my own teaching experience in the UAE. Of greater concern is the reality that students begin their tertiary education in the UAE with insufficient levels of English to allow them to learn through English as the medium of instruction. Their imperfect mastery of English prevents them from engaging with the curriculum with an effective manner.

Students often come from Arabic-medium high schools, where the majority of teachers are Arabic speakers, and initially struggle at university where most of

the teachers are monolingual native speakers of English. Many students must complete some or all courses in the foundations programme, which includes EFL, Arabic, and maths instruction. To exit the English foundation courses, students are required to take an international English proficiency exam, such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). For the IELTS exam, students are required to achieve a band five average across the four language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking).

A minority of students with low English language proficiency did not want to complete the foundation programme, which was considered too difficult and time-consuming, as a result of which, some decided to seek admission to universities in Egypt or Jordan, among other countries. Upon return, many were able to secure employment, mainly in the government sector with ease as they now had an undergraduate degree. For the vast majority of students however, most of whom are female, this option is not very feasible.

This study seeks to view EMI policy from the perspective of the content teachers at a tertiary institution in the UAE. It provides an in-depth examination of how EMI policy has been implemented in this particular context, and it portrays the complexities that arise, along with the benefits and pitfalls for all concerned. Specifically, the study describes faculty members' pedagogical practices in terms of EMI and the challenges posed by the often relatively limited English language proficiency of many of the students who begin undergraduate study with a prerequisite IELTS band 5.0.

1.2 Rationale

In a study on global EMI, Dearden (2015) raised the need to research its impact. She states that there is

an urgent need for a research-driven approach which consults key stake-holders at a national and international level and which measures the complex processes involved in EMI and the effects of EMI both on the learning of academic subjects and on the acquisition of English proficiency. (p.2)

This need is as important in the Gulf nations as it is worldwide. Many questions arise from the policy of using EMI. With a high number of expatriates, the UAE and other Gulf states are unusual in their demographic structure. With a local population that is over-represented in the government sector, the government has adopted a policy of Emiratisation that aims to promote the employment of Emirati nationals, particularly in the private sector, where it is estimated that only 5 percent of Emiratis are currently employed (Fox, 2007, p.3). These factors, amongst others, have created a society where English has grown in importance, where it is perceived as an essential skill for Emiratis to access employment in the private sector. To achieve the objectives of Emiratisation, and to prepare graduates who can function in a culturally diverse workforce, federal tertiary educational institutions, such as the institution in this study, aim to (in theory at least) develop bilingual graduates with skills in Arabic and English speaking contexts.

The rationale for conducting this study evolved from my initial professional concerns, as an EFL practitioner, about the role of the first language (L1) in EFL learning. As an English/Arabic bilingual myself, I found that few studies had examined the pedagogical implications of excluding, or indeed, embracing the L1 in English language teaching, and the manner in which this inclusion influenced student learning.

In most cases, English language teaching has excluded the learners' first language, which is certainly the case in the Gulf context as compared to other parts of the world such as Asia and/ or Europe. Early on during my employment as an EFL instructor at a tertiary institution in the UAE, I conducted two small-scale research projects: one of which examined the use of L1 in the classroom; while the second concentrated on the medium of instruction debate (Mouhanna, 2009) and the potential place of L1 in this model (Mouhanna, 2010).

However, over time this issue has become part of a broader concern for the quality of education, which I felt was affected significantly by EMI policy as it was enacted at the institution in question. As an EFL teacher, I routinely had post-secondary school students in my classes who were struggling to develop sufficient English competence to enable them to exit their English preparation courses and begin their undergraduate studies. With many students experiencing difficulties with English competency, I could also envisage that this would be a continuing issue in their undergraduate studies, which were also to be conducted through the medium of English. Anecdotal evidence from teachers in the various faculties echoed and reinforced my concerns.

A large body of the literature has focused on its effects on the L1 and identity, but relatively less work has focused on the effects of EMI and its possible impact on curriculum and pedagogy in the tertiary education system. My thesis works to contribute to the body of literature which examines the adoption of EMI to the exclusion of students' L1, and its effect on pedagogy and learning. Furthermore, a growing body of research has examined teachers' perspectives regarding the efficacy of this policy and how it is implemented in the tertiary education sector. By examining teachers' perceptions, this study contributes to this body of research and gives a voice to a group whose experiences and insights are not always represented in broader educational policy. They, after all, experience educational policies in action. Through this study, I wanted to explore some of the possible gaps that exist between intended policy goals and their eventual outcome.

In summary, by focusing on teachers working with the day-to-day realities and consequences of EMI policy in many UAE tertiary institutions I believe that this research will contribute to the body of literature exploring this important educational issue.

1.3 Theoretical Approach

This study examines the use of English as the medium of instruction in a tertiary education institution in the UAE. It is informed by a critical theoretical approach, and draws critical applied linguistics (CAL) to inform the interpretation of the data. A central aim of CAL is to problematise given truths, by reassessing their

relevance and efficacy (Pennycook, 2001, p. 7). This theoretical approach explores aspects of our educational reality that have been taken for granted and are identified as 'naturalised' assumptions to be questioned (Dean, 1994; in Pennycook, 2001, p.7). It follows that CAL can highlight the problematisation of given reality, along with the unchallenged assumptions which shape language policy. CAL calls for scrutiny of decisions made at the administrative levels, which subsequently influence the educational process, including pedagogical decisions made in the classroom, and the quality of learning.

Another valuable aspect of CAL is its emphasis on preferred futures (Pennycook, 2001), where CAL researchers express "'utopian' visions of alternative realities by stressing the 'transformative mission of critical work or the potential for change through awareness and emancipation'" (p. 8). This focus on preferred futures can counteract the notion that critical work is often pessimistic and does not offer solutions or alternatives. The current study seeks to problematise the taken-for-granted policy of EMI as it is currently implemented in tertiary education in the UAE. It aims to portray some of the complexities that arise in the implementation of this policy based on the realities voiced by teachers. However, it also concludes by suggesting an alternative reality for institutional practice.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to investigate the effects of language policy on teaching and learning, I have sought the perspectives of content teachers at a university in the UAE. The study has been shaped by three overarching research questions pertaining

to EMI policy. The first question deals with content teachers' perceptions of EMI policy. It examines their perceptions of institutional rationales for its adoption, and whether there are any correlations between teachers' views and other teacher characteristics. The second research question examines the accompanying challenges that this policy poses for students and teachers, and teachers' strategies that address the challenges arising from the EMI policy. The final research question investigates teachers' understanding of the place of Arabic in the language policy of the university, versus their perceptions of the role that it should play. It examines both teachers' use of the majority of students' first language, Arabic, and their perceptions of the possible roles that it could play in the teaching and learning process in content courses. These research questions are outlined below:

1. What are content teachers' perceptions of EMI?
2. What are the perceived challenges of implementing EMI in relation to course delivery, assessment practices, and learning? How have teachers addressed these accompanying challenges?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of the role of L1 in student learning and in the university overall?

1.5 Methodological Orientation and Organisation of Chapters

The study examines themes surrounding the implementation of EMI policy from the perspective of content teachers who are employed at a tertiary setting in the UAE. This study utilises a qualitative approach, which is based primarily on data

from semi-structured interviews with content teachers from a range of different departments within this educational setting. The study is also draws on institutional and government policies and other documents which provide important contextual background for the study.

Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter provides extensive background to the study by outlining the immediate and broader context of the research. It examines educational policy and key contemporary reforms in the UAE's education system, which have been instrumental in informing language policy. This chapter also gives background information about the institution in question. The third chapter presents a review of the literature surrounding EMI policy. It begins by outlining the prevalence of EMI, and the accompanying issues and implications of this language policy on L1, the local culture and teaching and learning as outlined in current research. The chapter concludes by situating the study in the current body of literature. The fourth chapter provides an outline of the methodology and data analysis used in the study. It also gives a profile of the teachers who participated in the research, examines ethical procedures, and presents some of the challenges that arose in the course of the research.

The fifth chapter presents the findings. It, specifically, explores major themes in the findings based on teachers' perceptions of the role of EMI at the university. It presents the findings in relation to the research questions by identifying the key rationales for EMI, the opportunities and challenges of this language policy and teachers' perceptions of the role of the L1 in the university language policy.

Finally, chapter six, the discussion and conclusion chapter, reiterates the key findings of the study, and discusses these findings in relation to other literature. The chapter also examines some of the implications of these findings. It concludes with recommendations for future policy and practice in terms of language policy and the pedagogy of tertiary education.

Chapter Two – Contextual Background

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides contextual background to the study. It begins with a brief analysis of English as a global language, language policy and EMI in the UAE, and examines these in relation to the UAE's school and higher education contexts. The final section provides contextual background regarding the tertiary institution where the study took place. Based on documentary analysis, it examines the institution's language policy and its implementation, its foundation programme, and other support structures that aim to assist students with English proficiency.

2.2 Broader Context

Language policy is a product of governmental language planning. It includes “conscious efforts to affect the structure or function of language varieties” (Tollefson, 1991, p.16). These efforts may involve the “creation of orthographies, standardisation and modernisation programmes, or allocation of functions to particular languages within multilingual societies” (Tollefson, 1991, p.16). The process of language planning is a fundamental aspect of nation building (Wright, 2004, p.8). Language policy and planning in the UAE have been inextricably tied to efforts to achieve modernization, and to ensuring the allocation of various roles for both English and Arabic. As Tsui and Tollefson (2008) assert, “the language of a nation, or an ethnic groups, is often a symbol of its identity and allegiance, and an embodiment of its values, cultures, and

tradition” (p.2). As an integral component of language and educational policy, medium of instruction has been identified as “the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalizing a language and a culture; it is the most important form of intergenerational transmission” (Tsui & Tollefson, 2008, p.2).

The majority of higher education institutions worldwide use their native languages as the medium of instruction, while learning through EMI is the non-standard model (McLaren, 2011), which has nevertheless grown in prominence recently. Despite its growth, it is by no means the norm in terms of higher education language policy worldwide (Phillipson, 2009). However, this has not been the situation in the UAE, and many other Arab nations, particularly in the Gulf region, where the EMI policy has been more generally adopted in recent decades due to numerous social, political and economic factors. A well-noted exception in the Arab world is the Syrian Arab Republic, which has not experienced US imperial influence like other Arab nations in its postcolonial period, and has historically adopted Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as the MOI at all levels of education (Farhat, 2012).

Rationales for MOI are often justified by appeals on pedagogical grounds or legitimised by association with a discourse of “opportunity” or “equality” (Schmidt, 1998, in Tsui & Tollefson, 2008, p. 284). In reality however, they are also shaped by numerous social and political forces, including “globalization, migration and demographic changes, political conflict, changes in government, shifts in the structure of local economies, and elite competition” (Schmidt, 1998, in Tsui & Tollefson, 2008, p.283). Hence the implementation of an EMI model

raises important questions from a political, cultural and religious standpoint. All factors which have been identified by above (Schmidt, 1998, in Tsui & Tollefson, p.283, 2008) are important contributors to decisions about MOI policy.

A fundamental aspect of Arab and Muslim identity is intrinsically tied to the Arabic language. It is the language of the Quran, and of Islamic scholarship, and is tied to Arab national identity and patriotism. As the language of a civilisation that helped to preserve and advance science, Arabic has also often been perceived by Arab scholars to be dynamic enough to lend itself to modern higher education (Al-Asal & Smadi, 2012; Troudi & Jendli, 2011; BouJaoude & Sayah, 2000; Yazigy, 1994) and has seen a recent resurgence (Ahmed, 2010). Despite the intrinsic nature of Arabic to Arab- Muslim identity, Arab nations have seen the spread and dominance of English arising from numerous economic, cultural and socio-political factors.

The majority of Arab nations have historically experienced some form of direct or indirect colonialism, and there have often been varying levels of distrust of 'Western', predominantly US foreign policy, especially during the post- 9-11 period. By extension, English has often been viewed as a threat to Arabic and Islamic culture (O'Neill, 2014; Al-Issa & Dahan (Ed.), 2011; Ahmed, 2010; Kaddur & Bayram, 2010; Al-Dhubaib, 2006; Karmani, 2005a, 2005b; Zughoul, 2003; BouJaoude & Sayah, 2000). Although Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) nations have promoted English language learning as an educational goal for their students as part of broader modernisation policies, it has been promoted

“on the condition that this will not lead to the creation of a hostile or indifferent attitude to the students’ Arab/Islamic culture” (Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999, p.91).

Beyond these broader concerns, EMI has been legitimised for the opportunities it is supposed to afford students. At the individual level however, it has often unintentionally, or intentionally, positioned those who are not native speakers of English in an inferior position. MOI policy is thus a fundamental aspect of education policy, which has significant repercussions for the students’ educational experiences, for the maintenance of their native languages, and their cultural and religious identities. It is in light of broader socio-political and socio-cultural concerns, as well as those at the local/ individual level, which have been explored at length by a broad body of literature, that this thesis examines the role of EMI in the context of the UAE. Below, I examine these issues in more depth.

2.3 The UAE

The Gulf has undergone dramatic social and economic changes in the era since the beginning of oil and petroleum exploitation. In this period, the UAE has progressed rapidly from a poor underdeveloped society with an economy dependent upon fishing, pearl-diving and simple agriculture, to becoming one of the world’s wealthiest nations in its post-oil discovery era. One of the results of this dramatic economic and social development has been the recruitment of expatriates from around the world to fill employment positions in many diverse fields. With an expatriate community of 7.316 million, or 88.5 percent of the

country's population, compared to 947, 997 Emiratis or nearly 11.5 percent of the population, this is one of the highest proportions of expatriates comparative to the native population among the Gulf nations and indeed throughout the world (Emirates 24 7, 2011).

During this period of rapid development, the public sector has become an attractive area of employment for nationals in the UAE, a pattern also evident in other GCC countries. However, this trend of local over-representation in the public sector, coupled with expatriate over-representation in the private has been identified as a key weakness in the current workforce structure, and one which is viewed as unsustainable in the future. Hence, as with other Gulf nations, the UAE has adopted a policy of Emiratisation which has encouraged nationals to seek employment in the private sector. With unemployment figures for citizens under 30 at 12 per cent (Gallup, 2009, p.407), this policy is a significant governmental priority.

Accompanying these developments has been a shift in the language policies of the Gulf countries, with the emergence of English as a powerful language for business and economic life. On the one hand, Arabic is recognised as the official language in the UAE, according to Article 7 of the constitution of the UAE (UAE Government, 2012). Arabic is identified as the language of the government, the language used in the delivery of government services, and the official language of communication in government entities. Proficiency in Arabic is stated as a mandatory requirement for employees working in a UAE government department, as indicated in Articles 2-4 of the Arabic Language

Charter (UAE Government, 2012). The reality however, is that English is the main public language (Piller, 2009), which demonstrates that, “though overt policy may be guaranteed at the federal and cultural level, the “trickle-down” effect of these policies may be minimal at the local level, or the resources to defend these rights may be inadequate” (Schiffman, 1998, p.2). English has come to play this de facto public role due to the unique demographic structure, the nation’s need for foreign labour, and the presence of ‘Western’ economic, political and cultural dominance in the region. These conditions have created what has been described as a dual linguistic culture where English vies with the native Arabic for prevalence (Findlow, 2006).

This trend increased in the years immediately after the discovery of oil in the UAE, when historically language policy had been predominantly focused on the native Arabic. The more recent and rapid globalisation of the UAE, accompanying the commercial exploitation of oil, has seen English also being used nationally, as part of a policy aimed at linguistic dualism. Linguistic dualism entails the use of language according to context, with the two languages occupying distinct domains. English has come to be associated with modernity, economics, secularism, material status and globalisation, and predominates in the fields of business, education and globalisation. On the other hand, Arabic occupies its place in terms of localism, tradition, culture and maintenance of religious identity (Findlow, 2006; Kazim, 2000). Findlow (2006, p.20) describes linguistic dualism and its relationship to power and status:

In the Middle East, in Israel as well as Arab countries, descriptions have concentrated on the ways in which the native language has become symbolic of nostalgia and authenticity, with the colonial language (English or French) increasingly associated with 'status' in a modern, internationally oriented sense.

However, the extent to which English is used at the expense of the mother tongue and the maintenance of the linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage of the nation is a salient question that has been raised by scholars in the field. A primary critique of language policy in the UAE has been based on broader concerns about neo-imperialism, the role of Islam and Arabic and the homogenization of cultures, which are associated with the spread of English. Karmani (2005b, p.86), in particular, highlighted how English has tended to serve a neo-imperialist agenda in the Gulf with its;

[...] corrective mission [...] for the project of English in Muslim contexts has scarcely ever only been about the learning or teaching of a supposedly neutral linguistic medium but perhaps more about the broader protracted struggle to defeat or pacify the formidable political force of "Islam".

Public concern has also been raised about the effect of the spread of English on Arabic, particularly as parents and stakeholders have seen an increase in the dominance of English in primary and high schools, which have traditionally been based on Arabic-medium of instruction (AMI) model. Similarly, studies have raised the need to further investigate the consequences of this policy on

the cultural and religious identity of Emirati nationals (Hopkyns, 2014; Troudi & Jendli, 2011; Troudi 2009; Findlow, 2006).

2.4 UAE Education and EMI

As discussed earlier, in the last three decades the UAE has experienced extraordinary economic and social development, and significant change in the education sector has been a natural by-product of this development. This sector has seen a period of remarkably rapid development, though this speed has been criticised for leaving “little time for reflection, consolidation, recalibration, or adjustment” (Syed, 2003, p.338, in Belhiah & Elhami, 2014). Similarly, language policy in the education sector has been characterised by insufficient reflection on the possible long-term social, political and educational repercussions. Below, I discuss language policy and EMI in the context of the UAE’s school and higher education sectors.

2.4.1 Primary and Secondary Education Sectors

In the UAE, primary and secondary education is compulsory up to grade nine. Education is based on a four-tier system: students attend kindergarten (4 to 5 years), primary (ages of 6 to 11), followed by the preparatory stage (ages 12 to 15), and high school (15 to 17) (Emiratisation.org, 2012). Local schools are funded by the government, and no expatriate children are enrolled. These schools are based on the national curriculum, which has a strong Arab and Islamic influence, and is characterised by single gender classes (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006), while private schools are based on various curriculums including IB, UK, American, Indian and others. More recently the Abu Dhabi emirate has

introduced more English at these levels in local public schools, and this trend is also increasingly evident in other emirates. Most private schools teach in English accompanied by compulsory Arabic classes (Findlow, 2006). Recent developments have also seen an increase in the role of English in the primary and secondary public school systems in order to prepare students for EMI in the tertiary level (Sanassian, 2011; Farah & Ridge, 2009; Findlow, 2006; Karmani, 2005a). Many Emirati and other Arab nationals send their children to private schools, where English tends to be the medium of instruction (Randall & Samisi, 2010), a trend that has been evidenced worldwide (Dearden, 2015). On the other hand, after secondary school Arabic speakers can complete their higher education in federal universities in English. The three major federal tertiary institutions (United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) and Zayed University (ZU)) utilise EMI in almost all of their departments.

In the Abu Dhabi emirate, the high schools are run by the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), which has, in the last few years, taken on a mass recruitment drive to get more native English-speaking teachers, from the USA, UK and Australia to replace the traditional pool of bilingual Arabic teachers. Over 500 native English language teachers were recently employed to teach in place of Arab teachers in K-6 levels, and teach the new curriculum which emphasises English (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014). This mass recruitment has been undertaken to implement the New School Model (NSM) or the Bilingual Abu Dhabi School Model, which focuses on the inclusion of English in the curriculum (Raddawi & Meslem, 2015).

These developments have been introduced by ADEC through the implementation of a bilingual education model at the primary level with Arabic and English immersion classes (Gallagher, 2011). This strategy has been adopted in order to improve English proficiency in preparation for EMI in the tertiary education setting, and to minimise the need for English language instruction prior to undergraduate study, such as university foundation programmes (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014). Another rationale cited for undertaking this shift from predominantly AMI has been based on pedagogical reasons, with AMI criticised for its rote-learning focus, while EMI has been lauded for its modern exploratory learning approach:

English medium will mark a landmark shift away from the tyranny of rote memorization toward a skills-based education that prepares students to live and work in the 21st century. (Farah & Bridges, 2009, p.1)

Studies have criticised the primary and secondary school sectors for their structurally embedded deficiencies, which have been blamed for the insufficient preparation of students to meet the country's social and economic needs (McLaughlin, 2014). They have been critiqued for their unsuitable curricula, ineffective teaching techniques, inappropriate assessment methods, little use of information and communications technology (ICT), poor libraries and learning support, limited facilities, unsuccessful school culture, low levels of professionalism, ineffective school systems and inadequate budgets (Al Ittihad, 2005, in McLaughlin, 2014). These factors have also negatively contributed to

the quality of English language teaching (ELT) in primary and secondary schools, which has left many students unprepared for EMI at the tertiary level. More recent initiatives in the Abu Dhabi emirate have attempted to address these deficiencies. However, these initiatives require time in order to reap positive change that can be seen in the tertiary education sector (Zacharias, 2013 in McLaughlin, 2014; Ahmed, 2010).

However, the extensive and speedy reform initiatives of ADEC have met with some criticism. Sanassian (2011) highlights that the main goal of the Abu Dhabi education reform has been to push the teaching of mathematics and science through English. Her study (2011) highlights the possible limitations of these new policies based on female Emirati teachers' mostly negative perceptions of the new initiatives. Moreover, these more recent policies have meant that while the primary and secondary sectors had previously been predominantly based around Arabic, there is now a marked increase in the presence of English at these levels of education. This shift to an increase in EMI in secondary schools has met with criticism from other key stakeholders, including parents, due to the perceived effect that this will have on Arabic. Farah and Bridge (2009, p.6) express parents' and FNC members concerns about using EMI in the Madaras Al Ghad schools due to

expressed fears over a decline in children's command of Arabic. Many also felt resentful of a foreign language and a foreign curriculum being imposed upon Emirati children.

These issues in the primary and secondary school system have had a significant impact on the preparedness of students entering tertiary education. It has been argued that students who have attended public schools have not received an education that meets the standards of industrialised nations, nor are they prepared for the change in the MOI to English (King, 2015; Stockwell, 2015; McLaughlin, 2014). At present, the implications of developing the primary and secondary sectors have not yet trickled up to tertiary institutions and a significant proportion of students continue to enrol in university unprepared for tertiary-level study. With a high focus on Arabic in the primary and secondary school years, and the sudden switch to a high focus on English in tertiary education, students with less instruction in English enter university at a significant disadvantage (McLaren, 2011; Troudi & Jendli, 2011).

2.4.2 Tertiary Education

There are two main post-secondary education pathways available for students in the UAE. Students can pursue vocational education, through the Higher College of Technology, or enrol at a federal or private university. Domestic providers of tertiary education include public universities, such as the major state universities- Zayed University and United Arab Emirates University, which provide free education for UAE nationals. Private university full-fee education, which mainly attracts expatriates, is also a growing sector in the UAE. There has also been an increase in the number of international branch campuses (IBCs) of well-established international institutions, over the past two decades (see Lane, 2011). Admission to all of these institutions is based on academic performance in secondary school, and English language proficiency for the

English-medium universities. Admission into HCT and the public universities is also based on performance in the CEPA-English exam (Common Educational Proficiency Assessment), which ascertains whether students' English language proficiency meets entry pre-requisites. Smith (2008) emphasises the link between higher education and economic and social development in the Gulf region which has witnessed phenomenal growth. He points out that;

the region may have, or be in the process of creating, the world's most globalised higher education system, with international partnerships, faculty and qualifications, and with the English language dominating almost all new initiatives. (Smith, 2008, p.20)

In the UAE, educational institutions reflect a 'Western' educational outlook, initially based on the UK model, with more recent US influence. There has been haphazard implementation of a range of educational models borrowed from predominantly 'Western' countries, particularly in terms of their philosophical mission, their pedagogy and curriculum (Wilkins, 2010). For instance, ZU's mission statement expressly refers to the influence of American and other 'Western' models of education on developing its educational culture. Federal universities have also pursued international accreditation, mainly from US-based institutional accreditation bodies (Wilkins, 2010). There is also a general preference for the employment of 'Western' educated, native speakers of English, particularly in the foundations programmes of the UAE's three predominant state tertiary education providers.

In the context of modernisation and globalisation, the policy of EMI has resulted from four key historic decisions which were made in the UAE in the 1970s. These decisions have “shaped the character and structure of higher education in the country” (Fox, 2007, p.3). The first strategic decision involved the building and operation of the UAE’s own universities to cater for both genders separately. The policy also encouraged the recruitment of internationally, well-qualified faculty, and the adoption of EMI. It also expressed the eligibility of all Emiratis for an education including females (MOHE, 2007 in Fox, 2007).

Hence, in contrast to primary and secondary schools, the national universities and higher colleges have been operating an EMI policy for significantly longer. The aims of these tertiary institutions is to train Emirati graduates who can eventually work for an international organisation, where English will be the main medium of communication.

Prior to beginning tertiary studies, students are required to demonstrate a degree of English proficiency. MOHESR (the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research) introduced the CEPA in 2007, which examined English proficiency levels. The results determine if students need to complete a foundation year of English to raise language skills before undergraduate study in federally funded universities, and some do not get the minimum requirements for a foundation programme (Farah & Ridge, 2009).

The endorsement of the EMI model has also increased the prominence of internationally recognised exams such as IELTS and TOEFL to assess academic performance. These exams have often functioned as gate-keepers in

determining who can begin their undergraduate or coursework studies in the three state tertiary institutions. The current IELTS entrance requirement for most tertiary institutions (both public and private) is around a band 5.0. An overall band 5.0 in IELTS describes the candidate as a modest user of the language with:

Partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field. (IELTS 2013)

This description indicates that upon entry into tertiary level, students do not have sufficient command of English to complete the demanding content of their undergraduate courses without significant difficulty, particularly during the initial years of undergraduate study. Without an IELTS band score of 5.0, or above, students with limited English proficiency are required to complete English foundations courses prior to beginning their undergraduate study. According to Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, ADEC Director-General, 10 percent of Emirati high school graduates enter their courses in major state universities – ZU, HCT and UAEU – while the rest, particularly those who come from predominantly AMI high schools, have to go through a foundation programme in their respective institutions in order to enter undergraduate study (AMEinfo, 2012).

The low standard of English proficiency for university entrance has raised a number of important questions. Firstly, the appropriateness and efficacy of the current, almost exclusive, implementation of EMI in the tertiary sector, and the resulting marginalisation of Arabic in higher education has been questioned.

These issues have subsequently raised other questions about how tertiary institutions have been addressing issues associated with language deficit in order to minimise the degree to which these impinge on learning. By extension, concerns have been raised about the negative effect of limited English proficiency on the general quality of education, especially relative to international standards.

McLaren's (2011) review of the UAE's higher or tertiary education providers' mission statements and policy documents however, points to the "unchallenged and 'taken for granted' assumption that an English medium curriculum is deemed to be very important" (p.26). In more recent times, and particularly as English has also come to occupy a larger role in primary and secondary levels of education, there has been a growing body of research that has begun to reassess the often taken-for-granted language policies of Gulf states (King, 2015; McLaren, 2012; Sanassian, 2011; Troudi & Jendli, 2011; Troudi, 2009; Findlow, 2006).

This recent growth in scholarly interest in the issue of language policy in the UAE and other Gulf nations, however, seems to have had a minimal effect on government policy and any recognition of the role of language policy on academic performance. This is evidenced in the comparatively sketchy policy focus or recognized official statements on language policy (Clarke, 2007). For instance, the UAE Ministry of Education and Youth recently released an education mission statement, the *Vision 2020* document, which outlines the key skills to be gained by graduates of a high quality education system. These

include skills for professional employment, effective communication skills and literacy skills (UAE Ministry of Education & Youth, 2000). The document discusses the key changes required in a range of areas affecting quality learning, including curriculum, teaching materials and evaluation tools. However, this document makes no reference to the issue of language policy despite its key role in the educational process (Watson, 2004).

2.4.3 UAE Higher Education and EMI

Concern has been expressed in the UAE media about the detrimental effect of English usage on Arabic speakers. However, there seems to have been little UAE governmental response to these concerns in the past (Lawati, 2011; Naidoo, 2011). More recently, there was an unsuccessful call for a monolingual shift to Arabic in 2014 by the National Federal Council, which aimed to preserve Arabic identity in the UAE (Salem, November 23, 2014 in Raddawi & Meslem, 2015).

In contrast, those same concerns in Qatar facilitated an important governmental reaction. Based on concerns about the perceived threat of English to “the mother tongue, local culture and national identity” in Qatari society, Qatar University changed from an English to Arabic-medium policy of instruction in 2012 (Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015). Arabic became the university’s “official teaching language for the faculties of law, international affairs, mass communication, and business and economics” (Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015, p.208). This change was publicised by the Qatari government, where researchers, according to Belhiah & Elhami (2014, p.4) were urged to;

[...] reclaim the legacy of Arabic as a scientific language by devising ways in which scholarly knowledge would be disseminated [...]and] noted that the visibility of Arabic in scientific research is marginal, and this situation has had a negative impact on publishing, writing and translation in the Arab world.

Qatar's decision caused a reaction from other countries in the GCC (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014), though not in terms of language policy in education or EMI policy. In the same year, the Prime Minister of the UAE Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, reiterated his support for the Arabic language by "announcing an integrated strategy to establish the UAE as a global 'centre for excellence' for Arabic language", and an Arabic language protection effort was launched as part of the *UAE Vision 2021* (Emirates 24/7 News Staff, 2012). This included setting up an Arabic Language Charter, while forming a committee of international experts to promote Arabic in science and technology (Emirates 24/7 News Staff, 2012). The Dubai Library Initiative, launched in 2015 is an important project that provides a sophisticated electronic platform for Arabic texts.

It would be naïve to deny the importance of English competency for students in the UAE given its economic, demographic and social realities. However, its current important role in the region and the fact that this is only likely to increase in the coming years, a key challenge for the UAE, as well as other countries in the region, is how to resolve, or at least accommodate, ambiguities regarding English (Ramanathan, 2005). Language policy must negotiate the competing

pressures of local, regional, national and religious identities with the homogenizing tendencies of globalisation and the spread of English (Clarke, 2007). Clarke (2007) emphasises the need for stakeholders, at the policy development level, and teachers, to investigate and challenge language policy in general and EMI in particular to ensure that the model adopted strikes a balance between the priorities of the economy and the maintenance of linguistic, religious and cultural identity.

2.5 The University and EMI

2.5.1 The University

The university where this study is situated was founded in the late 1970s. The university has two segregated campuses (male and female), employs over 1,000 academic staff and offers courses in nine colleges (Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, Education, Business and Economics, Law, Food and Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine, and Information Technology). Combined, the different colleges offer 100 undergraduate and graduate degrees. Subject teachers are recruited internationally, and represent around 65 nationalities including Arab nationals, as well as teachers from Europe and other 'Western' nations, Asia and Africa. Currently, a quarter of the faculty and staff are Emirati, and this number is growing according to an institutional document. The university's science courses tend to attract the better performing students (including those with higher language proficiency). Interestingly, although students' English capabilities are assessed prior to beginning university study, English proficiency for academic staff is not assessed although a certain English proficiency is a prerequisite for employment.

Currently the university has just over 13,000 students enrolled, with a significantly large number of female students, who make up 80 percent of the student population. The majority of the student population is Emirati, many of whom are from the Abu Dhabi emirate, though students from the northern emirates of Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah are also particularly well represented.

Based on a recently published report on the university's website, international students are well represented at the university. Although the university's founding goal was the education of UAE nationals, international students from 60 countries, but predominantly from Arab and Gulf countries, are enrolled across the different degree programmes. They represent approximately a fifth of the undergraduate student population, and more than two fifths of graduate students, according to an online document published on the institution's website.

2.5.2 The University's EMI Policy

Like the state-funded tertiary education providers, and many if not all of the competing private universities, the case study university has almost universally adopted an EMI policy as institutional practice. The EMI policy is recognised in the online Teachers' Handbook, and in official university documents. At the same time, a key objective for the university is to produce bilingual graduates proficient in English and Arabic. Findlow (2006) points out that in principle, many institutions advocate bilingualism as language policy, and claim to produce bilingual students. However, the reality in the federally-funded tertiary

institutions is that this is neither the practice nor the eventual outcome. Findlow's (2006) description in many respects reflects the current situation at this particular university. Undergraduate courses are predominantly delivered in English. Even the Shariah Law course requires candidates to obtain an IELTS score of 5.0 to gain entry, and delivers a number of courses in English, despite the reality that for the majority of their careers in the state court system, Arabic will be the predominant language of communication.

With English as the medium of instruction, students entering undergraduate courses are required to provide evidence of their English language proficiency through international English proficiency exams such as IELTS or TOEFL. Scores on the CEPA exam indicate that many students do not possess sufficient English proficiency to study at university (Fox, 2007) and must complete foundation courses to improve their language proficiency. If students do not obtain the required score, they are required to complete remedial courses in English, which include up to four non-credit courses, with a pass or fail grade. If upon completion of the English courses students do not achieve the required band or score on these international English language aptitude tests, they cannot begin their undergraduate studies, and their enrolment is suspended until they independently achieve the required score. In 2013, 20 percent of students were prepared to enter university at federal institutions, compared to 16 percent the year before, and 3 percent a decade earlier (Salem & Swan, 2014).

2.5.3 English Foundation Programme

The majority of students subsequently required to enrol in the prerequisite remedial English foundation courses, which many struggle to pass. This has been the source of frustration for many students who have been forced to delay their undergraduate studies as a result of their low English language proficiency. As an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, and an examiner for an international English examination in the UAE, I have witnessed the difficulties, and repeated failure of many students, who have entered their tertiary studies with insufficient levels of English, and have struggled for long periods of time in an effort to improve their language skills and begin their undergraduate studies.

The current structure of English foundation courses comprises four courses over four 8-week quarters, consisting of eighteen hours per week of intensive English. Students are under pressure to complete the courses and exit the foundations programmes in a timely manner within a maximum period of a year, which is a recent change from when students could spend up to two or three years completing these foundation courses.

The efficacy of such preparatory remedial courses however, in the Arab world, and particularly the UAE, has been called into question. Apart from the financial drain on higher education (Fox, 2007; Salem, 2014), some have gone as far as evaluating foundations programmes as “ineffective in increasing English language skills of students learning EFL/ ESL [English as a second language]” (Othman & Shuqair, 2013, p. 132). Othman and Shuqair (2013, p.137) describe

the key criticisms levelled at the foundations programmes implemented in universities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region:

Over the years, some professionals offering the remedial courses have claimed that the effectiveness of the courses in improving the skills of students in the foreign language is greatly challenged. Some believe that the remedial courses are just a waste of time for the students because they fail to portray any significant improvement in their test performance. This sentiment is supported by the claims of many students who feel like the remedial courses are a model of punishment. Their general attitude towards the courses is negative.

In the UAE, there has been much publicized criticism of English foundation programmes, with regular media reports of government plans to abolish them by 2018. This was reportedly confirmed by the former minister of education, Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan (Salem & Swan, 2014; Salem, 2014):

For too long students have had to suffer through a limbo year when they were neither school pupils nor studying towards their degrees, and universities have had to bear the cost. (Salem, 2014)

However, targeting the foundation or bridging courses as the source of the problem ignores the underlying causes, including insufficient access to quality, EFL learning at the pre-university level, and other issues in the primary and secondary school sectors discussed earlier in section 2.4.1. These programmes have been established as a short-term solution to address the broader problem of unpreparedness for EMI due to limited English language proficiency,

particularly after predominantly AMI based instruction at the primary and secondary levels (Watson, 2004). Foundation programmes are often under a lot of pressure to improve English proficiency within a short period of time, and are subsequently often blamed by university faculty for undergraduate students who experience difficulties with English mediated studies (Watson, 2004).

Foundation programmes in UAE-based tertiary institutions are EFL courses usually designed to prepare students for a band 5.0 in the IELTS examination or a TOEFL score of 61 (internet-based test) or 500 (Institutional Testing Program). By comparison to the prerequisite requirements expected of international students for university entrance into universities worldwide, this level of proficiency is much lower. Australian universities, for example, require a minimum of 6.5 for “linguistically less demanding” courses such as the sciences, and require even higher scores for entry into humanities, education, medicine and law where language requirements are more demanding (Craven, 2012). Hence, even upon successful completion of the remedial English courses and the attainment of a band 5.0 in the IELTS, levels of English proficiency remain insufficient to enable students to effectively complete their undergraduate study through EMI.

2.5.4 University-wide Language Support

With ADEC’s recent initiatives to increase English language proficiency at secondary school level, it is expected that in the next few years, students in increasing numbers will skip the foundations programme and immediately begin undergraduate studies. In a document outlining the challenges facing the

institution, the case study university is currently reviewing the foundation programme to focus more on the language support of students during the course of their studies, as opposed to preparing school leavers to meet the university's admission prerequisites through the foundation programme.

Beyond the foundation English courses, there are two main avenues of access to continued English language support. Students must complete English for academic purposes (EAP) courses. The two main courses that students across the faculties must complete are general academic writing courses, which focus on developing skills in essay writing and reading source texts, and an oral communication course, where students develop public speaking skills. A few departments also require students to complete a third specialised course. For instance, the university recently introduced a third ESP course for the business faculty as a result of feedback from the college and potential employers, which outlined the need for students to develop business communication skills, business etiquette and relevant language and content. Although the ESP courses have distinct names based on respective faculties, they tend to be generic with only a slightly different focus depending on the faculty (e.g. students can prepare presentations relevant to their particular area of study). Students can enrol in the academic writing course for another faculty if necessary. Furthermore, it is argued that the two semesters of academic language courses are insufficient to develop academic language skills, or to assist them in meeting the language needs of their respective courses, given their initial low levels of proficiency.

Secondly, students can access individualised language support through the university's learning support centres (part of the University College Student Academic Support Programme). The writing, speaking, and tutorial centres were initially established to meet the language (both Arabic and English) needs of students in the foundations courses. They have more recently broadened their services to attract undergraduate and post-graduate students. However, despite their valuable services, these learning centres' limitation is that they are relatively small-scale and require significant expansion to enable them to service the language needs of students university-wide. Beyond these support mechanisms, there are few support networks available to students at university to improve language proficiency once they exit the foundations programme.

In addition to the initial challenge of studying in a foreign language as a primary study medium, students must also cope with changes to the learning styles espoused by the university, which are based on a "student-centred teaching approach and a self-directed learning style" (Durham & Palubiski, 2007, p. 86). The challenges of study through EMI coupled with differences in learning styles affect not only the students, but also the teachers who must address these in the delivery of their content courses. Many of the teachers employed at the university in question are recruited internationally, reflecting the goals of higher education policies of the 1970s, which promoted the employment of qualified content teachers. These content teachers must deal with the realities of language policy and may find they are dealing with a cohort of students who may not have sufficient English proficiency to cope with the work. However, the teachers may not have the pedagogical background to assist their students, and

initially begin employment unprepared for this challenge. Due to the EMI policy and limited language proficiency allied to students being unprepared for a student-centred pedagogy, teachers have often had to adapt their teaching techniques and materials to assist students.

Though the university has a professional development centre designed for teachers, its professional development initiatives have largely focused on the use of interactive technology in the classroom, course and curriculum design and assessment. As outlined on its website, the centre focuses on equipping teachers with skills including course and curriculum design, project design and assessment, creation of interactive course content and the use of technology for more effective instruction. These professional development topics are important for course teachers who may not have undergone specific teacher training, and who may lack the information technology skills to utilise technology for teaching and learning. However, no attention has been paid to supporting teachers with issues associated with addressing language and literacy challenges in their teaching, despite the significant negative repercussions of this ongoing issue on teaching and learning.

The experiences of these teachers in implementing the EMI policy can provide important in-depth insights into the inherent challenges of this policy both for teachers and learners. This study examines these challenges and the resulting approaches that teachers have adopted to address limited language proficiency.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some contextual background to the study, beginning with a general background to language policy, the role of English as an international language and EMI both in the broader context and in the UAE. The chapter also examined the role of EMI in the UAE education sector at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The final section examined the role of EMI at the university. This chapter illustrated how English has grown to play a dominant role in public life in the UAE, and by extension how EMI has become an unquestioned policy in the tertiary sector and now increasingly in schools. The following chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the study, and problematises the often unchallenged exclusive role of EMI in the UAE's institutions of higher education.

Chapter Three – Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews a selection of literature relevant to the study. It begins by examining language policy, the spread of English and EMI both in the broader context and in the UAE. It subsequently provides an analysis of the prevalent rationales for EMI policy and problematises this policy by examining some of the key issues associated with its implementation. Finally, the chapter discusses the ‘space’ for this study’s research questions, by situating it in the current body of literature.

3.2 The Spread of English and EMI

3.2.1 Global Spread of English

English has become a lingua franca in the contemporary global era. British colonisation and trade from the 17th to the 19th centuries followed the military and technological hegemony of the United States after the WWII have contributed enormously to the global spread of English (Troik, 1977; in Phillipson, 1992). The continued dominance of English on a global scale, witnessed since WWII, has resulted from, and has been reinforced by, the military and economic hegemony of Great Britain and more significantly and recently, the USA. Phillipson (2009, p. 14) posits that, “There is nothing ‘normal’ about the way English has become established - it is a survival strategy (the pull factor) dictated by economic and political pressures (the push factor), which dovetail with linguistic imperialism”. These factors have secured for English a

role as the predominant language of commerce, computing, and research and development in the modern globalised world. Today, English is endorsed for scientific, technological and cultural interaction, as well as economic, political and strategic cooperation, spreading also through mass media, communications, multinational corporations and the internationalisation of professional and personal activities (Clyne, 1995).

From being the language of empire, English has now become the contemporary language of globalisation (Wright, 2004). The globalisation phenomenon has meant that people “are finding themselves needing to communicate or access information outside their primary language group”, which in turn has led to “a situation where increasing numbers are functionally bilingual, with their language of group identity not the language that they need in most of their acts of communication” (Wright, 2004, p.7). Given its strong association with globalisation, the spread of English is predicted to continue, and according to Graddol (2006) looks set to become the second language of the majority of the World’s population by 2050. English by this time is predicted to follow Chinese, Hindi/ Urdu, and Arabic as the most commonly spoken language in 2050, but is expected to hold the “first position as a lingua franca for socio-economic development” in the course of the next century (Marsh, 2006, p. 30). Kachru (1990), who identified the range of ways English was utilised by speakers, created a division of speakers into an inner circle (native speakers), and outer circle (second language speakers) and the expanding circle (foreign language speakers). Generally, the shift in status of speakers is from the expanding circle moving to the outer circle, as English gains more prominence and prevalence in

various domains of everyday life, as is evident in many Asian and European nations today.

The adoption of EMI for all levels of education, particularly HE, has also reinforced the global spread of English (Phillipson, 1992, 2009a, 2009b; Pennycook, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), further expanding the 'outer circle' of English language speakers worldwide. Graddol (2014, p.10) asserts that "English is now identified as a new basic skill that all the children need to acquire if they want to participate fully in a 21st-century civil society". The global status of English has been used as a justification for its adoption in higher education and thus its dominance is continually heightened (Coleman, 2006). Wright (2004) posits that this contemporary growth cannot be accounted for simply by colonisation and the military and technological hegemony of the USA today, but also by the perceived advantages with which its acquisition is associated. Hence the spread of English reinforces the often unchallenged disempowerment for those groups who do not have access to English.

English is achieving a critical mass. The millions of second language speakers and would-be speakers cannot be accounted for by straightforward coercion nor even through direction: the mass results from the incremental effect of individuals deciding that English is of advantage to them, as the prime language of social promotion in a globalising world. Those disadvantaged by their non-native speaker position contribute to their disadvantage by their consensual behaviour. If they all refused to acquire English, they would halt the imbalance that deprives them of the advantages of the native speakers. However, they perceive that to do so unilaterally would cut them off from global networks and systems that can bring political advantage, professional

reward or economic benefit, and so do not make that choice. (Wright, 2004, p.156)

The increase in the global dominance of English has, however, seen a proliferation of scholarly work questioning the power of English to marginalise already disempowered individuals and groups, and to reproduce prevailing power structures promoting Anglo-Saxon interests (Wright, 2004; Pennycook, 1995; Tollefson, 1991; Phillipson, 1992, 2009a). As a result, a significant body of literature has been published on the growing global influence of English, particularly the manner in which it has threatened global linguistic and cultural diversity.

3.2.2 English and Arabic in the Gulf and UAE

The growth in the influence of English has also been witnessed in the Arab world, particularly in the GCC region in the past three decades. Like the other Gulf monarchies, the official language of the UAE is Arabic, as is stated in the constitution of the UAE (UAE Government, 2012). Arabic is a diglossic language, where there is a “high variety” (the classical Arabic of the Qu’ran and other religious texts), and also a “colloquial” variety (Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which is used in the media, in government and in daily communication, as well as having various dialects used in different Arab nations and regions (Charise, 2007). MSA is the variety taught in schools, and utilised for written correspondence in the workplace. The nation’s Arabic Language Charter (UAE Government, 2012) identifies Arabic as the language of the government, of official communication in government entities, and the medium of communication for the delivery of government services. The document also

identifies the role of Arabic at every level of education, for cultural activities, for business and consumer benefits and in the media.

Apart from its significant role in Arab and national identity, the language is also inextricably connected with Islam, and motivation to learn the language is extremely strong as “linguistic competence aids salvation”, as learning “becomes an act of identity and even worship as knowledge of the sacred language gives entry to sacred texts” (Wright, 2004, p. 114). Some argue that because of the strong link between Arabic and Islamic identity, “there is no likelihood that English will make inroads into interpersonal or regulative functions” in either the Gulf or other Arab nations (Schaub, 2000, pp. 236-7, in Charise, 2007). However, despite the intimate link between Arabic and national and religious identity in the Gulf, the dominance of English has increased in these nations. Its growth has particularly been associated with the growth of the expatriate worker population, upon which these nations have relied heavily to support their unprecedented development and expansion in the past few decades. Population estimates for 2014 indicate the population is between 9.44 million, (United Arab Emirates Population, 2016) with Emirati nationals accounting for less than a quarter of the country’s population. The majority of the expatriate population is either from Anglophonic countries or from expanding or peripheral countries such as India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. The number of languages spoken in the UAE is estimated to be around 100, spoken by expatriates of 200 different nationalities and 150 diverse ethnic groups; with Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Hindi and Malayam identified as the most commonly spoken languages (Randall & Samisi, 2010).

Partly as a result of the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the expatriate population, the nation's experiences of colonisation, and American hegemony in the region, English has become the lingua franca of the United Arab Emirates, and has been adopted as the medium of communication in numerous domains. As with other Gulf countries, the status of English is increasingly shifting from EFL to ESL status, or from the majority of speakers representing moves from Kachru's (1990) category of the expanding circle of foreign language users to the outer circle of ESL users.

This prominence of English vis-a-vis Arabic in the UAE has meant a condition of linguistic dualism exists, where English represents economic prosperity, modernity, and globalisation, while Arabic represents the domains of religion, tradition, and local culture (Findlow, 2006; Kazim, 2000). Even the UAE's Arabic Language Charter (UAE Government, 2012) recognises the prevalence of English nationally:

Along with the remarkable and contemporary scientific leaps, the apparent intellectual advancement, the development of communications devices and their wide use among the young and the elderly alike, English has become a widely used language, especially among the youngsters who easily imitate what they hear. Moreover, since the country serves as a hub for international conferences in addition to being a ripe environment for intellectuals from across all fields, such as medicine, pharmacy, engineering and technology, they could all find a common communication ground in the English language.

However, the Charter fails to acknowledge some of the factors already discussed earlier in this section which have contributed to this situation. The Charter also attributes the dominance of English to EMI in the tertiary education sector, as the education systems in the UAE and other states of the GCC have increasingly made English a prominent part of language policy in education, particularly HIE where it is the main, or sole, medium of instruction.

3.3 Rationale for EMI

In his *Linguistic Imperialism Continued*, Phillipson (2009b) identifies the increased prevalence of English-medium universities in Europe, and growth in the popularity of the HE industry of the UK and US amongst international students, as some of the factors which have maintained the dominance of English. In the UAE, this dominance in education and language policy is also evident through the EMI policy in higher education, and increasingly in the primary and secondary levels. Brumfit (2004) asserts that “for the first time in recorded history, all the known world has a shared second language of advanced education” (p.166), and English has become the language of science, and gradually, the language of many other disciplines.

The adoption of EMI in universities worldwide has been based on numerous rationales. It would be naïve to ignore the influential, globalising role of English, and its positive contributions to higher education and scientific knowledge in the contemporary world. Crystal (2005) points out that approximately 80 percent of scientific publications are in English, which is also the medium of communication for the majority of international scientific meetings, symposia

and other exchanges (Montgomery, 2009). Montgomery (2004) highlights the role of English in formal international scientific contexts, in its capacity to allow global academic exchange, to advance knowledge and to improve mobility and opportunities in employment.

Studies have been conducted across many European nations where EMI policy has witnessed significant growth in a higher education context, and have identified other key rationales for its implementation (Coleman, 2006). Most universities in Northern Europe have adopted a policy of internationalisation (Graddol, 2006), one factor of which is the adoption of EMI for post-graduate, and undergraduate programmes, if not exclusively, then at least in part (Smit, 2010). This has enabled them to attract international students, and to internationalise the education of domestic students. Coleman (2006) also identified key rationales for this policy in European higher education namely: academic internationalisation; staff mobility; teaching and research materials; the need to improve graduate marketability in the globalised competitive workplace; and the spread of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) (pp.4-6). Coleman evaluated these rationales as a, “rainbow of motives that range from the ethical and pedagogical through the pragmatic to the commercial to the commercial” (p.4).

Other rationales for EMI include the need to promote cultural diplomacy, and to promote an international, globalised image of the university by successfully recruiting an international mix of both visiting or permanent international staff, and international students (Cho, 2012). The rationales cited for the EMI in HE,

particularly in science courses, in the UAE echo the reasoning cited in other nations in Europe, Asia and Africa. For UAE-based institutions of higher education, internationalisation has been considered a priority in theory at least. Higher education institutions (HEI) have sought US-based institutional accreditation; have adopted 'Western' educational models; and have recruited international academics (Wilkins, 2010; Marsh, 2006). EMI has been perceived as a language policy that has facilitated this process.

EMI in higher education in the UAE has also been adopted with the goal of creating a knowledge economy that would better serve the people and future aspirations of the country. In order to access global knowledge, there is a need to access Internet content and other international sources of data and academic material, the majority of which is in English. As Pennycook (1995, p.42) points out;

A large proportion of textbooks in the world are published in English and designed either for the internal English-speaking market (United Kingdom, USA, Australia, and so forth) or for an international market. In both cases, students around the world are not only obliged to reach a high level of competence in English to pursue their studies, but they are also dependent on forms of Western knowledge that are often of limited value and extreme inappropriacy to the local context."

Despite the issue of the possible inappropriateness of 'Western' textbooks, Arab students and academic have little choice but to refer to these as there have been limited moves towards translating scientific and general texts into Arabic, which has restricted learners' access to information and knowledge written in

foreign languages (Al-Harazi, 2003; in Troudi, 2007; Habbash & Troudi, 2015). Apart from the issue of limited availability of specialised textbooks in Arabic, another rationale for the adoption of English in tertiary institutions has been the limited specialised resources and terminologies available in Arabic, in the areas of science, business and technology (Al-Jarf, 2008).

3.4 Problematising EMI as Educational Policy

Tollefson (2006) argues that the main aims of critical language-policy research have been to critique traditional mainstream approaches to research which have often been apolitical, that is, have not examined this issue in relation to power structures. Critical language policy research has furthermore aimed to acknowledge that policies often create and reproduce various forms of inequality, with policymakers often promoting the interests of dominant social groups.

More broadly, Hunt (2012, p. 98) also points out that “the use of English in global institutions, media, the Internet, international business and leisure illustrates that English is not a value-free tool, but complicit in deployment of power globally and locally”. Kazmi (1997) draws on Foucault’s ‘panopticon’ metaphor to explain the ‘technology of power’ of Anglo-American hegemonic discourse, which is reinforced through the spread of English. This panoptic power does not require force to maintain power, but allows for Anglo-American economic, political and developmental dominance. TESOL English is a major contributing factor giving a voice to globalisation, and supporting colonial

powers (Pennycook, 2004; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003; Auerbach, 1995), and the spread of American 'cultural beliefs' (p, 2004).

These realities are evident in the Arabian Gulf states, where the belief that education is best provided in English seems to be an “uncontested practice”. As Schmidt (1998) argues;

Most public discussion of medium-of-instruction policies assumes that their aim is to ensure that students gain the language skills necessary for successful subject content instruction, equal educational opportunity, and future employment. Indeed, in many settings, one of the most effective discursive moves to legitimize particular policies is to associate them with a discourse of “opportunity” or “equality” (in Tsui & Tollefson, 2008, p. 285).

Schmidt's (1998) observations in many respects apply to the situation in the UAE. English proficiency is considered a key skill for both educational success and access to employment. Development and modernisation have been connected to the English language by UAE policy makers, further seen as justifying its presence in the curriculum at every level of education (Syed, 2003). It has been recognised for its role in economic success, with studies showing how limited English language proficiency impedes the growth of the private sector workforce in the UAE and other Gulf nations (Mashood, Verhoeven & Chansarker, 2009; Al-Ali, 2008). Al-Ali (2008) in particular, identified limited English proficiency as a barrier to the work readiness of UAE nationals, and was perceived to be an obstacle to Emiratisation, a government initiative to increase citizens' employment in both the public and private sectors. Currently

the UAE workforce is characterised by its 'dualistic feature' (Muysken & Nour, 2005), where a concentration of Emiratis are employed in the public sector due to high wages and other subsidies fuelled by oil revenues. These positions in the public sector do not often require high skill levels, and a command of English is not necessarily a prerequisite. At the same time, the private sector is dominated by foreign workers, who require high skill levels including a mastery of English (Muysken & Nour, 2005).

At the same time, studies have raised concern about the socio-economic inequalities that are associated with access or lack of access to English, which leads to inequalities in study and work opportunities. McLaren (2011) and Abdulla and Ridge (2011), point out how the socio-economic discrepancies between the different regions of the UAE influenced levels of access to English instruction. Abdulla and Ridge (2011) identified a correlation between the performance of male students in the English CEPA exam and their region in the UAE. Students from Abu Dhabi and Dubai performed better than students from the poorer emirates. In his study focusing on Arab-Muslim students in a Gulf Arab university, Karmani (2010) examined perceptions of the socialising effects of English-medium education. Via questionnaires and focus group sessions, Karmani (2010) found that although students tended to accept the advantages of studying in English, they also perceived culturally alien effects of this policy on Arab-Muslim students. Furthermore, participants expressed concern that "individual livelihoods are contingent on their proficiency and subsequent performance in English", and that limited mastery of English served "to antagonize large sections of the young Arab population" (p.110). Though this

study was conducted in the context of the UAE, it focused on EMI from the perspectives of students, and focused on language policy from a sociocultural perspective.

The findings of such studies demonstrate some of realities of how English is a “tangible economic resource” and conversely also reinforces “relationships of unequal power” (Tollefson 1992, p.2), which in some contexts can actually “block full and open access to education and employment” for particular groups (Tsui & Tollefson, 2008, p.286). As Tsui and Tollefson (2008) point out:

As ideological constructs, [medium-of-instruction] policies often reflect the interests of groups that dominate the state policymaking apparatus, and thus, they reproduce unequal relationships of power within the larger society. (p.284)

According to Phillipson’s seminal work, *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), the contemporary spread of English is situated in and reinforced by ‘Western’ cultural, economic and military hegemony, or imperialism theory, which he utilizes to explain the global linguistic dominance of English. Linguistic imperialism is identified as a subtype of cultural imperialism, which includes scientific imperialism, media imperialism, and educational imperialism. However, although all types “overlap and interweave with the others” as an over-arching world structure, linguistic imperialism pervades the other forms of imperialism, as “language is the means used to mediate and express them” (p.65). Phillipson (1992) asserts that “Each is a theoretical construct forming

part of imperialism as a global theory which is concerned with the structural relations between rich and poor countries and the mechanisms by which the inequality between them is maintained” (p.65).

Canagarajah (1999) and Pennycook (1994) however, critiqued Phillipson’s theory. Pennycook (1994) argued for a “move beyond a reductive theory of imperialism” (p.57) proposed by Phillipson (1992), which did not sufficiently recognise that English language learning was a reciprocal process, or as one which involved agency from local contexts. Phillipson has been critiqued for his focus on the reasons why governments and organisations have promoted the spread of English, without examining how this process may be separate from global capitalism (Pennycook, 1994). His work has also been seen to leave little room for consideration of the manner in which “English is used in diverse context or how it is appropriated and used in opposition to those that promote its spread” (Pennycook, 1994, p.58).

While Phillipson (1992) was viewed by Pennycook (1994) as emphasising the structural factors contributing to English linguistic imperialism, Pennycook called for a much needed focus on the role of the local/ individual in this process. Both theories are useful for gaining a better understanding the complex political and cultural factors influencing the global spread of English, and can contribute to a better understanding of the spread of English, and language policy in the Arabian Gulf.

Critics of EMI have centred upon issues of identity and concerns about the marginalization of the native language (Ahmed, 2011; McLaren, 2011; Troudi, 2002, 2007, 2009). There seems to be little consideration of the long-term effects on Arabic usage, on students' cultural and religious identities and on teaching and learning, factors which are discussed below. Another key concern is the extent to which varying levels of English language proficiency affect learning, and how these in turn influence the quality of teaching and pedagogical practices.

Below, I examine some of the key themes, or issues that have been raised concerning English medium instruction. These themes are: EMI and its effect on native language maintenance and status; the role of the native language in English medium instruction policy; the resulting effects on cultural and religious maintenance; and the teaching and learning issues that have arisen.

3.4.1 Effects on the L1

One of the fundamental concerns voiced about the global power, and spread of English has been its effects on the maintenance of native languages worldwide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001, 2000a; Phillipson, 1992, 1998). Applied linguists have reaffirmed the need to ensure that English is not taught at the expense of native languages (see Pennycook, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000a; Phillipson, 2009, 1992). The key criticism of EMI policy is the perceived threat it poses to the native language and the perception that it is the only language of science (Troudi, 2007; Smith, 2004). Described as a "killer language" (Coleman, 2006, p.1), English has been seen as a threat to language diversity and concerns

have been voiced about its threat to the Arabic language (O'Neill, 2014; Al-Issa & Dahan (Ed.), 2011; Kaddur & Bayram, 2010; Al-Dhubaib, 2006; Zughoul, 2003). In the context of the Arab world, Troudi (2007) raises concerns about the undermining of Arabic, as "a symbol of cultural, national identity and even self-respect and pride" (p.7). Drawing on Pennycook's (1998) analysis of the relationship between ELT and colonialism, Troudi reiterates as simplistic the idea that English is maintained for economic progress. According to Graddol (2006), demographic studies indicate Arabic will grow faster than any other world language by 2050, with its speakers predicted to have a very young age profile and has been identified as the fifth major world language (Zughoul, 2003). However, despite the demographic significance of Arabic worldwide, Gulf States have emphasised the role of English at the expense of Arabic.

English has been described as becoming "entrenched in the Arab lands" and "occupying more and more territory from the native language" (Zughoul, 2003, p.18). Zughoul's paper based on a review of the literature, highlights that while English poses a threat to Arabic language and culture, it is still badly needed in the Arab world. Al-Issa and Dahan (2011) argue that, "the nefarious role that English seems to play appears designed to eventually remove Arabic from a place of prestige and power on the local scene, both educationally and socially" (p.3). Kaddur and Bayram (2010, p.369) identify the growing hegemony of English as one of a number of factors threatening the Arabic language:

The Arabic language confronts threats, some of which are the disregard for the formal language in the daily life, the emergence of local dialects, and the potential replacement of Arabic with English.

There are consequences for how this will affect the national, cultural, religious and linguistic identities of young people in the Arab world in the long term. The trend in education policy is to move towards increasing English language learning at the expense of MSA. Al-Issa and Dahan, (2011, p. xi) assert:

No one is espousing the immediate death of Arabic, but the warning signs of a possible future loss of MSA continue to grow with a need for educators, parents, and policy makers in the Arab world...to be cognizant of the role global English currently exerts on Arabic-speaking youth. They can no longer ignore the signs that English, along with popular culture, are a dangerous pairing that can lead young people away from their native Arabic.

The perception of the superiority of English as a language of power vis-à-vis Arabic is a reality which has been discussed in the literature. These studies highlight the significant threat that English appears to pose for the status of Arabic, but does not address in significant depth, this threat in relation to the educational context. Other studies on the other hand, have highlighted the crucial role of language policy, and by extension, MOI policy, in determining native language preservation as well as the maintenance of a positive national and cultural identity:

The language of a nation, or an ethnic group, is often a symbol of its identity and allegiance, and an embodiment of its values, culture, and traditions. Medium of instruction is the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalizing a language and culture [...] Medium-of-

instruction policy determines which social and linguistic groups have access to political and economic opportunities, and which groups are disenfranchised. It is therefore a key means of power (re)distribution and social (re)construction. (Tsui & Tollefson, 2008, p.2)

Despite the crucial role of MOI in the preservation of native languages, the Gulf States have in the past three decades increasingly been giving preference to English as the MOI, particularly in higher education. This prioritising of teaching and learning in English has a marginalising effect on Arabic and Arab culture as has been demonstrated by a number of Arab Gulf-based studies, such as those conducted by Sanassian (2011) and Troudi (2007, 2009). Sanassian's (2011) study based on data from interviews and observation of Emirati middle school female teachers, examined the effects of educational reforms in a UAE middle school. The study highlighted the inseparable nature of language education, and the potentially detrimental effects of EMI on Emirati culture, the preservation of Arabic culture and on Emirati identity. The growing hegemony of English in the higher education sector was raised by Zughoul (2003, p.19):

With the exception of Syria in the Arab world who maintained a strong teaching tradition through the medium of Arabic, the schools of science, engineering, medicine and business teach through the medium of English (French in Arab North Africa) or a hybrid variety which uses a blend of English and Arabic. Despite a lot of lip service to Arabisation and Arabicisation, no laws have been enacted or language plans drawn to be implemented regarding the use of Arabic in Arab universities in any Arab country. In fact there is what can be considered a sharp regression in the use of Arabic in higher education in some Gulf Countries. In fact, the Gulf states are witnessing now, under Western pressure in the post September 11 events and the American occupation

of Iraq, a return of the 'imperialist' 'neo-colonialist' English medium education.

Al-Badry (2011) explores the prevalence of English and the value placed on having knowledge of this language by Arab parents in the Gulf:

At home, parents import nannies who communicate with children in English, nurseries are immersing children in English to give them a head start and middle and upper class Arab parents are proud to showcase their offsprings' communication skills in English (p.91)

Al-Jarf's (2008) survey of female Saudi students' perceptions of Arabic and English, also found that 94 percent of students believed English was superior to Arabic in a number of important domains. English was viewed by these students as a prestigious language, *the* international language, a language suited for science, technology and research. These findings were echoed in a recent study by Habbash and Troudi (2015), whose participants viewed English as superior to Arabic, particularly in relation to the former's perceived power and compatibility with science as compared to the latter. Troudi and Jendli's (2011) research on tertiary students' opinions emphasised "major concerns about the constant onslaught of English and its potential disastrous effects on Arabic as a language and a cultural symbol" (p. 15). Findlow (2006) asserts that EMI policy reflects market needs, so Arabic may be perceived as non-useful, after which, Arabic culture may be perceived as the outsider or other. This illustrates the weakening of the status of Arabic in the eyes of its native speakers. As these studies argue, an education system which favours teaching in a foreign language will have far reaching effects on the students and also on their language and culture.

Another concern is that with the increased focus on English in the tertiary sector, students may not gain expertise in communicating in their L1 in their specific field. With the increase in the role of English in higher education, fewer Arab students will have opportunities to continue to learn in and use their native language in academic contexts. This in the long-run will have an effect on the degree of Arabic proficiency of young Arabs, in comparison to Arabic. The degree to which students are achieving sufficient proficiency in Arabic in the current education system has been questioned. Pennington (2014) for instance, critiqued tertiary students' levels of Arabic proficiency. She reports on a survey conducted with 2,142 students at UAEU, ZU and HCT which found that students' mean score for Arabic writing skills was 11.09 out of 20. These results highlight a need for developing students' written and communication skills across every level of education, including university. Troudi (2007) comments on the practical implications of this, such as communication barriers which occur between foreign language trained physicians and their Arabic speaking patients, as a result of using a non-native language for instruction.

Phillipson (2009a) further reiterates the urgency of developing robust language policies in order to preserve language diversity. In a similar vein, McLaren's (2011) UAE-based study on EMI reflects on government language policy, and raises concerns about the potentially detrimental effects of EMI on the maintenance of Arabic.

It would appear in the United Arab Emirates, and wider Arabian/Persian Gulf region, that the policymakers (government ministers, hereditary rulers, etc.) charged with formulating medium of instruction policies and channelling their nation's future linguistic (and arguably cultural) direction, are going against their own best interests in promoting English to the, albeit inadvertent, detriment of Arabic. (p.37)

To counteract the increasing dominance of English, there have been media debates in the UAE about language policy and the need to preserve Arabic (Randall & Samisi, 2010). There has also been an increasing interest in the role of Arabic in education, as voiced by certain government figures. To illustrate, the year 2008 was labelled the year of national identity by the President of the UAE, while a conference on national identity was organised by the Vice President (Randall & Samisi, 2010). Hedaiat (2004) documents the support for Arabic within a bilingual model of education, as expressed in a convocation speech by the former minister of higher education and president of ZU, Sheikh Nahayan Al Nahyan, "Zayed University will gain a distinct identity as a world class university if we produce graduates who are proficient in both Arabic and English, and skilled in the use of information technology" (p.1).

More recent government initiatives have also sought to reassert the role of Arabic in the universities. ZU initiated Arabic Across the Curriculum (AAC) in 2001, where "students' skills of speaking and writing in Standard Arabic are supported both in an Arabic composition course and within the other content courses in the different colleges of the university" (Hedaiat, 2004, p. 10). There has also been a push to incorporate an Arabic exam in the exit CEPA tests that

all students complete at the end of secondary school. However, this has so far proven unsuccessful (Swan, 2012).

All in all, this media and government interest does not seem to be stemming the growth in influence and dominance of English in the country, nor its negative effects on the status of Arabic.

3.4.2 L1 in the EMI Model

Implicit in this language policy is a trend that is reflected in broader language policies worldwide (Tollefson & Tsui, 2008; Phillipson, 2003; Schiffman, 1998), where language policy may be explicitly expressed in the constitution and legislation of a country, but many aspects of the policy are unexpressed and unexamined in any real detail (Phillipson, 2003). Studies have recognised this discontinuity between official policy and everyday practice (King & Benson; in Tsui & Tollefson, 2008). This issue is characteristic of language policies aimed at promoting language rights, at international and national levels (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000b; May, 2015). As Phillipson and Skutnabb (1996) point out: “Explicit language policy formulations are relatively rare, which does not mean that there is no language policy. On the contrary, there are competing policies at the national and supranational levels” (p.433).

This reflects the reality of language policy in the UAE. On the one hand, the official language policy of the tertiary institution in question is that of bilingualism, the minimum learning outcome for graduates includes Arabic proficiency for native and non-native students as well as English proficiency. However, while limited Arabic proficiency is not often an obstacle to entry into

undergraduate studies, English proficiency serves as a gatekeeper and often restricts access to higher education for the majority of students. As in other contexts, there is concern that the overriding goal should not be a monolingual English educational setting, but one where the reality is bilingualism (Phillipson, 1992; Sridhar and Sridhar, 1986).

Emphasising bilingualism, Graddol's (2006) analysis of English as a global language highlights the future competitive edge of bilinguals or multi-linguals over monolingual English speakers in the workplace, and he concludes that English is moving beyond its 'foreign language' status, to that of a basic skill, thereby generating greater need for additional languages. Al-Issa and Dahan's (2011) volume on global English and Arabic found that a key theme of many studies was the need to move "towards bilingualism, rather than the continuing focus on English" (p.viii).

However, in practice this is not the case. Troudi's (2007) analysis of other educational institutions in the UAE indicated that, "superficially, [policy] appears to be bilingual but is heavily weighted in the English direction" which gives "prestige and power" to English instead of Arabic (p. 9). This is evidenced in the fact that the majority of the courses available at federally funded universities are delivered predominantly in English, including medicine, chemistry, physics, IT, engineering and other science-based courses, while Arabic is utilised for Islamic studies, law and courses including public relations and Arabic literature (Troudi, 2007). Furthermore, while the Abu Dhabi reform project at primary and secondary levels has shown signs of bilingualism, the implementation of these

reforms in primary schools, according to Sanassian (2011), indicates that they are heavily biased in favour of English, to the detriment of the native language. Whether these reforms yield effective outcomes and result in the desired improvement in bilingual English and Arabic proficiency has not yet been ascertained, though evidence suggests that this may not actually be the case.

Troudi (2007) critiques some of the prevalent arguments in support of EMI in the Arab world, asserting that the notion that Arabic cannot be used to teach the sciences is 'weak and unfounded'. He refers to other countries and regions which have successfully achieved scientific endeavours while maintaining native language use in higher education (e.g. China, Japan, Iceland and Taiwan). Troudi (2009) also argues that Arabic can hold its own as a language of science, with many current scientific journals and publications coming from the Arabic speaking world. Furthermore, Arab countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic have historically taught subjects such as medicine and technology in Arabic.

Al-Jarf (2008) has argued for the need to continue introducing Arabic terms which could become more commonly used through the media, and through the force of habit. She refers to the Saudi Terminology Databank, the Arabic Language Academy in Egypt and the Center for the Coordination of Arabization in Morocco. These are terminology databanks and dictionaries, which are working on Arabising technical terms. Al Jarf (2008, p.207) concludes that:

[...] the inferior role of Arabic as a medium of instruction in higher institutions in Saudi Arabia is heightened by the lack of language planning and linguistic policies that protect, develop and promote the Arabic language, by the inadequate Arabization efforts, and by the inadequacy of technical books translated and published in Arabic.

To counteract the inadequacy of available Arabic content, studies have highlighted the need for translation of English texts to Arabic (Ebad, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2012; Al-Jarf, 2008). Al-Jarf (2008) points to countries such as Armenia, Ukraine, Turkey, Korea and Japan which have successfully aligned global knowledge by translation and publication of specialised material into the native language.

At the university where the interviewees were employed, responses indicated an institutional preference for the exclusion of Arabic in instruction, which reflects the prevalent tenets in teaching English to students of other languages (TESOL) and English medium teaching. Phillipson (1992) identified one of several unchallenged tenets in the ELT profession, which was that belief that English as a second language is best taught monolingually.

Phillipson's critique of this fallacy is drawn on by Hunt (2012) whose study problematised the imposition of a monolingual approach within a tertiary educational institution in the UAE. This extreme form of monolingual policy was imposed not only in the EFL classroom, but the entire institution was designated as an English-only zone, including content-based classes, the cafeterias, indeed all communication at the institution. This monolingual stance is often an

implicit, unwritten policy, which marginalises students' native language and contradicts UAE tertiary institutions' goal of producing bilingual graduates.

This exclusion of the mother tongue in language learning has been criticised on a number of levels. At a practical level, it is seen as devaluing the pedagogical utility of the native language in the L2 classroom (Copland & Neokleous, 2011; Juárez & Oxbrow, 2008; Cook, 2001; Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Wells, 1998; Auerbach, 1993), and arguably in the delivery of undergraduate and post-graduate content. Furthermore, this monolingual approach has been criticised on a moral level as a policy which has "implied the rejection of the experience of other languages, meaning the exclusion of the child's most intense existential experiences" (Phillipson, 1992, p.189).

Hunt's (2012) critique of the monolingual policy at a tertiary institution in the UAE, illustrates the sometimes excessive zeal with which this policy is often applied. Though the university which is the focus of this study, does not, to my knowledge, explicitly legislate English only in the content-learning classrooms, it has tended to be an unquestioned assumption, and an unspoken expectation particularly by the English foundations programme executives. At a practical level, many teachers, even those of an Arabic background who may themselves have completed their studies in English, may not feel confident in drawing on Arabic to teach content courses. However, the extent to which these perceptions of language policy are representative of faculty and staff at the institution is to be ascertained later in this study. This study deals with these

issues from the perspective of the teachers, and examines the extent to which the native language is drawn upon in the classroom, and for which purposes.

3.4.3 EMI and Culture

The effect of language policy on cultural identity is not extensively addressed in the data in this study, as it is based on the perspectives of teachers rather than students, who would be better placed to discuss these concerns. However, I do believe it remains imperative to examine how language and identity are inextricably interwoven in a study of EMI policy. Language is often perceived as the “first and most significant representation of culture” (Lafayette, 1988, p.19). Hence, one cannot consider the effects of EMI on students without some recognition of the significant influence of this policy and how it affects cultural identities. Culture manifests itself in a major way through language:

Material culture is constantly mediated, interpreted and recorded- among other things, through language [...] Culture in the final analysis is always linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community, that is both real and imagined. (Kramsch, 1995, p.85)

Language is neither neutral, nor apolitical. Though the ELT profession may believe that English does not affect the local culture, studies have consistently argued otherwise:

Social change occurs slowly, but inevitably at the edges of dominant cultures. This is true also of the change that we might want to bring about by teaching people how to use somebody else’s linguistic code in somebody else’s cultural context. Teaching members of one community how to talk and how to behave in the context of another discourse

community potentially changes the cultural norms of that society.
(Kramersch, 1995, p.86)

In the UAE context, there has been concern about the effect of English on Arab culture and the Islamic religion. As discussed earlier, Arabic is inextricably intertwined with Islamic belief and practices as the liturgical language of Islam, as well being the language defining Arab identity and nationalism. It is the language of revelation and ritual worship and has profound religious significance for Muslims. Karmani (2005) has criticised language policy and the dominance of English at the expense of Arabic and cultural and religious identity in the Gulf:

That English has a role to play in the Arabian Gulf region is without doubt [...] its overwhelming role in the region has snarled up not only the possibilities of reaping some of the important benefits of learning English, but also of exploring and instituting ways of developing Arabic language policy initiatives to cope with ongoing challenges of industrialization, modernization, and globalization. Simply opting for “more English and less Islam” seems an utterly grotesque way of basing a national language-education policy particularly in such a deeply conservative Muslim region such as the Arabian Gulf. It seems clear that such formulas, rather than solving problems, can only serve to exacerbate the already dismal state of language-education policy in the region. (Karmani, 2005, p. 101)

The implications of the global spread of English and linguistic imperialism have been studied in various contexts, including the Gulf. Britain controlled the UAE and Oman, until 1971 and 1970 respectively, and the more recent occupations

of Afghanistan and Iraq, have at times reinforced mutual distrust and animosity in the Arab/ Muslim world towards nations identified as English-speaking and of Christian heritage, particularly the USA.

As a result of these broader socio-political issues it has been asserted that EMI policy may have long-term negative effects on young people's cultural identities, which create "fractured cultural identities [that] leave an indelible psychological scar" (Macedo, Detrimus & Gounari, 2003, p. 77; in Troudi & Jendli, 2011, p.14). In a study to determine if Emirati female students perceived that English had an effect on Emirati cultural identity, the majority strongly agreed with this correlation (Hopkyns, 2014). Hopkyns (2014) concludes that:

Those changes were both positive and negative with the latter category including 'Arabic loss', 'clothing and lifestyle changes' and 'desires to be like English native-speakers' being described in the greatest detail. It is clear that, whereas the participants value the importance of English, concerns about its effects on their society are numerous, indicating the 'double-edged sword' nature of English as very much present. (p.11)

These effects on language and culture have been met with calls to reassess language and education policy in the UAE, and other Gulf states. Canagarajah (1999) asserts that;

a key challenge for the UAE as well as other countries in the region is how to resolve, or at least accommodate, ambiguities about English (Ramanathan, 2005) and how to reconcile the competing demands of

local, regional, national and religious identities with the homogenizing tendencies of globalization and English. (p.76)

As for the perceived threat that English poses to students' cultural identities, Karmani (2005) asserts the need to develop "language education policy and planning solutions that are locally based and help maintain and indeed promote Arabic-Islamic values" (p.101). Clarke (2007, p.588) states that

it is important that this new generation of English teachers in the UAE recognize their capacity to fertilize a predominantly west-based TESOL as well as a male-dominated UAE political elite with their views about the roles and purposes, opportunities and threats, of English in the Middle East.

On the other hand, studies have also highlighted the agency of language learners in challenging the effect of English on culture, and on the preservation of Arabic. Hopkyns (2014, p.5) refers the multifaceted, dynamic nature of identity, which allows individuals to be bilingual, and where English positively contributes to their identities.

While language is an important part of identity, it should be recognized that it is one of many aspects contributing to identity construction. These multifaceted aspects of a person's identity are fluid, changeable and constantly evolving. It is therefore not possible or desirable to remain in a state in which one's culture, language and identity remain unchanged. Indeed, changes to identity through the use of English may be welcomed changes, which add to rather than subtract from a person's sense of identity.

Clarke's (2007) study of young Emirati student-teachers of English studying at the Higher College of Technology highlighted their awareness of issues of power and inequality in language education. A young woman was described as "not willing to accept being positioned as a cultural dupe with no agency and initiative of her own" (p.588). This echoes Kabel's (2007) interpretation of the role of English in the Arab world, where in contrast to viewing English and "putative hegemonic discourses as an inhibitive and imposed encumbrance", it is worth considering that the "appropriation, far from being drenched in a confrontational idiom, is a move towards new sites of collaboration and contestation, towards much wider human possibilities" (p.136). In a similar vein, in a Dubai-based study of the English use by police officers, Randall and Samisi (2010) concluded that "there is no evidence of the concerns that such a widespread use of English may have a negative impact on the Arabic language, which been widely expressed by the government and regularly debated in the press" (p.49)

Similarly, Pennycook's (2003) study which showed how language being mixed in the lyrics of rap and hip-hop was contributing to a global popular culture that transcended boundaries provided evidence that the spread of English was not leading to a homogenization of world culture.

Though the issue of EMI and culture has not been addressed explicitly in the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis, it remains a pertinent area of consideration when examining the efficacy of EMI policy in the UAE.

3.4.4 EMI and Teaching and Learning Needs

Coleman (2006) provides an overview of the inherent challenges of implementing an EMI approach in HEI based on Smith's (2004) analysis of key problems raised in the body of literature. The factors identified, which were relevant to the UAE context, were all broadly related to the role of teachers, students, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. These challenges are summarized below:

- Inadequate language skills and the need to train indigenous staff and students.
- Unwillingness of local staff to teach through English.
- The inability of native speaker tutors to adapt to non-native speaking students.
- Organizational problems and administrative infrastructure.
- Lack of interest from local students.
- Loss of confidence and failure to adapt among local students.
- Uniformity and availability of teaching materials.
- Equity of assessment for native and non-native English speakers (Smith 2004, in Coleman, 2006, p. 6-7).

These points are discussed below in relation to teaching and learning in an EMI model.

The Learners

A number of Smith's (2004) key points (listed above) are relevant to the UAE context, particularly those which involve the language proficiency (that is, students' inadequate language skills, a lack of interest from local students and their loss of confidence and failure to adapt to the EMI model). In the UAE the transition to tertiary education includes "changes in the medium of instruction, the educational/academic culture, and the educational expectations of both the teacher and students, specifically with regard to graduate outcomes" (Durham & Palubiski, 2007, p. 84). Students' English proficiency upon entry into HE has been described as intermediate "at its best" (Troudi, 2007, p.5). In a previous study of teacher perceptions of EMI, I found that while university foundation teachers were generally supportive of the EMI policy, they were aware that their students had insufficient English proficiency (Mouhanna, 2010). Karmani (2010) also expressed a degree of frustration due to the challenges faced during an English medium education. Other studies have reported students citing "realistic and pragmatic reasons" for preferring EMI to AMI.

Studies examining the efficacy of EMI have discouraged its use when student proficiency is too low, or when they have not reached a 'threshold level' of proficiency. In an Indonesian-based study on the implementation of EMI, Ibrahim (2004) compares the adoption of a submersion approach where students are thrown immediately into an English-only environment, to a transitional bilingual approach where the first language is initially used. Proponents of the former approach claim that with exposure and use of the L2, students will learn the language, while incorporating the L1 will decelerate the

learning process. However, Cummin's 'Threshold Hypothesis' (Cummins & Swain, 1986), supports the idea that additive bilingualism is best achieved when L2 has developed to a threshold level (Ho & Man, 2007). Hence, an exclusive EMI model only benefits those bilinguals who have "surpassed the second threshold and reached the top level (competence in both languages) [and] can enjoy cognitive advantages" (Ibrahim, 2004, p.128). On the other hand, those who have not reached this threshold, and have competence in one language only may have either positive or negative results, while students at the bottom end of the spectrum (lower levels of competence in both languages) are "likely to derive more even disadvantages" (Ibrahim, 2004, p.128). Hence, it is more likely that those with high English proficiency benefit most from English as the MOI. Similarly, in a Hong Kong based study, Ho and Man's (2007) analysis of MOI studies argued that "for students with low to moderate ability, CMI [Chinese medium instruction] could help them learn better" (p.15). They conclude that "English as the MOI should only be used with students with high English ability, and hence have the competence and skills to learn without difficulty in English" (p.15).

Such studies call into question UAE tertiary institutions' application of the EMI model when students' English proficiency levels are still poor, and they are unable to effectively complete "cognitively challenging and linguistically context reduced" university-level courses through an English MOI (Ibrahim, 2004, p. 129).

As discussed earlier, the current overall minimum entry IELTS band for students is 5.0, which does not equip students with sufficient language proficiency to function in an academic learning context. A 5.0 in IELTS qualifies the candidate as a “modest user of English” (IELTS Guide, 2015, p. 6).

Troudi (2007) reminds us that upon leaving high school, most students would have been studying English for up to twelve years (Guefranchi & Troudi, 2000; in Troudi, 2007). However, many are still not above the threshold of competence in English that enables them to study with EMI. Although major educational reforms have been introduced by Abu Dhabi Education Council, which aim to improve English proficiency, these initiatives have yet to yield noteworthy results in terms of the percentage of students bypassing English foundation courses. Apart from language difficulties, student transition also means they experience differences in pedagogical practices that create linguistic and cultural distance (Syed, 2003). In the UAE, the K-12 level English has historically been taught by Arab nationals, while English is taught mostly by North Americans, teachers from the British Isles and Australians at the tertiary level (Syed, 2003).

Hence, the policy of EMI disadvantages many students who have limited proficiency in English, as “the burden of having to study content subjects in an alien language can be detrimental” (Troudi, 2007). In a large-scale quantitative study conducted across six universities in the major cities in the UAE, and incorporating the perspectives of 500 students and 100 teachers, Belhiah and Elhami (2014) found 66 percent of teachers agreed that most of their students

were able to read and understand lectures, while 37 percent agreed that their students could read and understand course materials. At the secondary school level, Qashoa (2006) found that a key demotivating factor for Emirati students was problems associated with vocabulary load, listening, structures and spelling.

Saudi-based studies in the tertiary education context highlighted some of the challenges that arose for students as a result of the EMI policy. In Al-Jarallah and Al-Ansari's (1989) study of medical students at King Saud University a much lower proportion of students reported adequate comprehension of lectures when compared to those presented in Arabic. Furthermore, half of the students reported perceiving themselves as having fewer opportunities to participate in class discussion, while their lower reading speed in English compared to Arabic meant they experienced more frustration than when reading in Arabic. Al-Sebaee (1995 in Al-Jarf, 2008) reported that medical students saved half their reading time when their medical course textbooks were in Arabic. In a Jordan-based experimental study comparing the failure rates of students in Arabic medium with English medium, it was found that while the failure rate for Arabic was 3 percent, for the latter it was significantly higher at 30 percent. In an older Kuwait-based study, faculty reported students' limited English language proficiency as an impediment to learning as it affected their comprehension levels with English textbooks, their comprehension of lectures and contributed to poor academic writing and verbal skills. Marsh (2006) argues for the importance of examining EMI as a possible contributor to educational failure:

When we look at the overall educational achievement in any country, it is necessary to consider if the medium of instruction acts as a barrier to learning. This is particularly important when fluency in the 'adopted' teaching language may be low amongst learners, and possibly even teachers. (pp. 30-31)

In a study analysing students' participation in problem-based learning (PBL) groups at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at UAE University, Mpofu, et al (1998) found that students' contributions correlated highly with their TOEFL scores, reinforcing the obvious link between English proficiency and academic attainment. Studies have asserted that EMI seems to be benefiting "only those students who have competence in English", and disempowering those without the language proficiency to function in an EMI setting (Sultana, 2014). Studies have argued that EMI has at times undermined students' learning, and excluded them from the learning process. In a recent study, Al-Ali, (2008) identified limited English proficiency as a barrier to work-readiness for UAE nationals, and was hence an obstacle in the advancement of the policy of Emiratization.

In other nations and territories characterised by an English-dominated education system, such as Hong Kong, reassessments of the outcomes of these policies have been sceptical about the chances of reaching the levels of proficiency required for academic attainment, with students facing difficulties following many of their lectures (Peng, 2005). Peng (2005) describes the practical learning challenges faced by students in Hong Kong HEI. If they had

insufficient levels of proficiency for academic attainment they faced difficulties with day-to-day learning such as following lectures.

Apart from the learning challenges posed, studies have examined the effects of EMI and low proficiency upon students' attitudes towards EMI and levels of confidence and motivation. In a UAE-based study on English as a foreign language in secondary schools, Mustapha (2002) found that 73 percent of participants held negative attitudes towards learning English. In a Bangladesh-based study, Sultana (2014) emphasised the negative emotional and psychological effects that EMI had on students who experienced significant difficulties with English proficiency. Furthermore, Sultana's (2014) participants, with lower levels of proficiency in English, tended to lose confidence in their abilities upon entry to university. In describing one female student's experiences of struggling with English in an EMI university, Sultana (2014) asserts that her

self-confidence was shattered. It shows her ambivalent feelings about her limited English abilities. In fact, her emotional condition was the consequence of the linguistic hegemony and ideology propounded by the university. The hegemonic ideology made her think that her linguistic capacity was synonymous with her general intellectual ability. Participants also seemed to lose interest in their studies and they seemed disoriented when they talked about their future. (p.37)

In the Saudi context, Al-Braik (2007) asserts that "most learners in the middle and lower middle levels emerge from EFL courses and programmes with a perceived sense of low satisfaction, and low achievement" (2007, in Elyas, 2011). These demotivating experiences are subsequently exacerbated when

students encounter difficult content and language demands at university level, resulting in a “sense of failure in students and in the teachers...likely to affect their learning and teaching identities” (Elyas, 2011, p.99).

Despite the general profile of low English proficiency, and the negative effects on learner identities, some studies have identified a positive perception of students towards EMI in tertiary education. Findlow (2006), who conducted a study amongst ZU students, found that half of the students preferred to study in English, 22 percent indicated Arabic, while the remaining students (28 percent) indicated a preference for a bilingual model of learning. Those who supported EMI based their preference on the following rationales: English as a world language; its importance as a second language, to facilitate communication with outsiders; for employment, and to help them in their studies (Findlow, 2006).

Overall however, despite student awareness of the utilitarian value of an English MOI, the literature reviewed above also describes the significant challenges that learners face in the UAE and in other EFL contexts where EMI is implemented in higher education. These learner issues provide further impetus for problematising EMI in the UAE context.

The Teachers

Relatively fewer studies have explored EMI policy from the perspectives of teachers. Teachers employed at the UAE’s higher education institutions are often educated in foreign universities, often through EMI, and are more confident in teaching the course in the language in which they had studied it

(Findlow, 2006). This is often also the case even amongst bilingual Arabic-background teachers. King (2015) and Findlow (2006) also point out that teachers were often more confident in teaching the course in the language in which they had studied it, which was usually in English if their studies have been in 'Western' tertiary institutions.

Limited language proficiency however, presents content teachers with significant challenges in the delivery of undergraduate courses (King, 2015; McLaren, 2011). Another issue Coleman (2006, p.7) points out is that content teachers;

[...] are unlikely to have specialist knowledge of the particular demands of university-level education through an L2, where mixed ability becomes the norm and complex content exacerbates already high cognitive processing loads.

This means that they are often ill-prepared to address the needs of their EFL learners, particularly if they have not taught previously in an EFL context. It has been argued that much of the EMI approach has been adopted without any modification of teaching and learning practices (Marsh, 2006). Troudi (2005) asserts that TESOL teachers must be cognisant of the implications of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. I would extend this need not only to EFL or ESL practitioners, but to subject-teachers delivering their content through English.

As a result of EMI policy and insufficient English proficiency, teachers are often required to adapt their teaching techniques, and materials to assist students in their learning. Teachers are sympathetic towards the challenges that students face as a result of completing their tertiary education in a language-medium that is not their own (Smith, 2011). With time constraints, and academic pressures, lecturers may simplify the work rather than rethink strategies to give the students what they need, particularly in the development of content related language proficiency skills. These anecdotal findings have also been echoed in the literature (Dearden, 2015; King, 2015; McLaughlin, 2014; Selvi, 2014; Rogier, 2012; McLaren, 2011).

General educational and pedagogical concerns have been raised in the literature in relation to EMI. UAE-based studies have highlighted this as a significant concern for teachers, who perceive limited English proficiency as an impediment to university learning (King, 2015; McLaughlin, 2014; Rogier, 2012; McLaren, 2011; Mouhanna, 2010). Rogier (2012) who conducted a UAE-based study on how students' English language skills develop while studying in English-medium classes in UAE universities, concluded that students' language proficiency improved over the four years of study. This study was based on the use of a retrospective panel study based on a test/retest method to compare scores on the IELTS exam after four years of undergraduate study. However, Rogier (2012) also reported on some of the negative effects of EMI on learning in UAE HEI and found that although students had confidence in their English language proficiency, 80% of teachers surveyed perceived students' language ability, particularly their listening and writing skills, was not enough for the

English-language learning environment. Due to these limitations, teachers reported adapting course content and assessment criteria. 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. Rogier's (2012) findings emphasised the need for clarity in institutional goals for language development, explicitly communicated in the tertiary setting, and the need to ensure that continued language development is a responsibility shared by teachers. However, although Rogier's (2012) study contributes to the body of knowledge of EMI in HEI in the UAE, its research questions do not problematise this policy, nor do they focus on the potential role of Arabic in the EMI model as it is currently implemented.

In a previous small-scale study (Mouhanna, 2009), findings also indicated teacher concern for students' limited English language proficiency, and its role as a significant barrier to content learning. These teachers asserted the need for the provision of continuing parallel ESP or EAP language support for students to assist them in gaining the skills and knowledge required in their respective courses.

In addition to pedagogical concerns, another important issue that has been raised relates to faculty-student interaction. Teaching is not just about having a body of knowledge and delivery techniques, but it is also about;

learning to work in a complex socio-political and cultural political space, and negotiating ways of doing this with our past histories, fears, and desires; our own knowledge and cultures; our students' wishes and preferences; and the institutional constraints and collaborations. (Pennycook, 2004, p.333)

As Weber (2011) points out, “linguistic and cultural distance between learners and teachers is a serious factor in the Gulf EFL classroom” (p.64). In many cases in the tertiary education sector, where foreign academics predominate despite increasing employment of Emirati nationals, students are often taught by faculty who are from overseas. They may have had some professional development to address cross-cultural awareness, though, as per Weber (2011), this is often very limited in scope, and does not adequately prepare teachers for the social and cultural realities of the students that they teach. Though very significant, these issues pertaining to students and teachers have received comparatively less research attention than broader issues of cultural and language preservation with regards to EMI.

3.5 Situating the Study in the Body of Literature

As can be seen from the literature reviewed above, there has been a growing body of much needed research into the social, political and cultural effects of the spread of English and by extension of EMI policies in the Arab world. Recent research in the field of applied linguistics and education in the UAE and Gulf context, has sought to problematise EMI and the dominant role of English (McLaren, 2011; Troudi, 2007). It is particularly salient to examine how EMI affects teaching and learning in a context where many students do not have

sufficient English competency to complete their undergraduate studies without overcoming serious challenges.

Studies have examined the role of student perceptions of EMI (Hopkyns, 2014; Malallah, 2010; Findlow, 2006), though comparatively fewer studies have examined EMI from the teachers' perspective in the UAE's higher education content teaching context. Furthermore, there are few studies that have problematized EMI, particularly in the manner in which it has affected curriculum and pedagogy, which I would argue should be a key aspect of studies examining the efficacy of EMI in the UAE. Hence, there is a need for more UAE-based research from the point of view of teachers, which explores how EMI affects pedagogy and learning, as well as views on the possible role of Arabic in language policy.

There are two main studies (King, 201 and McLaren, 2011) that are of particular relevance to this study, in terms of research focus, methodology, and findings. However, though these two studies are both based in the UAE, and explore teacher perceptions of EMI, they make contrasting recommendations about EMI policy in HE in the UAE. Firstly, McLaren (2011) whose study has been referred to earlier, examines via a mixed methodology study (quantitative questionnaires and interviews with senior management), faculty and management perceptions of the English medium and current concerns amongst TEFL/ TESOL practitioners. In his study, McLaren's (2011) study draws a number of conclusions in relation to EMI in the tertiary sector. Firstly, he concludes that teachers do not appear to believe that a monolingual learning environment,

which excludes Arabic is most effective for students' learning, due to the cognitive burdens it entails. Based on his findings, McLaren (2011) recommends that tertiary institutions in the UAE adopt Arabic as the MOI, while English is taught as a foreign language. McLaren (2011) concludes:

Many faculty were unconvinced that a monolingual classroom environment were efficacious. EMI was challenged on the grounds that studying through another language adds to the learner's burden (Troudi, 2009) and makes mastery of content subjects more difficult and contingent upon the students' language skills. (p.2)

Though McLaren's (2011) contributes significantly to this field of inquiry, in my study, I do not espouse a reinstatement of AMI policy in higher education, due to various factors, which make this too difficult (these factors are explored in some depth in the discussion chapter). Furthermore, the context of McLaren's (2011) and the participants, and the research questions differ from those of the current study. McLaren's participants included both teachers and senior administrators, and in addition to a focus on the efficacy of EMI, also compared native and non-native English teachers' opinions. On the other hand, this study focuses solely on content teachers' perceptions.

A more recent study by King (2015) explored UAE-based tertiary teachers' views on EMI policy enactment in the UAE Federal Tertiary Sector. In contrast to McLaren (2011), King (2015) supports EMI in HE, but highlights the need for an increase in the role of Arabic in the current model. King's (2015) study in many respects parallels with the goals and findings of this study, though a

number of differences are also evident in both their methodologies, and sample foci.

Firstly, while King's study was based on questionnaire responses and interviews with content teachers working across various tertiary institutions (both private and public) in the UAE, this study was based on the interview findings from content teachers working in one federal tertiary institution. Hence, while the former focuses on a broad range of experiences in various institutions, this study sought to examine, in a more in-depth manner, the language policy as it was enacted in one particular institution. By focusing on the teachers' perspectives of EMI as it is enacted in one specific context, the study was able to examine the effect of EMI on teaching and learning, and the role of Arabic in the EMI model, as well as take into account some of the contextual factors, which were specific to the university. These contextual factors in turn added complexity to issues surrounding language policy, such as the linguistic diversity of students and teachers, and the geographic diversity of the Emirati student population. In this way, it seeks to contribute to the controversial debate on language policy, and EMI in the tertiary education sector in the UAE. Recommendations based on the findings of the study will add to the body of literature, which explores the complexities and challenges of implementing EMI for teaching and learning, and the possible role of Arabic within EMI model.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature in the fields of language education and policy in the UAE, which are relevant to the current study. It has highlighted some of the

factors which have contributed to 'linguistic dualism' in the UAE, and the implementation of EMI in higher education. It has also outlined some of the key issues that have arisen as a result of the growing dominance of English, including its effect on Arabic, on students and teachers, and on the national, cultural and religious identities of the UAE population. More importantly, the review of the literature described the current body of knowledge concerning EMI, but also pointed to the gaps in the literature. This chapter concluded by highlighting those gaps, which necessitate the problematisation of EMI in HE in the UAE, and an examination the role of Arabic in current language policy in HE, both of which are the focus of this study. The following chapter outlines the methodology utilised in this study.

Chapter Four - Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study explores the complexities that arise when implementing EMI in a tertiary institution in the UAE. The study has been conducted from the perspective of subject teachers. Specifically, it analyses how a group of educational practitioners' teaching practices and student learning are affected by EMI policy. The study is an interpretative, qualitative approach which incorporates qualitative research instruments. Data for this investigation was based on interviews with subject teachers from a variety of departments.

The first section introduces the theoretical perspectives which frame this study, and its methodological approach. This is followed by a description of the data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter outlines some of the ethical considerations, challenges and possible limitations of the study.

4.2 Qualitative Theoretical Framework

The methodological approach adopted for this study is shaped by both my philosophical stance and worldview as a researcher, as well as an orientation suitable to the purposes of this research. My ontological view of the world is based on a perception of social reality as perceived by multiple people who, in turn, have multiple views of events and multiple perspectives of any given phenomenon (Mack, 2010). This ontological view in turn shapes my epistemological considerations, or the question of what is (or should be) regarded as "acceptable knowledge" in a discipline. My epistemological view, or

my view of social reality, and what I perceive to be acceptable knowledge, is informed by both interpretative and critical paradigms. Specifically, while the interpretative paradigm plays an important role in my view of social reality as subjective, multiple and fluid; the critical paradigm has also informed the data analysis and recommendation phases of the study. I examine these two paradigms below.

4.2.1 Interpretivism

Crotty (1998, p.3) defines epistemology as “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology”. The epistemological view or the theory of knowledge which frames this study is an interpretative paradigm, characterised by a “concern for the individual”, and the desire to “understand their interpretations of the world around them” (Cohen & Manion, 1998, pp. 36-37). Bryman (2004) defines interpretivism as an;

alternative to the positivist orthodoxy that has held sway for decades. It is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action. (p. 13)

Hence, an interpretivist epistemology postulates that researching the social world requires a different “logic of research procedure [to a positivist approach], one that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order” (Bryman, 2014, p.11). Where a positivist approach seeks an explanation of human behaviour, an interpretivist approach seeks to understand it (Bryman,

2014). It is based on a constructivist view of reality, where meaning is seen to be “constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p.43). It focuses on the *emic* perspectives of the participants involved in the study, their multiple and subjective perceptions and interpretations of reality.

Thus, this research like others from the interpretivist tradition (also referred to as constructivism) aims to “look for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p.67), and seeks to “emphasise the ability of the individual to construct meaning” (Mack, 2010, p.7). To conduct research based on an interpretivist perspective, the role of the researcher is to “understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants” (Cohen et al, 2007, p.19). As an interpretivist epistemology, constructivism is particularly salient for educational research, and for reflecting on best teaching practice (Richardson, 2007). Newer paradigms in the study of education have gone beyond a traditionally favoured positivist approach, which “needed demonstrable facts and behaviours” and where:

The subtleties of meaning making - thought and feeling, and the complexities of social interactions - were overlooked or trivialized by the juggernaut of numerical “truth”. The study of human beings – and therefore the educational endeavour of teaching and learning – required a new paradigm in scientific thinking, and new strategies to record the more qualitative aspects of learning. (Richardson, 2007, p. 9)

4.2.2 Critical Perspective

Beyond an interpretivist paradigm, the study has also drawn on some elements of critical perspective, particularly in the data analysis and recommendation phases of the study. I have utilised critical applied linguistics (CAL) mainly to raise awareness of the issues of equity, access, and power that are associated with EMI. In the data analysis chapter of the thesis, I explore where appropriate, how EMI has affected the experiences of teachers.

As with the general aims of CAL, an additional concern of critical language policy research involves social change. The philosophical underpinnings of critical linguistics closely align with some of the objectives of the current study. Research based on critical linguistics has been growing, as researchers reiterate the need to study the role of power in language and language use (Pennycook, 2001). Critical approaches to language learning deal with language teaching and learning in relation to the language learners' understanding of themselves, their social context, their histories, and life chances (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Tollefson (2002) defines the role of critical linguists as:

[...] activists [...] responsible not only for understanding how dominant social groups use language for establishing and maintaining social hierarchies, but also for investigating ways to alter those hierarchies.
(p.4)

In justifying the role of the critical paradigm in social research, Fairclough (2014 p.6) reinforces the role of power relations in shaping language practices, which is a factor that researchers must examine:

A critical orientation is called for by the social circumstance we are living in. If power relations are indeed increasingly coming to be exercised implicitly in language, and if language practices are indeed coming to be consciously controlled and inculcated, then a linguistics which contents itself with describing language practices without trying to explain them, and relate them to the social and power relations which underlie them, seems to be missing an important point.

A critical paradigm draws on the data to contribute to effecting change and challenges dominant social and political discourse in the field of education. Because this study aims to analyse the effects of a language policy, it is based on an orientation towards languages, which “criticises modern language study for taking conventions and practices at face value, as objects to be described, in a way which obscures their political and ideological investment” (Fairclough, 2014, p. 6). Pennycook (2001, 2004) identifies the critical dimension that is added to applied linguistics as CAL, which he defines as a process which requires “a constant scepticism, a constant questioning of the normative assumptions of applied linguistics”, and “connect it to questions of gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, ideology and discourse” (Pennycook, 2001, p.10). CAL covers the theme of language policy, and planning amongst others. Like Fairclough, Pennycook (2004, p.793) also asserts that critical applied linguistics must;

incorporate a view of language, society, and power that are capable of dealing with questions of access, power, disparity, and difference, and which see language as playing a crucial role in the construction of difference.

He further posits that a “crucial component of critical work is always turning a sceptical eye toward assumptions, ideas that have become “naturalized”, and notions that are no longer questioned” (2004, p. 799). Utilising criticality as an analytical lens facilitates more in-depth awareness of how language policies and practices influence social interaction and communication patterns (Johnson, 2012, in Hunt, 2012). Criticality focuses on local contexts and specificities, and is critical of universal claims. As Pennycook (2001) points out, criticality necessitates the avoidance of a unitary stance, and at the same time, requires a consistent positioning of the self through reflection and reflexivity of the given reality, and the need to work “towards a more contextual understanding of power relations” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 45). In an earlier work, Pennycook (1994) emphasises the crucial role of teachers and applied linguists in discarding perceptions that the ELT profession is neutral, and to investigate the “interests served by our work” (p.24).

A key aspect of being critical is the process of problematising taken-for-granted assumptions and ‘self-evident truths’. This process, according to Pennycook (2001) is based on, “casting far more doubt on the categories we employ to understand the social world and on assumptions about awareness, rationality, emancipation” (Pennycook, 2004, p.329). Beyond problematising, criticality requires that researchers acknowledge the diversity and complexity of the social

world, to acknowledge how language defines the world, and constructs and reinforces knowledge, and power structures (Hunt, 2012).

4.2.3 Critical Perspective and Language Policy

In this study, language policy cannot be isolated from the socio-political landscape. In fact, language policies “permeate and interconnect” with numerous governmental concerns including but not limited to culture, commerce and foreign affairs (Phillipson, 2003). Phillipson (1992) argues that the relationship between broader social, economic and political factors and language policy favours English over other languages through his theory of linguistic imperialism. He defined this phenomenon as:

The dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution and structural (material properties) and cultural (ideological properties) inequalities between English and other languages. (p.47)

English dominance over other languages was identified by Phillipson (1992) as one form of linguistic imperialism. He also identified it as a subtype of linguicism, defined as; “ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). Language policies and, by extension medium of instruction policies, provide further evidence that language is enmeshed with issues of knowledge ownership and access to power in society. Through a critical lens, this study interrogates how language policy

influences the lives of individuals and groups, who do not have the power to effect change in policy and higher decision making (Tollefson, 2002). In this vein, the current study problematises the naturalised assumption that the UAE's language policies are the most suitable for key stakeholders, particularly students. It examines its often overlooked, inherent limitations and negative effects, which have not been sufficiently explored.

4.3 Methodological Approach

The study is based on subject teachers' experiences. Based on the interpretative and critical perspectives discussed above, the study sought to explore the perceptions and experiences of the English-medium policy in a particular context. To do this, the study focused on a single university. Yin (2013) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry which "investigates a contemporary phenomenon ("the case") in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 2). A case study design has been identified by Yin (2003) as suitable under a number of conditions. Specifically, a case study is suited for research where the focus is on "how" and "why" questions and where the behaviour of participants cannot be manipulated. Furthermore, case study research is suitable when contextual factors are believed to be relevant to the study, and where there are unclear boundaries between the phenomenon and the context (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This study fits these conditions, firstly through its interpretative perspective which aims to examine social realities, perspectives and participant beliefs.

Secondly, the study does not aim to manipulate the behaviour of the participants, but seeks instead to understand and give a voice to their experiences. Case studies provide an ideal method for exploring participant experiences as they allow for close collaboration between researcher and participants, while allowing participants to narrate their stories. Consequently, these stories enable the participants to express their views, while in turn providing opportunities for researchers to better comprehend their behaviours and actions (Lather, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993, in Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Contextual factors have a significant influence over the manner in which EMI policy is enacted. The adoption of an EMI policy and the ensuing results are contextually dependent, and are based on the manner in which the policy is implemented. Hence, examining EMI through a case study perspective enables me to explore the “causal links in real-life interventions”, which are often too multifaceted to capture via quantitative surveys or experimental research (Yin, 1989).

By exploring one tertiary institution in the UAE, this study provides an account of the complexities and challenges experienced in this particular context. Though case studies have been critiqued for their limited generalisability, this has not been a key concern nor an ultimate aim for researchers who have conducted case studies (Gomm, Hammersly & Foster, 2000). In contrast, case studies reflect an interpretive paradigm by portraying contextual uniqueness which may not be as accessible via other methods.

4.4 Data collection- Interviews

The ideal way to explore an educational institution's processes and policy behaviours is through examining the perspectives of the people who are a part of these processes (Seidman, 2006). Dearden (2015) posits that EMI appears as a "phenomenon which is being introduced 'top-down' by policy makers and education managers rather than through consultation with the key stakeholders" (p.3). As stakeholders, teachers have a personal and professional investment in their institution and their students' education, but are often on the receiving end of policies, without having much input into their development. Teachers also have a wealth of knowledge and experience which can help to assess the success of these policies. Therefore, they are essential voices if the aim is to gain insight into the effectiveness of management policies. This study seeks to provide a voice for teachers, by enabling them to communicate their perceptions and experiences regarding EMI policy.

In order to access teachers' perspectives I have drawn on semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection. Qualitative interviewing has long been utilised as a means of gaining knowledge in the social sciences (Kvale, 2007). They are used because they allow the researcher to explore participants' "identities, experiences, beliefs and orientations" (Talmy, 2010, p.111). These interviews seek to understand the central themes of the participants' 'lived world' (Kvale, 2007, p. 11). Seidman (2006, p.9) argues that the purposes of in-depth interviewing is;

not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to “evaluate” as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.

Qualitative interviews seek to gain descriptions of specific situations and actions rather than participants’ general opinions (Kvale, 2007). Furthermore, they are designed to gain qualitative knowledge that is expressed in normal language as opposed to quantification, where “precision in description and stringency in meaning interpretation correspond to exactness in quantitative measurements” (Kvale, 2007, p.12).

Semi-structured interviews have been utilised in this study to give some degree of control over the direction and emergent themes. However, it also allows for a degree of flexibility that ensures teachers can respond with themes and concerns that are also relevant to their own experiences. According to Kvale (2007, pp.10-11), a semi-structured interview “comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and it involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured - it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire”.

Despite its invaluable role in qualitative research, interviews as a data collection tool have been the focus of ‘stereotyped objections’. Kvale (1994) identifies these criticisms of the interview as: “it is not scientific, not objective, not trustworthy, nor reliable, not inter-subjective, not a formalized method, not hypothesis testing, not quantitative, not generalizable, and not valid” (p.147).

However, he later points out that most of these objections are based on the broad criticisms levelled at qualitative research by proponents of the quantitative approach. He argues that for the remainder of these criticisms, qualitative researchers utilising interviews must ensure that they produce “new, worthwhile qualitative knowledge, convincing in its own right” (p.148). He concludes that instead of weakening the value of the interview as a research tool, these criticisms can be utilised by the researcher to assist in strengthening and improving the research design and clarifying the specific nature of the study (Kvale, 1994).

4.5 Research Procedures

4.5.1 Procedures for Conducting Interviews

Teachers from different faculties at the university were invited to participate in individual, qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Teachers were provided with information describing the research topic and methodology, and what participation entailed for teachers, either via email or face-to-face.

Teachers were recruited through a snowballing technique. Snowballing is a technique used for finding research participants, whereby participants recommend other potential participants, and so on. As such, it is a process of participant recruitment, which allows the researcher to access an ever-expanding set of possible participants (Bertaux, 1981, in Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) points out that recruiting participants through snowballing or other means should be contingent upon two criteria. The first is determining when one has interviewed enough participants by considering the need for

accessing sufficient numbers to reflect the range of participants and sites. The second criterion refers to the saturation of information, which is the point when the researcher starts to hear a repetition of information (p.59). For this study, the decision to access a small number of participants was based on their representation of a range of perspectives from different faculties in the university, and for their different language backgrounds (both Arabic and non-Arabic speaking backgrounds).

Nine teachers volunteered to participate in the study. These teachers represented a range of faculties and departments in the university (see table 1 below), which allowed for a diversity of responses reflecting different experiences. The participants also represented a range of language backgrounds, less than half of the teachers were of an Arabic-speaking background. As Staller (2012) points out, “sample size matters in an objectivist’s epistemological framework because you need large enough numbers for statistical power during analysis” (p.407); however, this is not the case with qualitative research, which seeks to understand human behaviour through gaining insight into perspectives and how social realities are perceived.

I also believe that the data reached a point of saturation, which is evidenced in the prominent themes, and similar responses patterns. Hence, recruiting more participants would have yielded more similar responses. Where qualitative studies may focus on comparatively small sample size, it gains rich in-depth data, which cannot be accessed through quantitative means alone.

Arrangements were made to conduct the interviews at a time that was mutually convenient. Interviews began with a reassurance that interviewees' identities would remain confidential, and both researcher and participants signed an agreement regarding the conduct of the research. All participants consented to audio-recording of the interviews.

The table below provides details of the participants. It lists the pseudonyms used, the courses taught and their period of employment at the case institution. Pseudonyms have been used to protect identities and to allow for an uncomplicated and free exchange of opinion. As can be seen in the table, the teachers' length of experience at the institution ranged from 3 to 14 years. Five of the participants were Arabic speakers, while the remaining teachers were from non-English speaking European backgrounds.

Pseudonym	Faculty/ Department	Length of employment (in years)	Language background
Ahmed	Humanities & Social Sciences – Linguistics	9	Arabic
Thomas	Science Faculty – Chemistry	10	German
John	Chemical Engineering	3	Greek
Zain	Business and Economics	15	Arabic
Basil	Agriculture	10	Arabic
James	Architecture	3	Spanish
Bayumi	IT	12	Arabic
Munzir	Chemical Engineering	8	Bengali
Abdul	Architecture	3	Arabic

Table 1: Participants in the study

The teachers took part in 60 to 90 minute semi-structured interviews. Prior to beginning the interview, participants completed a form seeking background information. This included:

- Demographic profiles (nationality, previous teaching experience)
- Age
- Length of employment at the institution
- Content taught
- Knowledge of Arabic (none, beginner, intermediate, advanced, native-like)

I then sought information about their experiences with EMI in the workplace. Interviews began with general questions regarding awareness and opinions of language policy and practice at institutional level and in their respective faculties. The second set of questions examined teachers' views of students' proficiency in English, and how proficiency levels may affect student learning and/ or motivation. The final set of questions examined how language proficiency affected content delivery, interaction and assessment practices. It also sought feedback from teachers about the support mechanisms, or the lack thereof, that was available. A copy of the interview schedule is in Appendix 1. These questions were designed to be open-ended to allow teachers to discuss the themes in a flexible manner and to avoid my own possibly preconceived ideas affecting their responses.

4.5.2 Credibility and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research has commonly been criticised as lacking in rigour compared to quantitative studies. It has also been criticised for being based on anecdotes, revealed in the way in which “research reports sometimes appeal to a few, telling ‘examples’ of some apparent phenomenon, without any attempt to analyse less clear (or even contradictory) data” (Silverman, 2006, p. 10).

To address this in social science research, there has been a move towards producing ‘reflexive accounts’, which enable researchers to become more visible actors in their research (Mann, 2010, p. 11). This trend makes visible the manner in which the researcher’s role influences, acts upon and informs the study (Nightingale & Cromby, 1997; in Mann, 2010).

The notion of credibility refers to confidence in how appropriately the data addresses the proposed focus of the study (Polit & Beck, 2012, in Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, & Kyngäs, 2014). Methodological decisions were based on gaining in-depth data from teachers about their experiences with EMI policy, which could not have been accessed through other forms of data collection, such as a survey.

To increase the rigour and validity of the findings and to avoid anecdotalism, various practices were used in the data collection and analysis stages. Audio-recording the data ensures that there is a traceable record of the event, and interview data is then transcribed accurately, verbatim with the inclusion of non-

speech events including pauses, laughter, inaudibility, etc. which portray more detail, and additional information (Sandelowski, Voils & Knafl, 2009).

To do this, permission was sought from participants to audio-record interviews. If interviewees agreed to this, the interviews were subsequently transcribed. If teachers were uncomfortable with this due to concerns about confidentiality, the interviewees were informed that the researcher would conduct the interview while taking detailed notes of their responses. However, none of the interviewees objected to being recorded.

During the data analysis process in which themes were identified, every effort was made to avoid a subjective or biased interpretation of findings. In reality, researchers are never free from their own preconceived ideas. However, the process of reflexivity, where the researcher critically reflects on the self as researcher, tends to limit the effect of these preconceived ideas. Furthermore, in the introduction I have disclosed my fore-structure, that is my expectations for the study, my “preconceptions, values, and orientation, including any theoretical commitments” (Stiles, 2005, p.486). These disclosures are essential in qualitative studies as they can assist readers to infer “the observations’ meaning to the investigator” (Stiles, 2005, p.486). In the final discussion, I have also reflected upon my “progressive subjectivity”, where I narrate the thesis journey, its difficulties, and surprises, how it influenced me, and how the data was influenced by initial expectations. The responses to these questions “illuminate the context of the substantive interpretations and may represent an important source of information in their own right” (Stiles, 1993, p.604).

4.5.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was adopted to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews. QCA is described as a flexible process where textual content is analysed through “a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials” (Bryman, 2004, p.392); while Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define this process as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1279). QCA is an ideal form of data analysis for this study as it allows the researcher to focus on “the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text [...it] goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1279).

The main objective of data analysis is to analyse the data by producing summaries, abstracts, coding and memos. The decision to use semi-structured interviews allowed for some initial organisation and sequencing of the data, which subsequently assisted in more efficiently processing the data and comparing responses. As above, every interview was transcribed ad verbatim by an independent transcriber (see Appendix 5 for a sample of transcripts). Following this, a key component of qualitative content analysis is the process of simplifying the data from the transcribed interviews, which enabled the identification of key themes and ideas, or content categories that emerged from the data.

Frequent margin notes were jotted down on the interview transcripts. Short analytic memos were subsequently developed to summarise the data from the interviews. These memos included summaries of major findings, and reflections on the data. In the course of the content analysis, the data was reduced to themes identified as content categories pertaining to the research questions (Prasad, 2008). These memos formed the basis for reporting on the findings of the study, and helped me “to achieve an analytical distance from the raw data and force the researcher to conceptualize” (Groenewald, 2008, p.505).

Key themes and concepts that emerged from the data were somewhat restricted by the interview schedule and questions described above (see Appendix 1). Hence, the key themes identified in the analysis of the data were to some extent anticipated. However, due to the open-ended nature of the questions asked, this was not the case for all the findings. These were identified upon closer reading of interview transcripts and notes. A tabulation of key themes was made of each interview. These key themes subsequently were used as categories by which the results of the data were reported. Events were counted to utilize “quasi-statistics”, or the “quantifying” of qualitative data “to facilitate pattern recognition or otherwise to extract meaning from qualitative data, account for all data, document analytic moves, and verify interpretations” (Sandelowski, Voils & Knafl, 2009, p.210).

4.6 Ethics & Challenges

4.6.1 Ethical Concerns

Prior to, and during, data collection, a rigorous process for gaining clearance to conduct research from the University of Exeter's (see Appendix 2) research ethics department was undertaken. One of the key challenges for conducting the research lay in seeking approval to conduct the study at a tertiary institution in the UAE. This was particularly an issue for this study because of the fact that it was critical in nature, and aimed to problematise a commonly accepted language policy instituted by not only tertiary education institutions' upper management, but by the Ministry of Education itself. For this reason, seeking approval to conduct the research would be a challenging process at the university in question. I sought the permission of teachers to participate in the study from external points of contact. That is, I accessed potential participants through my own contacts with teachers at the university, and subsequently through the snowballing technique to access other participants.

I worked through the rigorous process of gaining ethical approval for my study through the University of Exeter's Human Research Ethics Committee to ensure that my study did not cause any undue harm to potential participants or institutions. Due to the sensitivity of themes addressed in the thesis, it was even more imperative to ensure that the utmost ethical standards were maintained, particularly in ensuring that the confidentiality of the institution and faculty were preserved. It was important to provide potential participants with full information about the aims and objectives, as well as the demands of the research by

communicating the data collection methods, duration, and the means in which data would subsequently be disseminated. This information was presented orally and through information sheets via email to all potential participants (see Appendix 3). Participants and I also read through and signed a Teacher Consent Form (see Appendix 4), to ensure that they were well informed about the study, and that they had contact details of my supervisor and co-supervisor in the event of their needing further clarification.

As a researcher, I was conscious of my responsibilities towards maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. This is particularly pertinent in case study research, as it is possible that persons and the institution may be portrayed in ways that make them identifiable. Every effort was made to maintain the confidentiality of participants at all stages of the research. To do so, pseudonyms are used for the names of individuals, and the institution itself. Measures were taken to limit the use of identifying information about the participants in the research. Identifying features are either omitted or altered in order to reduce the risk of identifying the participants. Furthermore, the data that was gathered from the participants was filed and stored in a secure location. Audio-files and transcripts were labelled with the participants' pseudonyms, plus the data was de-identified and codes were stored separately.

4.6.2 Constraints and Issues

As discussed above, one of the key challenges for conducting the research lay in seeking approval to conduct the study at the tertiary institution in the UAE. This was particularly an issue for this study because of its critical nature and its

goal of problematising commonly accepted language policy instituted by not only tertiary education institutions, but by the nation's ministry of education itself. For this reason, seeking approval to conduct the research was expected to be a challenging process if I wished to incorporate student perspectives, or to access teachers as participants through the university channels. I foresaw the difficulties of accessing ethical approval from the university to conduct the research, so I instead decided to access the participants externally from the university. Furthermore, I decided against interviewing, or surveying students, as well as conducting observations of EMI classrooms, which would have significantly enriched this study.

4.6.3 Limitations of the Study

The study is qualitative in nature, and hence it is characterised by a few limitations based on the approach adopted. One of the key limitations of interpretative studies is that it does not use scientific procedures for verification and so it is difficult to generalise the results to other situations (Mack, 2013). However, this is not the objective of this research, which seeks to explore teachers' perspectives on the effects of language policy and its enactment on teaching and learning. As Yin 2003 (p.10) points out:

case studies [...] are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study [...] does not represent a 'sample', and in doing a case study, your goal will be to generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).

Another possible limitation is the study focused only on the perspectives of the teachers in relation to EMI policy. This decision was based largely on the need to ensure that the study focus and data collected were not too broad for the scope of the study. A second justification for this decision was accessibility of participants. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, I decided to conduct the research based only on teachers' perspectives. My initial research plan involved the incorporation of students' perspectives in this study through observations and interviews. However, given the difficulty of gaining access to this group of participants, the research design was modified. Without doubt, these additional sources of data would have enriched the research. However, given the scope of the study, and the sizeable number of participants who volunteered to participate from a diversity of faculties at the institution, I was still able to access to a range of rich and in-depth data from a representative range of perspectives and experiences.

Another point for consideration which may have affected the diversity of responses was the recruitment methods of participants through the process of convenience sampling and the snowballing technique. Methods of sampling, particularly snowballing, may not be the ideal way to provide a statistically representative sample, as participants are likely to recommend more participants from their own social networks (Bryman, 2004). However, this form of sampling is one of the few available alternatives to access participants, and the number of participants provided a saturation of the data.

On the whole, however, this study does not claim to explore the full range of experiences and perspectives of academics teaching through EMI in higher education in the UAE. It does however offer some valuable contributions to a more thorough understanding of the inherent challenges of teaching students content through a foreign language in higher education.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approaches adopted in the study. It presented the key rationales for the study's interpretative, and critical frameworks, and its use of case study methodology and interview data. Finally, it accounted for the analysis of the data, and some of the ethical concerns and challenges that were experienced during the research process. The following chapter details the findings of the study.

Chapter Five - Findings

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in chapter 3, the data collected for this study was wholly qualitative, and relied on extended semi-structured interviews with teachers as part of a case study at a university in the UAE, where English is the official medium of instruction. This chapter reports on the findings of the study, based on the interview responses of nine teachers at the university, who were employed in the following departments/ faculties: Humanities and Social Sciences, Linguistics, Business and Economics, Engineering, Architecture and Food and Agriculture. Below is a summary of the participants' profiles as reported previously in the methodology chapter. Pseudonyms have been used, and potentially identifying details have been modified or omitted to protect the identities of the participants. Refer to table 1, (p.109) for interviewees' respective faculties/ departments, period of employment, and language backgrounds.

The findings below have been reported in relation to the themes outlined by the research questions guiding this study, and the themes identified in the data. The research questions are based on three underlying themes. Firstly, the findings are presented in relation to content teachers' perceptions of EMI, and the perceived rationales for adopting this policy in their institution. Secondly, the findings examine the perceived challenges of implementing EMI in relation to course delivery, assessment practices, and learning, and how these are

addressed. Finally, the chapter explore teachers' perceptions of the role of L1 in student learning and in the university overall.

5.2 English Medium Instruction Policy

5.2.1 Teacher Perceptions of the University's EMI Policy

As discussed above, the first research question aimed to explore teachers' perceptions of EMI policy generally. Teachers were asked to report on their awareness of their EMI policy as enacted in their workplace. All nine teachers interviewed were aware of and reported implementing the university's EMI policy, which has been interpreted as the use of English for teaching and learning. Teachers reported being informed verbally of this policy either during their initial orientation experience by the university's Human Resources personnel or by the heads of their respective faculties. In the excerpt below, John, a teacher in the faculty of Engineering and a relatively recent employee at the university, reports being instructed during his staff orientation programme to communicate solely in English with students.

During the orientation programme, the human resources office did a structured orientation programme for the faculty members and during that, among other things, was that English is the language of instruction. Of course, when I was looking at the university and when I was searching the website, I did see that they are using English as the official language. (John)

Although teachers were aware of the EMI policy, none could identify a specific policy document dictating language use in the university or the role of Arabic in

this model. As discussed in section 3.4.2, the university's language policy tends to be implicit. There is little reference to EMI policy in the available university documents, except for a sentence in the Human Resources Manual instructing teachers to use English in the classroom. An additional reference to language policy was based on the university's objective of producing bilingual graduates. Despite the scarcity of references to the university's official status of EMI policy, all the interviewees were aware that it was to be implemented across the faculties with the exception of Sharia and Law, and a handful of compulsory general education subjects (Islamic Studies and Emirates Studies).

Of the nine participants, only two viewed the university as being one that advocates a bilingual policy reflected in one of the university's strategic objectives of producing bilingual graduates. Below, Ahmed, a teacher in the department of linguistics, described the university as bilingual, though largely based on EMI, with his department (Linguistics) naturally also adopting an EMI stance as it focused on the English language.

I am not aware of a specific document, but I know the university policy on teaching, is the university is a bilingual one and the medium of instruction is English-apart from the Arabic Department and maybe other departments. But I know in our college [linguistics], the language of instruction is English. (Ahmed)

On the other hand, Thomas, a teacher in the Faculty of Science perceived that all departments were to use English.

As to language use, it's clear. In all departments it will be English.
(Thomas)

Teachers reported that EMI was often enforced at the university by individual departments. English proficiency amongst teachers was considered an employment prerequisite regardless of the academic discipline (though naturally with the exception of the Arabic, Islamic Studies and Sharia and Law specialists), and English medium in the classroom was often reported as an enforceable requirement. Ahmed below narrated an incident where the department head had worked to enforce EMI in the Linguistics programme. Though the Linguistics programme is English based, there seemed to be little or no tolerance for the incorporation of any Arabic either in the courses or in actual classroom interactions:

We have to use English and only English in the classroom...I remember a few years back, people were interviewed, if they were not capable to speak English proficiently and properly, they would either have to resign or to rectify their English. (Ahmed)

In the faculty of Architecture, Abdul also reported it was strictly enforced:

Well they are taking it very seriously, aah, they, every time like when we meet with the higher management, they say, they keep emphasising on using English as a medium to communicate with the students, and you're not allowed any students to respond in Arabic. (Abdul)

Teachers' reports reflected the degree of importance placed on EMI policy at the university, which has also come with the exclusion of Arabic. Abdul's report in particular indicates the level of pressure put on teachers to implement EMI which may be a result of multifarious factors. These may include students' resistance to comply with the sole use of English due to limited English proficiency and/or teachers' use of Arabic to assist students' comprehension of content, when it is not understood in English. Below, I examine the rationales cited by teachers for EMI policy at their institution.

5.2.2 Rationales for EMI at the University

Utilitarian Function of English in the UAE

Teachers' responses to the rationales for the implementation of EMI at the university reinforced the reality that English "has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 81). Reflecting the rationales cited in the literature review, all of teachers referred to some of the utilitarian functions that EMI served for Emirati students seeking access to the UAE's workforce. Teachers discussed the invaluable role of English proficiency for students, and by extension EMI in relation to the multicultural nature of the UAE's workforce and society, which prioritised English to increase competitiveness in the UAE workforce where English has become the lingua franca. Teachers emphasised the role of English in allowing students to access opportunities for postgraduate studies, or for employment abroad. English was viewed as a skill which opened doors "*if they wanted to do postgraduate*

studies” (Thomas). This point was further reinforced by Basil as can be seen in the excerpt below:

It's good for the future, for the students in the future. If they wanted to do postgraduate work in English they will be good and English is an international language. (Basil)

Teachers' responses also reflected the perception that the practice of learning content through EMI would equip students with further opportunities to improve English proficiency, though the correlation has not been unanimously substantiated in the research (see Lei & Hu, 2014). In the excerpt below, Thomas highlights the belief that EMI enabled students to develop their English proficiency:

It helps the students later on in their career for sure. Especially here in this area, in this country where they have a lot of interaction with non-nationals so from that point of view, that's probably good.

In short, English proficiency afforded students opportunities for academic success and future upward mobility. Teachers articulated the perception of English as a gatekeeper to important societal functions, “a powerful means of inclusion or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions” (Pennycook, 1995, p.40). Without this proficiency, students were perceived to be significantly disadvantaged.

English for Internationalisation

The role of English as an international language was raised by teachers, who emphasised the need for learning the language to pursue international competitiveness, for international communication and accreditation for the university and its students. Teachers initially described English in positive terms as “*an international language*”, “*a global language*”, “*very essential*”, “*a good opportunity for students*”. As discussed in the above section, teachers highlighted that through knowledge of this global language, students had access to power and resources locally and beyond the UAE.

English is a global language, we have to face it, so you have to teach your students how to speak in English even though (sic), especially in the UAE. Like, we have people from all over the globe and this is the only way they are going to communicate with them. I know it's important that we know, hold on to our Arabic, but we have to face this change. It is what they need. (Abdul)

EMI policy also enabled the university to pursue a path of internationalisation, of pursuing a path towards becoming a reputable academic institution in the region, and of climbing global university rankings. Like other HEI in the Arabian Gulf seeking US-based institutional accreditation (Wilkins, 2010; Marsh, 2006), EMI has been perceived to assist the university in gaining this, a process that it was undergoing during the course of the study.

Teachers described how this policy enabled the university to transcend language boundaries and recruit accomplished academics internationally to fill

the gap in local expertise and in effect also raise the international ranking and reputation of the university. The status of English as the global language, and the resultant need for English proficiency enabled access to academic positions for the teachers in this EFL setting. This rationale was cited by four interviewees, who were of non-Arabic speaking backgrounds (but were non-native speakers of English).

We need to make a connection and a smooth transition between what part of the university and work options. So if you're teaching and the language of instruction is all English, most probably you will look for a job that you can realize this. Furthermore, by having English medium policy, the university was also then able to attract reputable academics from around the world. (Thomas)

Teachers emphasised the role of EMI in enabling the university to recruit qualified teachers internationally, as can be seen in John's statement below.

[By] having English as the medium of instruction, the official medium of instruction, the university can attract people from all over the world. This university can have faculty members from different areas of the world so they can get the best they can. (John)

Teachers' rationales in sum emphasised the relationship between EMI and the university's internationalisation efforts as well as for students' capacities to compete internationally.

Arabic as a Language of Instruction

The third research question examined teachers' perceptions of the role of Arabic in the university's language policy. In addition to citing rationales for EMI, was a recognition of the need for Arabic in education, and the perception that specific courses necessitated teaching in students' first language. Arabic-background teachers in particular emphasised the need to incorporate Arabic into students' education. Two native-Arabic teachers did not agree that EMI policy could be implemented in courses where the more practical choice would be Arabic.

Some students I see have mixed opinions. Some students are happy with that and especially those that are taking the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics and TESOL, so the instruction would have to be in English. However, in other departments sometimes they find it a challenge; why not take these courses in Arabic because we are Arab people. We live in the Arab world and our courses focus on Arabic and on Emirati and Arab society, so why not take them in Arabic? (Ahmed)

Similarly, Zain did not support the university's marginalisation of students' L1 in the university, and described this language policy as counterproductive to students' learning.

Arabic, I think if you are talking about learning, Arabic is a primary language. It should be used except in medicine, engineering and science. I don't understand why it should not be used in other subjects. Why should we penalize the students because of their language? (Zain)

Both Ahmed and Zain were critical of the university's almost exclusive English-only approach to EMI policy in the university. However, the remaining participants, though all second-language learners of English themselves articulated the commonly cited reasons for the role of English in the UAE and its educational institutions. English-medium policy was justified by teachers based on the demographic realities of the UAE, as discussed above where expatriates accounted for more than 80 percent of the total population, and the role of English as a *lingua franca*.

Overall, interviewees identified these utilitarian rationales for the university's adoption of EMI, and were largely supportive of this language policy, though two teachers (both of Arabic-background) had reservations about the degree to which Arabic was excluded. Teachers also cited the need for this policy based on the internationalisation of HE. However, despite their support for EMI policy, teachers were not without concerns about the attendant challenges that arose as a result of this policy, as will be discussed below.

5.3 Perceived Challenges of EMI in the classroom

The second research question aimed to examine the effects of EMI on teaching and learning. Teachers discussed at length the accompanying challenges that the university's EMI policy entailed for the teaching and learning process, in an educational context characterised by the limited English language proficiency profile of students. This section examines a number of challenges posed for teachers when implementing EMI at this particular university. Firstly, it presents findings from the teachers in relation to EMI use and students' English

proficiency levels, the effects of proficiency on quality of learning, and teachers' course delivery and assessment practices. These are discussed in some detail below.

5.3.1 Students' English Proficiency

Students at the case study university were reported to be struggling with basic English proficiency, beyond which they needed to develop academic literacy, a challenging but necessary element for academic success (Cummins, 2008). Teachers highlighted the need to improve students' language proficiency in the secondary school years, before they began their university education.

They should be addressed at an earlier stage than, you know in the earlier years. That means that students that come to us have better language abilities. (Basil)

Overall, two groups of teachers presented varying degrees of concern about the effects of students' language proficiency on their more general learning. Perhaps understandably, teachers in the sciences were comparatively less concerned about EMI policy and students' language proficiency than teachers interviewed from the Business and Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences faculties. This may reflect the degree to which language skills, particularly academic writing and reading are a requirement of the latter faculties, compared with the sciences. However, another contributing factor may be the fact that the sciences tend to attract the better performing students (including those with higher language proficiency, as discussed in the contextual background

chapter). Hence, these two groups of teachers described slightly different levels of concern about the impact of English medium instruction policy on students.

All nine teachers, however, expressed varying degrees of concern regarding students' levels of English proficiency. Every teacher interviewed stated that for some students, language proficiency was not sufficient to meet the linguistic demands of an academic context. The two excerpts below represent teachers' general assessments of their students' levels of English proficiency, and reflect not only the degree of polarisation in students' levels, but also the extent to which language barriers affected a large proportion of the student population at the university:

I would say half the class is very good and half of the class, they need to be translated to Arabic where they get their friends who are good in English. (Munzir)

Anything like intermediate; some of them are slightly more advanced than intermediate so probably upper intermediate and others are lower than the middle intermediate. So, they are like low intermediate in their proficiency in English. So, basically they are not quite proficient-um, many of them. Some of them are. (Ahmed)

Teachers pointed out that language proficiency profiles varied depending on the students' secondary schooling, and many students also exited the foundations courses into their respective faculties with insufficient levels of English. As discussed in the contextual background chapter (section 2.4.2), the IELTS band requirement to exit is a 5 or 5.5 overall, which is not sophisticated enough to

meet language demands at university level. Unlike many teachers who are not aware of what this band level entails in terms of language ability, Basil from the faculty of Food and Agriculture described the inadequacy of the band 5 IELTS profiles, and the varied levels of student language proficiency depending on their educational backgrounds:

It depends, mostly in the general education course, I find some students struggling in English. They don't...they translate every word, word by word. Those that took the IELTS exam, they are not doing well. The ones who took English in the three years, or previous English in high school, those are doing fine. But students in Agriculture are doing good... students should start using English well in high school before they come to university. I don't think the foundation courses help if the students might pass them and take the IELTS exam. The IELTS exam with 5 average is not really good...if they pass in English classes in university, then take their IELTS, this is not good...all the students are suffering from this. They pass IELTS but their English is not good.
(Basil)

On the other hand, two teachers interviewed lacked awareness of what the exit requirements from the foundations programme actually entailed in terms of language proficiency. Subject teachers were somewhat unaware of IELTS banding, and what this relatively low entrance score of 5.0 implies in terms of language ability. To illustrate, Zain a teacher in the Business and Economics Faculty expressed concern that that in spite of gaining their IELTS entrance score and completing their foundation level courses, students continued to struggle with general language issues in their faculty studies. This raises the

question about the quality and length of the preparation courses offered at the university, which were not sufficiently preparing students for tertiary study.

They're not what you expect...not all of them, they should be proficient because they are passing the requirements, the IELTS and foundation level course- which means we are expecting this level of proficiency. But honestly, in class, no; it's below the average. (Zain)

Without possessing the required level of academic language proficiency, and sufficient access to the academic language and literacy support, many students were reported to be not only struggling in their undergraduate studies, but were also discontinuing tertiary study due to the barriers posed by the English-medium instruction policy. Teachers reported that students who struggled with lower proficiency in English did not support this language policy. Three interviewees believed that their students' resistance to English-medium policy was considered a serious obstacle to success in their tertiary studies, due to their struggles with English. Zain expressed concern that students' low proficiency levels were causing them to drop out of university.

We have around 25 percent of students, they drop out from the programme because they can't finish their requirements for IELTS [...] I'm telling you, they drop out because of the language [...] but they don't want to officially, they don't raise this question because of the culture in the [university], but if you honestly ask them one by one, all of them. I can tell you right now, do a survey an anonymous survey, 90 percent they will tell you they prefer, even the good ones [...] Arabic language as instruction, as the main language. (Zain)

Zain was heavily critical of the university's implementation of EMI policy, for acting as a gatekeeper, and for disenfranchising a segment of the student population and contributing to the decision to discontinue studies. Though he perceived EMI and accompanying limited English proficiency to be a serious problem facing a sizable proportion of the student cohort, it is concerning that it has remained largely unacknowledged and unaddressed in the university.

Overall, teachers expressed concerns about limited English proficiency. However, this does not seem to match with acknowledgement by upper management and government figures. The only publicised attention pertaining to language policy from upper management has been the opposition of the foundations programme reflecting criticism by government bodies and the media. As discussed earlier, English foundation courses have been heavily criticised as being ineffective in improving students' language proficiency (Othman & Shuqair, 2013), a financial drain on the university budget, and a perceived inconvenient delay for the students (Salem & Swan, 2014; Salem, 2014). This has in turn resulted in a gradual reduction in the duration, depth and scope of the much-needed courses offered. While the English preparation courses have been heavily criticised, EMI policy in its current manifestation seems to have largely escaped scrutiny or modification as a possible contributor to students' struggles or failures in their academic studies. These policies have inadvertently placed students in an unfair situation.

5.3.2 Limited language Proficiency as a Barrier to Learning and Participation

Based on teachers' responses, students were clearly struggling with the cognitive drain of having to learn university content through a foreign language with which they were not confident. This added pressure of learning content through a foreign language is not one that students studying through their L1 must grapple. Teachers consistently reported on the difficulties that EMI posed for students, as they were not only forced to comprehend new knowledge, and gain new skills during their undergraduate studies, but they were doing so in a foreign language in which they were not proficient. Teachers reflected on the degree to which English proficiency amongst students was sufficient for a university with EMI policy. Zain questioned the university's success in producing bilingual graduates with language proficiency that enables them to successfully compete in the UAE workforce, particularly in the private sector.

We did some research on alumni, about what skills they're missing...they are soft skills not hard skills. Let's say if they're in physics or math, they have the basic foundations of science or engineering but the problem they are facing now-the first problem is communication. They can't write a report.... I have one student he is from business, now he is a department head. One of the problems he was facing, is how during a meeting sometimes with foreigners and they can't talk because they are too shy. (Zain)

Teachers were unanimous that students' language levels affected their learning and participation. Every teacher interviewed emphasised that students' limited

language proficiency was often a barrier to learning, which they attempted to address by modifying curricula, assessment and delivery of content as will be discussed further below. Teachers emphasised that for students struggling with English, language difficulties became significant to cause much frustration, the effect of which was evident in the quality of students' content learning. Students' struggles with English, and the impact of this on the quality of their work and learning is expressed in the excerpts below.

Definitely it will affect their learning; of the students in their major to some degree I would say. In chemistry, maybe not as much maybe as in some other majors because in chemistry we very often look at the structures you know, and then we have our own language. But yes, it does affect the students' learning to some degree. (John)

In the excerpt below, Zain acknowledges the effect of students' limited academic writing skills in the Business faculty.

Yes, it [low proficiency] does affect, because sometimes they mean something but the way of developing their ideas is different because they don't pay attention to the writing style. (Zain)

Below, Ahmed reports on students' struggles with English in other courses, where language becomes an additional cognitive burden.

There is no problem with teaching English in English-this makes a lot of sense. But when it comes to other subject matters, Geography or Maths, I don't know Physics, and Chemistry and so on, it might be

difficult. I'm not sure about that because I hear students sometimes they complain. They say that they are struggling with both the content, with the subject matter as well as the language and probably, sometimes the subject matter is compromised because of the language capability. (Ahmed)

When asked to discuss the specific areas of weakness with which students struggled, teachers highlighted key areas of literacy. Of the four skills, the productive skills, writing and speaking were identified as significant obstacles. This echoed the findings of studies in other EFL contexts where EMI policy was implemented (see Sultana, 2014; Evans & Green, 2007). King's UAE-based study (2015) highlighted the need for some recognition of the fact that English is best suited to more hands-on topics or subjects, and students are not comfortable when there is a lot of reading and writing. This concern was voiced not just by teachers in the Humanities (Linguistics), and Business and Economics, where language production, particularly writing, is often the basis of assessment, but also by teachers in the fields of Architecture and Science.

They all speak English rather well, I have to say but the point is that the writing. Writing is very catastrophic. I would say only 5 percent of the students are good, have any real writing skills. You know that afterwards they could be employable in the international setting...I would say 50 percent do not read at all, and maybe their skills could be improved. Let's say the top 50 percent of our students they do read well and as expected from a university student, so they are doing well. But 50% might not be doing so well. (Thomas)

Teachers also discussed students' difficulties with the appropriate and ethical use of online materials and resources in relation to academic writing. This crucial academic writing skill is one that needs to be developed amongst students at an early stage in their undergraduate studies. Teachers were concerned that students were reported to be not adopting academic referencing conventions when using online materials in their writing, or using incorrect referencing which was an ongoing problem, echoing findings of McLaughlin's study (2014) in another UAE tertiary institution. Another concern amongst teachers was the inappropriate use of translation apps such as *Google Translate* for text production.

It's with the internet, with the advent of the net, most of them, they copy paste from sources. It's then there's more. Now, when we talk about the reflection and write your opinion or give ideas. It's very tough. They can't explain what they're doing when I ask them what they do. They write in Arabic then they translate. Now with the [online] tools, they Google Translate. Most of them, they do translation. They, it's not correct. The ideas are not there. It's word by word translate, now you can see and what they produce...which means there is a lack in, I can tell you this is writing. (Zain)

Apart from writing, six of the nine teachers interviewed also reported weaknesses in oral communication. John, a teacher of chemical engineering stated that although his faculty received the top performing students, he still found that students experienced difficulties with verbal communication.

I honestly don't think many difficulties in the written language, many problems in the reading areas, but I noticed that some of my students, my Chem students, have some difficulties in expressing themselves in English orally... I think my Chem undergraduate students have more difficulties in the oral part of the English... They avoid asking questions, sometimes they have a problem understanding and it's not because they can't follow the chemical engineering material. I think it's,... most of the times when I have those situations, it's because, well it's a combination of the two. (John)

In the excerpt below, Zain emphasises that verbal skills were limited not just in the early years of study, but across several years of undergraduate study.

Speaking and listening- I am not really happy about their level of proficiency in these skills, especially when we talk about second, third year students. Barely can they communicate as I can give you proof because of my expertise in presentations...It's below average actually. It should be better than that. (Zain)

Four teachers discussed how students' limited language fluency restricted their participation in class discussions and oral presentations. Because of the language barrier, they were excluded from the opportunity to benefit from learning through discussions and oral presentations. This disempowering limitation faced by students created barriers between the more proficient students in the class, and those who had difficulties with English. Hence, as Sultana (2014) concluded, this created a situation where students "were relegated to separate positions even in the classroom. This [language proficiency] was, in fact, a physical manifestation of their mental segregation,

i.e., 'us' and 'them'" (p.33). John, a non-native speaker of English, empathised with the students' experiences of struggling with language proficiency:

I have noticed that those students that are not proficient in the spoken English, lack confidence to express themselves in the classroom. So, in that way their performance is being affected...They don't feel as confident. And personally, because I'm not a native-speaker, and I sometimes have this feeling. For instance I've been in conferences internationally, where they would use English so I can understand my students, they lack confidence because of their proficiency in English.
(John)

Fewer teachers (2 interviewees) identified verbal communication as an area of difficulty for students. Thomas, who had earlier identified academic writing as a key issue amongst students did not identify oral communication as a prevalent weakness amongst his students.

I'd say 10 percent to 20 percent of the students, some they might be affected but I would say 80 percent of the students, they can express themselves quite well in class. I don't see that being a problem.
(Thomas)

In sum, reports of the difficulties encountered by students in the essential areas of academic writing and speaking were observed by teachers to be a barrier to learning and class participation. These barriers often marginalized students with a limited command of English, and empowered those students who entered the university with high English proficiency. The former group is grappling with the demanding academic content of their courses, and the complex language

demands required for comprehending the information, completing assessments, and contributing to discussion. This double effort and cognitive drain was also reported in other recent studies of EMI policy in EFL educational contexts (King, 2015; Sultana, 2014; Rogier, 2012; McLaren, 2011; Troudi, 2007; Marsh, 2006). In effect, these reports are a cause for concern as it means that students with lower proficiency are short-changed in terms of missed opportunities for accessing a high quality education.

5.3.3 Proficiency Levels, Course Delivery and Assessment Practices

The relatively low entrance scores for English meant that many students were not equipped with sufficient levels of English to perform at an academic level and struggled through their undergraduate education, placing significant pressure on teachers to effectively teach their respective courses. A significant finding was that when asked whether students with higher English proficiency were more likely to succeed academically in their respective courses, teachers agreed that there tended to be a correlation between language proficiency and academic performance as can be seen in the excerpts below.

Mostly yes, I would say absolutely [student with higher English proficiency will do better]. (Thomas)

I have made a connection between the good English of the students and his ability to perform in the classroom or in exams. And I think that the better the English of the students is, the better the performance which is normal I think. (John)

Teachers were asked to reflect on how students' proficiency levels in English affected their course delivery, and assessment practices. Despite the concerns about the correlation between low English proficiency experienced by students and limited academic attainment also demonstrated in the literature (Sultana, 2014; Aina, Ogundele & Olanipekun, 2013; Mpofu, 1998), teachers reported various pedagogical measures they had adopted to address this issue. Seven of the ten teachers interviewed indicated that limited language proficiency in English affected their rate of delivery as well as the scope and depth of content covered in their courses. Ahmed described how students' limited proficiency influenced the depth, pace, and quality of teaching in a negative way.

Yes it [limited language proficiency] does [affect my teaching]...it affects the rate of your delivery, the speed with which you go and the quantity of your teaching, and sometimes the quality...Because if you are doing a lot of explanation, you go over the relevant material more than one time. Difficult vocabulary and difficult terminology will have to be explained, simplified. The technical terms will have to be simplified, over-simplified. So yes, it does. Whereas if you go and teach the students who have all advanced in their language skills; you don't have any issues, any problems with the language skills. Then you focus exclusively on the content, on the subject matter of what you are teaching rather than on the language. (Ahmed)

Zain, a teacher in the business faculty also echoed Ahmed's views on the effects of students' limited language proficiency on the pacing and the degree of depth that was achievable when language demands were taken into consideration.

You have to lower your level, all your expectations... Instead of teaching 10 chapters, you'll end up with 8 chapters. We used to teach 14 chapters. We've dropped to 12, then it dropped to 10, now it's in fact 8. They can't cope with this pace of delivery...number 2, you have to sacrifice some of your time...because they can't cope with the language. (Zain)

The inevitable reality for some teachers to seek “shortcuts” to compensate for limited language proficiency however often conflicted with the pressures to fully address the course outcomes. Teachers reported this constant pressure to seek a compromise between these two objectives.

I have to change myself. Not change them because in a semester you cannot change everything. You cannot, like either be smart and choose the shortcut (laughs), which is you always aah, but you still have outcomes to deliver, so you need to make sure that your students by the end of the semester will achieve these outcomes. At least some of them not all of them. (James)

Teachers reported teaching strategies such as sending PowerPoint presentations to students before lectures to allow them to prepare beforehand, by reading and checking unfamiliar vocabulary. Thomas stated that this was routine practice in his department, which was not a regular practice he adopted in previous workplaces.

As for assessment practices and student performance, every teacher agreed to various degrees that these were negatively affected by language levels.

Teachers attempted to address this in various ways. They reported modifying their assessment practices to minimise unfairly penalising students for their language proficiency, though this was not always possible. Thomas, a teacher in the engineering faculty narrated how recently, students' limited language proficiency had negatively affected performance in the recent midterm exam.

We just had midterms recently, where we felt that some students answered the questions wrongly because they didn't understand the English word 'digestion'. So the course material was not all focused on digestion, but it just came up that word. And, so ultimately the focus of the classroom was on something totally different but still in this case in order to answer the question correctly they would have to know the word, and quite a few people made this error. (Thomas)

Teachers were conscious of the unfairness of penalizing students for their language proficiency instead of their mastery of the core content of their respective courses. Zain reported using ongoing assessments, and feedback which minimised the possibility of students being penalised as a result of limited language proficiency.

We have what we call progressive tests, and we don't because we want to avoid, we don't want to penalize them because of the language. We used to have scenario based exams, which means there is a scenario and then they give a solution. All of them, most of them, they fail this question, but when I give them test of multiple choice question, they do well. I tell you maybe there is a gap of 10, 15 percent dropping because of the language, or sometimes they don't even answer the question. Because of the language, they skip the question. (Zain)

However, avoiding penalising students for language problems was a difficult task for teachers, particularly in 'language-loaded' humanities courses, where sophisticated written communication skills are a necessary requirement (Ho & Man, 2007, p.13).

In theory, we don't have to mark the students' essays and articles for language because we are focusing rather exclusively on the subject matter and the content. However, I tell my students if your language, if your grammar, language is bad, is not so good, you will lose marks. And usually I take between 10 to 20% of the total mark for the language. And they know, you know part of the evaluation criteria is of the whole process, the language component. It is important that you say something, and the way you write, it should be convincingly clear. (Ahmed)

Teachers also described the use of multiple assessment tools to allow students to overcome potential limitations resulting from language proficiency. Group projects enabled students to work collaboratively, and to verbally report on findings in their L1. Four teachers reported avoiding exam questions that required extended language, such as essays or short questions; and highlighted that multiple choice for instance, was often a practical choice to minimize language barriers.

To get high marks? Well, if you put the exam as multiple choices, you would probably do well. But if you ask them to do essay questions, they are not going to do well. (Basil)

In the excerpt below, Ahmed indicates the degree to which he is conscious of students' limited English proficiency and the manner in which it can affect students' capacity to respond to more 'challenging questions'.

I think this is challenging too. But when students know that you are conscientious about your work that you are training them to be able to do assessment in a proper comprehensive way, they work hard. But again, you will need to be careful not to give, not to ask highly challenging questions. Questions should be challenging in some ways, should be valid but we see that sometimes we find it so difficult for the students to write lengthy pieces of writing. So make it somehow easy.
(Ahmed)

As mentioned earlier, there was comparatively less concern about language inhibiting students' performance from the teachers of chemistry, architecture and engineering as from those from the humanities and business faculties. These teachers highlighted that when responses were numbers, structures, or drawings, that is less "language-loaded" so English proficiency was not a factor that significantly affected assessment performance. However, even in these courses, teachers were conscious of language as an obstacle in assessments.

Architecture, no because we...count on drawings not on texts or presentations...It depends on the exams. If your exam is True or False, or if the language is very complicated, this will have an impact. I tried last time in one of my quizzes to examine the way they analyse a topic or situations, they had a hard time because they had to read a lot.
(Abdul)

John pointed out possible language barriers were factors which he considered when he designed his assessments, despite initially stating that assessment practices were not affected by students' levels of language proficiency.

When I write an exam here in this university, because I have in my mind that the students are not native-speakers, I try to be very careful in my problem statement so I don't mislead my students, so they don't have any language issues when they read the problem statement. Don't forget that we are engineering. We don't test the students upon their language abilities. (John)

Overall, teachers were conscious of how students' language proficiency influenced their content delivery, and assessment practices. Beyond the measures described above, most of the interviewees were not able to address these issues due to the time constraints and pressures of a content driven syllabus. Three teachers responded to this challenge with a degree of frustration. Though they asserted that literacy was not the priority of their job, it was an issue that meant content and assessment modification in order to support students. They did not feel that they were able to develop students' language in the short period of time that they taught them.

I have to change myself. Not change them because in a semester, you cannot change everything. You cannot change them. You cannot change you...you either be smart and choose the short cut, but you still have outcomes to deliver, so you need to make sure that the students by the end of the semester will achieve these outcomes. (James)

Above, James highlights the common perception that there is often little chance of affecting change in students' language proficiency in the one semester that he teaches a cohort of students, so he modifies his own practices, particularly with assessment.

5.4 Addressing Language Barriers

The second research question also involved an exploration of how teachers addressed some of the challenges of adopting EMI in an EFL educational context. In their interviews, the six of the nine teachers identified academic literacy and language support as an area of need amongst their students as was discussed at length above. Apart from modifying course content and assessment practices to minimise unfair disadvantage to less proficient students, it is evident from teachers' statements above that there were common perceptions amongst teachers that they were not able to effectively contribute to, or did not feel it was their responsibility to develop students' language proficiency. Teachers emphasised that this was not their area of expertise, nor an area that received their attention due to other time constraints and teaching demands.

I think we cannot address them in class in a major way, so we already do things that we ask students to write more, so that students do realize that writing is very important but ultimately, that's about what we can do at this point. (Thomas)

John, a chemical engineering teacher, was mainly concerned about students' acquisition of correct terminology, beyond which, he perceived it was not his role to address students' language and literacy.

Mainly I am concerned about the terminology. I'm concerned about whether they are using the terminology correctly. I am not really concerned about speaking, and everyday English mistakes...I have to cover my material which is engineering. My material is not English. I take for granted that they know, that they have a good level of English.
(John)

Beyond these measures, fewer teachers reported incorporating specific practices to provide students with literacy support. Zain reported planning for literacy support, though it was a challenging undertaking. An inevitable and significant outcome of this support was that this was taking up valuable time from the content learning, and in effect undermining the quality of education that these students received, and hence their level of competence in their respective disciplines.

We try, but it's not the problem. I haven't the time for my content. I don't have time to produce, we try to help them out but it's not my goal. I don't care about the language. I care about what they can produce in terms of the content, because at the end of the day, I have some goals to achieve. That's why we are in between. We pay a price for the language. I have to spend 15 minutes just to recap and, yes I can spend time explaining the words, but this is on the back of the discussions and the engagement in the class. (Zain)

Although he expressed frustration at the need to address language barriers during class time, Zain reported how the university's promotion of mobile learning enabled teachers to share materials with students prior to a lecture or tutorial. Students were subsequently expected to access and read the material to ensure comprehension and check unfamiliar vocabulary prior to class.

We are opting for mobile learning, which means they have access to content anytime anywhere. They don't [all access these]. How many read slides before coming? That's one of the goals of mobile learning, class should only be for discussions and engagement. (Zain)

Zain also reported asking students to complete multiple drafts of project reports, and in this process, he worked in close collaboration with students to improve both the quality of the content and the language, both face-to-face and through online networks set up for that purpose. However, these efforts though worthwhile, were time-consuming and required significant time commitment training and planning from individual teachers. It also meant that the problem was not being addressed explicitly and effectively at a university level.

Apart from teachers' own strategies to address limited language proficiency, I asked about the language remedial support services available for students beyond the foundations programme. Teachers discussed the university's provision of parallel language classes (largely academic writing and public speaking) courses that students completed in the course of their studies. However, teachers were concerned that these parallel English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes were not designed to cater for the specific linguistic

needs and requirements of the various faculties. Consequently, these courses were perceived as being less effective in providing the language that students needed for their respective courses.

In the early semesters, they have some concurrent course in English, but there are I have to say, that these ESP courses they should be tailored to individual departments, and ultimately all the ESP courses are doing more or less the same content and that I think could be changed. (Thomas)

Fewer teachers were aware of the learning support centres (writing, speaking, tutorial, and independent learning centres) which have recently expanded their services to meet the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Four of the ten teachers interviewed were aware of the support centres which were available to students. Of these four, one teacher reported having specifically referred students to these services or had liaised with personnel from these support centres to assist students.

We need to work hard on that one [providing students with additional language support]. Maybe they take remedial classes. We refer them to the writing centre, to the reading centre or reading group. Few do come, so maybe ask them to have more skills classes, and courses so this should be addressed at the department and college level. (Abdul)

Beyond the concerns about the low language proficiency that current university admissions required, teachers' responses regarding English language support

indicated that few of them were aware of the language support services that were available to students in the university.

5.5 L1 and EMI

This section re-addresses the third research question, which examines the role of L1 within the EMI model as implemented in the university. As discussed earlier, EMI was largely supported by teachers in the university based on the important role that English plays in the UAE, and the need to attract internationally reputable academics. However, teachers also expressed reservations about the degree to which EMI should be implemented in the university, particularly in faculties or courses where it would perhaps be more effective to use Arabic. The university's policy for the majority of faculties was English-only, but four of the nine teachers interviewed were not fully supportive of this monolingual policy, which was seen to be marginalising students' first language, and which missed opportunities to make use of Arabic effectively in teaching and learning. It also contradicted the university's strategic goal of producing bilingual graduates, with the bi-literacy skills necessary for employment in the UAE's public and private sectors.

Because limited English proficiency was often a frustrating learning barrier for students, teachers' L1 use assisted in temporarily overcoming this when it was practical and efficient to do so. The use of the students' first language as a pedagogical tool was reported by three Arab teachers. Zain for instance, expressed concern that EMI led to inefficiency in communication compared to the use of Arabic. He was prepared to allow students to use Arabic, despite

contradicting university policy in order to enable meaningful learning experiences for his students.

When I ask them a question and then they can't answer. I know, because of the language. Now, when I tell them, ok you have fifteen minutes to express it in Arabic, all of them, they participate. (Zain)

Below, Ahmed described code-switching into Arabic to assist students in better comprehending course content, a strategy also reportedly used to compensate for students' limited English proficiency by subject-teachers in other studies (King, 2015; Selvi, 2014; Kim, 2011).

Sometimes, there is no way to explain something apart from going back to Arabic, and sometime I find if I use Arabic, every now and then not to say that you will use continuously, there is no need to do that. But sometimes when you use a word here, a word there or maybe to explain something...Yes, banning the first language doesn't make sense. (Ahmed)

Similarly, Zain reported that the use of Arabic was imperative when teaching his students due to gaps in his students' English proficiency.

Sometimes [I speak slower], even Arabic. I have to use Arabic. I can tell 20 percent of the content is translated to Arabic. Because I make sure they understand. If you don't understand the word 'management information system' in Arabic, you cannot advance to the next level, which means I have to do it.

Arabic-background teachers in the study generally supported the judicious use of Arabic in the classroom echoes the findings of other studies (King, 2015; Elmetwally, 2012). Teachers who were non-Arab also reported allowing students to reiterate important information to each other in Arabic, though they expressed awareness that this did not necessarily follow university policy.

Based on this admittedly small sample of participants, there seemed to be a contradiction between university policy disallowing Arabic use in the EMI policy which was adopted, and the reality on the ground where teachers both used and permitted the use of Arabic to address gaps in students' language proficiency. Teachers' careful responses which acknowledged contradicting university policy, also often emphasised its infrequency in their classes. This was the case perhaps to avoid any possible repercussions by their institution, as is evident in the excerpts below. John, who is not of Arabic- background, reported allowing students to use Arabic, despite believing that it was beneficial for students to solely use English in the classroom.

It is in their benefit to use English. However, sometimes when I have a students whose level of oral English is not that good, it has happened two or three times, in these three years, that I am in this place - I allow another student to explain to him in Arabic. I do not encourage this attitude because they have to try and improve their English. (John)

Similarly, Thomas reported allowing students to translate to each other in Arabic when content was not fully understood by everyone in class.

I do sometimes give tutorials and here I don't always follow university policy in such a way that some students have understood it well, I ask them to repeat this in Arabic for their own colleagues. I think for me, this is rather good because they will then learn to express the same content in Arabic. Because otherwise...those 10 percent who we might not reach as well with English, you could reach this way. (Thomas)

In addition to the verbal use of L1 in the classroom, three teachers also supported the provision of Arabic textbooks to supplement learning in their respective courses, a recommendation made by other Arab-based studies (Habbash & Troudi, 2015; Ebad, 2014; Al-Jarf, 2008; Al-Harazi, 2003). Thomas, who supported EMI due to its perceived utility in preparing students for the multicultural and English language dominated workforce, emphasised the role of the first language to support learning through the use of Arabic textbooks and materials.

But I still believe it would be good to have some resources in Arabic; books in Arabic on the subject, I mean the subject of chemistry. That would help the students a lot. So maybe, it would be better to have a mix, that maybe the major language of instruction should be English but that at least you know maybe even some of the course could be taught in Arabic...I think it will be better to have a policy where both languages would be allowed. (Thomas)

On the other hand, Abdul was also wary of translating information to the students' L1 as he was not confident of the accuracy and quality of the translations.

Well I use it as a tool, but the problem is that it's a chain. Basically, you are using references, which are written totally in English by a Western guy, which is hard. Giving everything that is translated into Arabic, I can't guarantee the quality of the translation in Arabic. (Abdul)

Overall, few of the native-Arabic speaking teachers reported communicating in Arabic at length in the classroom, but utilised Arabic judiciously to aid students' learning. Teachers were conscious of the EMI policy governing language use in the classroom, and did not want to be penalized for not abiding by the university rules. Non-Arab teachers also reported allowing the use of the L1 in the classroom to ensure students were learning. Teachers also identified a perceived need for Arabic textbooks to supplement students' learning within the EMI model.

5.6 Summary of Findings

5.6.1 Teacher perceptions of EMI policy

Teachers reported on the need for EMI policy in positive terms, though they were concerned about the nature of its implementation at the university. Teachers perceived the rationales for EMI to be largely utilitarian. Firstly, they saw the need for English proficiency amongst graduates entering the UAE's ethnically diverse workforce, and believed that EMI policy potentially allowed students to improve English proficiency. Secondly, EMI was perceived as an important element toward improving the international competitiveness of the tertiary institution and its graduates.

5.6.2 Challenges of Adopting EMI

A key challenge identified in the implementation of EMI was students' limited English proficiency. Limited proficiency was perceived by teachers to negatively affect students' learning and participation in education. A correlation between language proficiency and academic performance was identified. It was reported to be a cognitive drain on students' content learning, as the productive skills, writing and speaking were viewed as key struggles for many students. The majority of teachers reported that students' limited proficiency affected their teaching, in terms of rate of delivery, scope, and depth of content taught. Teachers reported modifying assessment to avoid penalising students due to language barriers. Though teachers reported such modifications, they did not view language and literacy support to be their job, nor an area of expertise. Mobile learning was viewed as a positive innovation, which provided further support to students who needed language support. Few teachers discussed the language support systems offered at the university for its students.

5.6.3 Arabic and EMI

Teachers, particularly Arabic-background teachers expressed support for introducing more Arabic in the delivery of content in general. Based on teachers' responses, there appears to be some contradiction between the university's language policy and its implementation. Though the university espoused EMI policy, to the exclusion of Arabic, teachers reported both using and permitting some use of Arabic in the classroom. Two of the four Arabic-background teachers reported code-switching and allowing students to do so in

the classroom, to assist students in learning content. The introduction of Arabic textbooks to support learning was also supported by a minority of teachers.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter reported on the findings of the study. The first section examined teachers' perceptions of EMI policy and its rationales in the university in question. This was followed by an analysis of teachers' perceptions of the challenges resulting from EMI policy, and the final section of the chapter examined the measures adopted by teachers to address language barriers encountered by their students. The key challenges highlighted by teachers largely resulted from students' limited proficiency in English, including modifications in course delivery, assessment practices, and a reassessment of the role of L1 in the current EMI model. The final chapter presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature. It also makes recommendations for universities using an English medium instruction policy.

Chapter Six - Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

There has been an increased adoption of English medium instruction in higher education, with English being described as the contemporary language of HE (Coleman, 2006; Brumfit, 2004). This trend has also recently been witnessed in the Gulf states, including the United Arab Emirates, where higher education has increasingly been characterised by the adoption of the EMI policy at the expense of the native language of Arabic (Zughoul, 2003). This thesis examined the implementation of English-medium instruction policy at a university in the UAE from the perspective of content teachers from various faculties. It portrayed teachers' perceptions of EMI policy and the attendant challenges of its implementation in a learning context where many students do not have sufficient English proficiency to effectively conduct study at a tertiary level. While the previous chapter presented the findings of the study, this final chapter re-examines and presents a discussion of the major findings and draws key implications from these. As shown earlier in the thesis, the research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What are content teachers' perceptions of EMI?
2. What are the perceived challenges of implementing EMI in relation to course delivery, assessment practices, and learning? How have teachers addressed these accompanying challenges?

3. What are teachers' perceptions of the role of L1 in student learning and in the university overall?

The first section (section 6.2) reiterates the key findings in relation to the research questions listed above which guided the study, and discusses these in relation to other relevant findings in the literature. The second section (section 6.3) outlines the major implications of the study, while section 6.4 presents some recommendations for stakeholders. The final three sections of the chapter discuss possible continuation of the study, a reflection of the doctoral journey, and a conclusion to the thesis.

6.2 Summary of Findings

6.2.1 Teacher Perceptions of EMI

The first research question concerned teachers' perceptions of EMI and their perceived rationales for the university's adoption of this language policy. Based on interview data in the study, teachers' rationales for the university's adoption of EMI were based on the increasingly internationalised status of tertiary education (Phillipson, 2009a, 2009b; Coleman, 2006; Graddol, 2006), which echoed rationales for its adoption in other universities worldwide. Teachers' rationales reflected an awareness of the correlation between the trend of "Englishization of higher education" and globalisation (Chang, 2010, p.56), which reveals an "unchallenged acceptance of English linguistic hegemony (Phillipson, 2006 in Phillipson, 2009b). Though the university does not attract a significant number of overseas-based international students, a key strategic priority of the university has been to boost its international competitiveness

through prioritising strategic goals of raising its rankings on world institutional rankings and league tables, seeking and successfully gaining international institutional accreditation, and through promoting a research agenda and research output. For these priorities, EMI has been perceived as a key element in achieving these goals.

EMI policy was perceived by teachers, themselves recruited from diverse parts of the world, as a necessary aspect of the university's measures to achieve internationalisation. Recruiting teachers internationally has been the university's long-term strategy which has succeeded in filling the gap in local expertise for the educational provision of its students. As a federal institution of a wealthy nation, the university has been successful in attracting and retaining human capital (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009) to boost its institutional profile, and provide a quality of education for its students locally.

At the local level, teachers also accounted for the role of EMI in the UAE based on utilitarian function that English plays as a lingua franca, in the nation's ethnically-diverse society (see section 5.2.2). Given the dominant role of English in the UAE, teachers emphasised the need for students to develop English proficiency to increase graduate competitiveness in "an increasingly internationalised, globalised and, by extension, Anglicised workplace" (McLaren, 2011, p.177). This perception was supported by Van de Hoven's (2014) student participants, who also supported EMI based on its utilitarian function as English served the role of lingua franca in the UAE.

Based on these rationales, the majority of teachers interviewed initially expressed largely positive views of EMI, particularly those teachers who were of non-Arabic backgrounds. However, although EMI was a policy that constituted common knowledge to all interviewees, none were able to refer to specific institutional policy documents to support its implementation, reflecting the often covert, implicit nature of language policies at governmental or institutional levels described in the literature (Phillipson, 2003; Skuttnab-Kangas, 2000b; Schiffman, 1998). Far from being communicated through explicit documentation detailing the university's position on language policy, EMI policy was communicated and imposed by individual departments (see section 5.2.1). With little reference to the language policy beyond the documents stated above, there is an absence (intentional or otherwise) of an explicit, clear expression of the institution's position on language policy, which in other documents seems to promote a bilingual approach to learning. This obliqueness in language policy has been a trend reflected in broader language policy (Phillipson, 2003; Schiffman, 1998) as language policy directives often expressed in the constitution and legislation leave numerous details unelaborated at a necessary level of detail (Phillipson, 2003). In this educational context, it was found that while in theory the university's policy documents espouse bilingualism, the reality often contradicts this.

6.2.2 Student Proficiency Levels and EMI Policy

The majority of interviewees initially expressed support for the university's EMI stance, based on the broad rationales reiterated above. However, although teachers rationalised the implementation of EMI at the university to serve

utilitarian, and internationalisation purposes, they had significant concerns about the accompanying challenges of EMI policy. When asked to identify these challenges (research question 1(b)), teachers raised students' limited English proficiency as a significant obstacle to this policy's effective implementation. As reported in section 5.3, the majority of teachers interviewed were concerned about students' language levels which were perceived as often insufficient to allow students or the tertiary-level teacher to operate through EMI. Similarly, Rogier (2012) highlighted teachers' perceptions of students' limited English proficiency in a HEI in the UAE, which differed from students' more positive perceptions of their language proficiency. However, the findings of this study also pointed out that all teachers were aware of the limited language ability entailed by an overall IELTS band of 5.0, which is lower than entrance prerequisites for undergraduate study at most international universities (Craven, 2012). These relatively low expectations of the students' proficiency upon entry into undergraduate study mean that at the outset, language difficulties are very likely to pose additional cognitive demands on students.

Students were particularly disadvantaged by limited language production skills as identified by teachers. Difficulties with English amongst UAE tertiary students is not a new finding (see King, 2015; McLaren, 2011; Gerson, 2010; Findlow, 2006), nor is it isolated to the UAE context (e.g. Pessoa, Miller & Kaufer, 2014; Klaassen, 2001) having been discussed as a concern both regionally and internationally. Gerson (2010) has also reported on teachers' assessments of students' proficiency in English writing, communication and maths skills as average or below-average based on survey research in a UAE

university. Lower rates of reading, writing and maths skills than students internationally are identified as a significant student learning issue (Gerson, 2010), as was the case in this study. These language production issues have also been raised in other Gulf countries, with writing difficulties specifically identified (Pessoa, Miller & Kaufer, 2014).

In this study teachers highlighted that courses which required less reading and writing, and more numerical tasks (e.g. engineering, sciences, architecture) were courses where students experienced fewer challenges from the EMI policy, a finding also reported in other EMI policy studies (King, 2015; Craven, 2012; Ho & Man, 2007). Language proficiency was more of a concern for teachers in the humanities and social sciences departments and in the business faculty (see section 5.3.3). This may also be due to the higher entrance scores demanded of students for the sciences than for the humanities and business courses. However, in saying this, it is important to consider that the UAE's higher education system is "biased against technical fields" with the majority of its tertiary students enrolled in humanities and social sciences (Muysken & Nour 2005). This in turn presupposes that students in these latter courses may enter the courses with comparatively lower English proficiency.

However, though teachers generally supported EMI based on its perceived necessity, they criticised its use in the delivery of courses as it affected students' comprehension of the content, and a minority of teachers questioned whether it would be more effective to deliver some of the content courses in Arabic.

Apart from the need to improve students' academic writing skills, teachers also identified as problems, students' lack of information literacy skills, such as the use of online resources for research, and the inappropriate use of translation applications. This is a significant issue that requires attention as tertiary education must equip students with an "understanding of the academic 'culture' of study' (e.g. active experiential) and academic concepts as understood by that learning culture (e.g. conventions on plagiarism and referencing" (Durham & Palubiski, 2007, p.84).

Students' limited English verbal communication skills was also described as restricting them from participating in class discussions, and made oral presentations particularly difficult (see section 5.3.2). Teachers inevitably interact and become better acquainted with learners at an individual level through verbal communication and the exchange of ideas. Without participating in classroom discussions, students are prevented from participating in these significant, meaningful interactions. This finding means missed opportunities for benefiting from group learning situations, and of learning to express and clarify ideas articulately. Though King (2015) points out that oral communication is a language strength for students, his participants do not raise concerns about how learner anxiety resulting from language barriers can work to reduce learners' participation. However, other international studies have reported on language anxiety experienced by EFL students, and their reluctance to speak in English for fear of making mistakes (Choy & Troudi, 2006). In her study of Bangladeshi students' struggles with EMI in higher education, Sultana (2014)

refers to the framework of a 'community of practice' (COP) (Lave & Wenger, 1998) to emphasise the social nature of identity and learning, where the power organisation of a community of practice either opens or prevents individual participation (Hodges, 1998). Sultana (2014) found that for students with limited language proficiency:

The medium of instruction had turned the classroom into a place of tension and struggle for them. They did not have the access to the COP of the university...the themes that emerged out of the data: images of 'us' and 'them', symbolic capital and struggles of power, academic socialisation experiences and identity, reduced chances of learning, acceptance of discrimination, and changes in self-perception. (p.30)

From a cognitive perspective, teachers, particularly those of Arabic-background, perceived EMI policy to be counterproductive to students' content learning. Echoing the findings of other studies, both in the UAE (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; King, 2015; Rogier, 2012; McLaren, 2011; Sanassian, 2011; Gerson, 2010) and abroad (Lei & Hu, 2014; Selvi, 2014; Bradford, 2013; Lau & Yuen, 2011; Phillipson, 2009a, 2009b; Tsui & Tollefson, 2008), teachers were concerned that by using EMI with students' limited language proficiency, the quality of education was undermined. Teachers made a direct correlation between high performance in coursework and higher levels of proficiency in English (see section 5.3.3). This inequitable effect of EMI policy was perceived by teachers to significantly benefit those learners with higher levels of proficiency, and to disempower those students with lower English proficiency, whether or not they are academically adept or have higher levels of talent in their chosen field. This

raises a key finding of this study, which is to reinforce the need to address the serious implications of this policy on the quality of students' content learning as it is currently practiced. McLaren (2011) raises similar concerns about the extent of students' learning through EMI:

The efficacy of EMI (obviously for 'dissemination' of content 'knowledge' in this case) was not only far from unquestionably accepted, but quite often rejected as not really being in the best interests of the students. Faculty (whether English language or content teachers) and management alike expressed concerns that the institutional insistence upon EMI could be, in fact, was detrimental to the students' understanding of their major subjects. (p.156)

These findings are not unique to the UAE or Arabian Gulf context as mentioned earlier, but reflect findings from international studies. Phillipson (2009b) refers to the issue of "capacity loss" that Swedes inevitably experience when required to function in English rather than their mother tongue. The outcome of this is the reduction of 'linguistic or communicative competence', and causes "capacity dispossession of the individual, in the worst case in both languages" (p.10). In a recent study of EMI which spanned 55 countries, Dearden (2015) found in her snapshot of Turkish Universities, similar concerns expressed by teachers about the effects of EMI on the quality of learning amongst students with low English proficiency:

They believe that EMI reduces a student's ability to understand concepts and leads to low levels of knowledge of the subject studied. Teachers believe it takes too much time to teach the curriculum through

EMI, that EMI causes feelings of alienation and separation and reduces student participation in class due to students' low level proficiency in English. (p. 15)

Selvi (2014) reports that the implementation of the EMI policy has been partly blamed for the failure of the education system in Turkey. This policy has been severely criticised for its cognitive-pedagogical effects on learning and teaching, for causing "lower levels of in-class knowledge and participation", and for the "reduced ability to understand content" due students' low proficiency levels (Selvi, 2014, pp.141-142).

These concerns raise questions about the quality of education that students are getting based on the EMI model. Notwithstanding the significant struggles that many students experience with studying in English, studies have described seeing an improvement in students' language proficiency, which was evidenced in other studies (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; Rogier, 2012; Choy & Troudi, 2006). Rogier's (2012) study which compared students' English proficiency upon entry and exit from a university in the UAE, found some expected level of improvement in the four language skills.

However, although some studies have found a correlation between EMI and improved English proficiency (Lasagabaster, 2008; Lo & Murphy, 2010; Rogier, 2012), these have not been unanimously substantiated in the literature (Lei & Hu, 2014). Lei and Hu (2014) found that after taking into account variables, EMI had not improved students' English proficiency due to a number of problems with the EMI programme namely "gaps between purported programme goals

and practice, inadequate command of English as the medium on instruction and learning, and poor pedagogical strategies to cope with language difficulties” (p.119). More significantly, they emphasised the importance of an initial ‘threshold of proficiency’, which many students in the case study university did not possess even after completing their English bridging courses:

Results point to the importance of prior English proficiency in the development of further English proficiency and positive affect in English learning and use, learning support to previous findings (e.g. Cummins 2000; Dujuy 2000; Stryker & Leaver 1997) that students need to reach a threshold of proficiency in English to benefit from EMI. (p.122)

In other words with these negative conditions affecting language learning, students’ capacity for improving their language is compromised, a situation which was reflected in teachers’ reports of the students’ language proficiency. Hence, it can be argued that the degree of students’ improvement in English does not necessarily equip a significant number of graduates with the language proficiency to be functionally bilingual, and communicate effectively in the workplace, an issue that was raised in the data.

6.2.3 EMI and Equality of Access to Education

Not all students entering the university struggle with English and are disadvantaged by EMI policy. As discussed earlier, language policies such as EMI cannot be sufficiently understood as educational issues in isolation from the broader social and political setting (Pennycook, 2002; Tsui & Tollefson, 2008; Tollefson, 1991). As Tsui and Tollefson (2008) assert, “Central to

decisions on language policy is the choice of medium of instruction, as this determines who will participate in power and wealth” (p.113). In the case of this study as in other international contexts (see Phillipson, 1992, 2009b; Tollefson, 1991), language policy and the manner in which it impacts students is largely determined by socio-economic factors, which largely determine the type of education afforded to students. Access to English-medium instruction at the primary and secondary level of education in the UAE is strongly correlated with socioeconomic status. In the UAE, affluent families can afford to enrol their children in more prestigious private international schools with EMI, while less affluence generally corresponds with less access to English language learning afforded in public schools or AMI schools. Students of high socioeconomic profile who have had initial English MOI are subsequently at a significant advantage upon university entrance, while those who have not had this instruction are disempowered at the outset.

Language ability has also been strongly linked with socioeconomic advantage across the seven Emirates and the resulting variable levels of economic resources available for education. Abdulla and Ridge’s (2011) analysis of CEPA scores based on emirates found that students from less urbanised, poorer emirates generally scored lower CEPA English scores. Similar to concerns raised by a teacher in my study, there was a concern that the study also found that male Emirati students’ limited language upon university entry ill-prepared them for study and contributed to greater attrition rates in higher education (see section 5.3.1). This link between the affluence of various emirates in the UAE,

the educational provision for their students, and English proficiency has also been discussed at length by McLaren (2011, p.161):

Once again, language ability rather than the students' skills and potential knowledge and understanding of the subject area was seen as the key factor in their success-raising the spectre of perfectly capable students failing to succeed due to the language barrier, while their 'weaker' peers made greater headway thanks not so much to a greater ability in the subject or more appropriate study skills but due to better linguistic abilities in their L2. This is a particularly vexed question in an educational system such as that operated in the UAE where different Emirates possess variable economic strengths and this can be manifested in the degree of educational provision supplied.

Like Sultana's participants in Bangladesh, private school educated students from affluent backgrounds in the UAE tend to have more instruction and exposure to English than public school educated students, which leaves the latter group in a disadvantaged situation upon entry to university. These inequitable realities seem to exist worldwide. In the Asian Pacific countries, "considerable inequity exists in terms of access to English language instruction" based on such differences as "the *haves* versus the *have-nots*, and city versus rural divides" (Nunan, 2003, p.605). Dearden (2015) also raises the concern that EMI is more accessible to students from higher socio-economic backgrounds: "Where there are concerns, these relate to the potentially socially divisive nature of EMI because instruction through English may limit access from lower socio-economic groups" (p.2).

For the university students, socioeconomic background and geographic region in many respects determine the extent to which they come to university prepared for a tertiary education in EMI. At the outset, students are either empowered or disempowered through their English proficiency, which affects their learning in many ways. This relative advantage or disadvantage associated with English proficiency or lack thereof is perpetuated in the university and beyond, with increased empowerment and upward mobility as well as access to international knowledge economy (Onsman, 2012). As Tollefson (1991, p.8-9) points out, “language is a means for rationing access to jobs with high salaries. Whenever people learn a new language to have access to education or to understand classroom instruction, language is a factor in creating and sustaining social and economic divisions”. Though teachers in this study did not articulate the correlation between language proficiency and broader factors including students’ regional and socio-economic profiles, they were very conscious of the ways that English proficiency empowered and disempowered their students. Teachers empathised with their students’ struggles with comprehending the content in a foreign language, and expressed concerns that this English proficiency in many ways was a determining factor in students’ academic performance in their courses.

6.2.4 EMI from a Pedagogical Perspective

Apart from cognitive pressures on students, EMI policy in an EFL university setting where a large proportion of students are not proficient enough to conduct academic study through English has created added pressures on teachers (Dearden, 2015; King, 2015; McLaughlin, 2014; Selvi, 2014; Rogier,

2012; McLaren, 2011). Teachers expressed concern that students' linguistic challenges (described in section 6.2.2) had an effect on the pace and breadth of their teaching, and their choice of teaching methodologies and materials. These teachers reported compensating for students' limited language proficiency, which inevitably affected the quality, depth and scope of the curriculum and content taught. Teachers reported modifying assessments and restricting exam-type questions (e.g. to multiple choice, short answer questions versus extended writing tasks, such as essays), to reduce the impact of language on students' performance. This finding parallels with Belhiah and Elhami's (2014) research that identified how students tended to struggle when examination questions which required them to read, analyse, and interpret data.

While pedagogical rationales for implementing EMI appear to be limited in the literature (Troudi & Jendli, 2011), those reporting challenges of teaching in EMI in EFL contexts are well documented and support the findings of this study. McLaughlin's UAE based study (2014) posits that the combination of lower standards of the K-12 UAE public education system, and the change in the language of instruction from Arabic to English, has led to significant challenges for teachers in transitioning students' from school to university. He points out that university teachers are forced to "scaffold their instruction and possibly provide more individual attention than is usual in Western based universities", and of more concern is that "performance standard expected may initially be watered down from what would be expected at leading Western institutions" (p.34). Dearden's (2015) comprehensive study for instance, has acknowledged

the pedagogical challenges posed for teachers in EMI's implementation internationally:

They [teachers] would additionally need to find alternative ways of presenting academic material to students for whom English was also a second language. In which case similar skills required of an EFL teacher would need to be found in an EMI teacher. They would need to know how to modify their input, assure comprehension via student-initiated interactional modifications and create an atmosphere where students operating in an L2 are not afraid to speak; all this whilst taking into account the many cultural differences present in the room and the potentially different language levels of individuals. (p.23)

Like this study, other recent studies (King, 2015; Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; McLaughlin, 2014; Selvi, 2014; Rogier, 2012; McLaren, 2011) also concluded that teachers, in recognition of the language deficits with which their students grappled, were spending significant time and effort in simplifying materials and giving students more support to negotiate learning:

They were practiced over and above what might be considered normal if students were studying in the mother tongue. Delivery decisions included summarising sources, simplifying materials, going more slowly, making judicious word choice, giving clear instructions, concept checking, pre-teaching basic terminology and avoiding reading and writing tasks if possible. Activities were favoured over lecture formats with group work key in promoting the possibility of peer help. (King, 2015, p.183)

Selvi (2014) also reported on the negative effects of students' limited English proficiency on teachers' time with the "inefficient allocation of class hours and greater preparation time on the part of the teachers" (pp. 141-142). Similarly, in a study that examined the case of implementing transferred curriculums in two teacher education programmes in UAE universities which adopted EMI, Aydarova (2012, p.297) criticised the manner in which content was modified, and simplified by teachers due to their perceptions of student English proficiency, and general ability:

When educators believe that students possess low levels of linguistic and academic abilities, they reduce and simplify the content. As a result, the curriculum gets diluted or trimmed to cater to the local students.

In this study, teachers reported modifying materials, reducing expectations of the reading materials, providing students with notes, summaries and presentations slides, and reducing the course content in order to work more slowly. Beyond this, teachers did not perceive their role as one which encompassed English tuition. One positive finding raised in this study, which has been useful for overcoming some of the language barriers, has been the university's adoption of mobile learning technologies. Through the use of applications and programs, one of the teachers reported about how mobile learning applications had made learning materials more accessible for students, and assisted them in overcoming some of the language barriers (see section 5.4). This finding has also more recently been supported by Saudi-based studies on the use of Blended learning in the EFL context (see Al Mahrooqi &

Troudi, 2014). However, more generally, and as in other EMI contexts (see Dearden, 2015; King, 2015; McLaren, 2011), teachers' did not perceive addressing students' language and literacy deficits as part of their job, but it was an issue that meant content and assessment was inevitably modified. As Arkoudis and Starfield (2007, p.6) point out:

Many of the expectations academics have as to what counts as successful performance are tacit and as they are not trained as language teachers they may struggle to communicate to their students exactly what the language-related expectations of their discipline are. Moreover, they often do not see this as their role. Their responsibility is primarily in teaching the content of their disciplines.

Based on these findings from this study and others on the negative pedagogical effects of EMI, a serious question emerges concerning the degree to which students' education is on par with the quality of education internationally, when teachers are forced to modify and reduce content material in order to compensate for students' language deficits. Based on responses from teachers interviewed and the literature, it appears that the policy of EMI in a context where the many students do not have sufficient command of English is inadvertently reducing the quality of educational attainment.

As this study has shown, it seems that limited English proficiency in a context of EMI policy is having an undermining effect on the quality of tertiary education that students gain. This can be evidenced in the manner in which teachers are adopting compensation strategies to address limited language proficiency, and

students struggle with comprehension and production of content. In this way, EMI policy as it is currently implemented, in a context where limited language proficiency is common, seems to be contributing to broader concerns about the inadequacy of educational attainment levels in GCC countries like the UAE as highlighted in the literature (Pech, 2009; Lootah & Simon, 2009). This issue of EMI and its effect on students' ability to access a quality tertiary education is also raised by King (2015, p.178):

If the HE curriculum is to prepare students to be internationally-oriented global citizens, it follows that this curriculum should match the quality standards of similar curricula around the world. This is compromised when teachers feel the need to simplify materials, shorten syllabi and avoid the use of certain essential undergraduate skills like reading and writing.

Apart from reducing the quality of students' tertiary education, limited language proficiency in itself restricts employability, as it is recognised as one of requisite skills for recruiting graduates by CEOs in Arab countries (Lootah & Simon, 2009, p.27). Despite the recent developments in the UAE's education system, Muysken and Nour (2006, p.976) conclude, based on the findings of a survey of 40 policymakers and labour market experts, that the education system in the UAE has not succeeded in equipping national graduates with the necessary market-oriented skills for employability. Lootah and Simon (2009) highlight the most important issues to address in secondary and tertiary schooling include not only the enhanced curriculum delivery, and improved facilities, but also the improvement in the study of second language, factors which are inhibiting the

quality of education in the Arab region. The findings from this study emphasise the need for reassessing language policy implementation at this particular university, which is responsible for educating a large percentage of nationals, and which as a result has a responsibility in ensuring graduates' workforce competitiveness.

6.2.5 Language and Academic Support at the University

Another key finding of the study was the limited references to support services for students and teachers to assist with language. Eight of the nine of interviewees' responses indicated that they often faced the pressures of students' limited language proficiency in isolation, and were often unaware of the (somewhat limited) support services available to students to which they can refer them. Though the current ESP courses that come after the prerequisite English foundation course provide valuable language support for students particularly in Academic writing and verbal skills, they are not sufficient in duration and in frequency to significantly improve students' English proficiency.

Furthermore, although the university has a professional development centre, much of the focus has been based on the utilisation of educational technologies, and curriculum development as discussed in chapter 2. However, very few if any workshops or other professional development opportunities have had an academic literacy and language focus, with the majority of these focusing on the educational technology, and Blended Learning. Furthermore, there is little collaboration between faculty and language and academic support

staff, a partnership which has been advocated by international studies (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Brinton & Jensen, 2002).

This situation where teachers have had limited professional development, or support in the implementation of EMI, is not limited to the UAE, but is found to be similar issue internationally. Dearden's (2015) comprehensive study found that while "27 per cent of respondents reported that their country had had some limited guidelines about how to teach through EMI, 60 per cent reported none. Moreover in very few countries adopting EMI was there a clear strategy in terms of educational structure with regard to EMI" (p.24). With little pedagogical training, subject teachers have been tasked with addressing the literacy and language needs of students without the necessary guidance or support. This study is in support of Rogier's (2012, p.ii) assertions 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 programmes.

Finally, the current remedial language support centres resourced do not currently have the material and human resources to provide language support on a university-wide scale. Without these support structures, students with limited proficiency in English will not get the assistance required.

6.2.6 Teacher Perceptions of L1 in the EMI Model

The final research question concerned teachers' perceptions of the role of L1 in the EMI model, and in students' tertiary education in general. Three of the teachers interviewed (all of Arabic-background) criticised the perceived marginalisation of the students' L1 in the learning process, and described the university's monolingual stance as counterproductive to the learning process. The incorporation of Arabic in the current EMI model, which was based on teachers' discussions, involved *the introduction of more AMI courses, allowing the use of L1 when needed in the EMI classrooms, and incorporating more Arabic texts to support students' content learning*. These are discussed below.

Introducing more courses in AMI

Arabic-background teachers discussed the need to offer more courses in Arabic, which would provide students with opportunities to develop their Arabic proficiency to a higher level and to reduce the cognitive demands placed on students as a result of the almost exclusive EMI model currently in place. The current marginalisation of Arabic runs counter to the articles of the Arabic language charter of the UAE (UAE Government, 2012) which assert the role of tertiary institutions in the preservation of Arabic. As discussed earlier, Arabic has been supported as the official language of the UAE based on the UAE's Arabic Language Charter (UAE Government, 2012). The Charter makes specific reference to its vital role of Higher Education institutions in developing students' Arabic language abilities as seen below:

Article (7) The government shall direct institutions involved in higher education to consider the Arabic language as an essential element of

education in public universities and to focus their efforts on modernizing the teaching of Arabic in ways that would develop graduates' language abilities and enable them to contribute to their country's sustainable development.

Despite this explicit governmental directive, the profile of Arabic learning in this university remains low, which is the case for almost every university in the UAE. Apart from foundation level Arabic courses, and a small number of general education courses, Arabic medium courses are isolated to the Arabic and Law faculties generally. By not giving all students opportunities to study more courses in their native tongue, the university has effectively marginalised Arabic, and prevented students from developing their proficiency in this language at a tertiary academic level. This limited profile and use of Arabic is not conducive to the eventual goal of producing fluent, functional bilingual graduates (O'Neill, 2014; Amin, 2009) nor does it reflect government's official position on language policy.

Use of L1 in the EMI Classroom

The current policy of EMI at the university does not seem to permit the use of Arabic in the delivery of EMI courses. However, teachers expressed concern about the impractical and problematic nature of the exclusion of Arabic, and reported its use in the EMI classroom when it was deemed practical and effective to do so. Unlike a number of the teachers in McLaren's (2011) study who supported the status quo of preferring a monolingual classroom, the majority of teachers in this study (both Arabic-background and non-Arabic

background) valued the presence of the students' L1 in the classroom to maximise learning in some form or another.

Arabic-background teachers interviewed indicated that they either used Arabic minimally in the classroom, or used the students' L1 in the classroom, to maximise students' learning, which echoed findings of other studies (King, 2015; Ho & Man, 2007; Picard, 2006; Ibrahim, 2004). All of the non-Arabic background teachers indicated that though they were unable to communicate with students in Arabic, they also allowed students to do so in order to assist those who were experiencing difficulties in understanding the content. Teachers empathised with the difficulties that many students were facing with being in an English-medium learning environment. As Zain, a teacher in the Business Faculty significantly pointed out, Arabic was intrinsic to students' capacity of self-expression and communication:

Because they feel they are in their own place. "I am. I can't, I want to express myself teacher. I am not stupid. I am here but if I don't have the language, I can't but if you give me a chance I will". That's my perception. When I open a discussion in Arabic orally, I will allow them to use Arabic, they express themselves and the one you think is out of ideas, you will be amazed. (Zain)

Picard's (2006) study also reported teachers' use of L1 to compensate for students' low English proficiency: "Rumours abound that many faculty members teach so-called English-medium subjects through the Arabic medium since they feel it is impossible to teach English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners of a lower intermediate level entirely through the medium of English" (p.39). King's (2015) teacher participants

were also using Arabic in the classroom, and EMI was not strictly applied, when it was perceived as impractical or unfeasible in some instances to do so.

It was noted that English-only policies in respondents' institutions were not always strictly applied, possibly in realisation that a blanket ban was unworkable and undesirable. It was suggested that teachers were unofficially allowed to do what they felt was best without too much monitoring as long as students were not complaining. (King, 2015, p.184)

In a similar vein, Selvi (2014) points out that “lower levels of academic attainment (Sert, 2000), the practice of asking fewer questions, difficulty with writing and note-taking (Zok, 2010), and general difficulties in comprehending and responding to questions in English (Dalkız, 2002)” contributed to teachers' decisions to utilise the Turkish language (p.142).

By supporting an EMI policy that marginalises the L1 from the EMI content classroom, the university effectively creates an obstacle for students with limited language proficiency in English, who cannot use English for effective self-expression and communication.

Translation of Specialised Texts to Arabic

In addition to using Arabic for instruction, or allowing students to use Arabic in the classroom, teachers also raised the need for the translation of scholarly work and course materials in the students' first language, an pressing need expressed in the literature (Habbash & Troudi, 2015; Ebad, 2014; Al Seghayer 2012; Phillipson, 2009b; Al Jarf, 2008; Al Hazari, 2003 in Troudi, 2007). To

illustrate the urgency of this need, Del Castillo (2004) states that nearly 10,000 books have been translated into Arabic over the past millennium, which is the yearly equivalent number of books, published in Spain. This is a worrying figure that emphasises the paucity of, and the need for scholarly texts to become available in Arabic. In addition to translation of texts, work is needed at the tertiary institutional level to maintain the status of Arabic aimed at developing terminology, or Arabisation of technical terms. Article seven of the UAE's Arabic Language Charter (UAE Government, 2012) encourages public universities to prioritise Arabic as an intrinsic to student learning and national development:

Article (8) Higher education institutions and scientific research centers in the United Arab Emirates shall contribute to the enrichment of the Arabic language through the development of novel scientific and technical terminology, and shall encourage Arabic language studies and research so that Arabic regains its historical role as a language of innovation and creativity.

This article requires these same institutions to contribute towards enriching Arabic, and raising its status as a language of “innovation and creativity”. This is not a need sited only in the Arab world. Phillipson (2009b) refers to French academics' concerted efforts to encourage scholarly publication in French and English, as “teaching through the medium of French requires that the writing of scholarly syntheses and textbooks in French should be seen as meritorious and necessary” (p.9).

There needs to be recognition of the significant role that Arabic can and should play in the current EMI model, hence the need for an “explicit multilingualism” policy (Phillipson, 2009b, p.15). Given the differences between the university’s vague language policy and actual practice, there seems to be a need for a reassessment of its efficacy.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations

Pennycook (1999) critiques the tendency of critical analyses of social structures and relations to be “pessimistic, deterministic, and reproductive” (p.335), where individuals are locked into unequal relations of power that are constantly reproduced. He argues instead for an alternative approach to critical work in the field of education, which provides a “vision both of what a preferable state of affairs might be and of how one might start to work towards it”, or “the inclusion of a means of transformation” (p.335). Below, I explore a number of implications and key recommendations are made to provide “a means of transformation” for overcoming limitations of EMI policy as it is currently implemented in this university.

6.4.1 Reassessing Efficacy of Current EMI Model

The study has raised concerns about students’ limited English proficiency, and the accompanying manner in which EMI is currently being implemented. Evidence from this study and others discussed in this chapter and the literature review, paint a less than positive picture of students’ English language abilities and the accompanying learning and pedagogical pressures this has entailed for students and content teachers. The study has also identified some gaps in the

language and academic support required to fulfil the needs of both students and staff to address students' limited language proficiency.

The study in effect questions whether the current model is equipping Emirati graduates with the English proficiency needed for successful employment, particularly in the private sector where language skills have been described as essential prerequisites for employment (Barhem, Younies, & Smith, 2011; Mashood, Verhoeven & Chansarker, 2009; Al-Ali, 2008). It also more seriously questions whether students are receiving a quality undergraduate education that is of the same quality standard as they would receive in international, accredited universities, a concern also raised by other recent studies (King, 2015; Hijazi, Zoubeidi, Abdalla, Al-Waqfi, & Harb, 2008).

More broadly, there appears to be some discrepancy between the language policy communicated in the media and by government, which call for the preservation of Arabic language and identity on the one hand, and the continued push for English as a medium of instruction at the tertiary level, and more recently at the primary and secondary levels of education on the other. A critical applied linguistics framework calls for a language education policy that upholds students' "right to identify with, to maintain and to fully develop one's mother tongue(s)", and where this is considered "a self-evident, fundamental individual linguistic human right" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, p.22). There needs to be more concerted efforts to preserve the role of Arabic in not only the primary and secondary levels of education, but also at the tertiary levels.

The discrepancy in language policy is also evident at the institutional level, where it remains largely implicit in nature, and which leaves the university and its stakeholders with little guidelines as to its broad language objectives, and alignment with government language policies (e.g. the UAE's Arabic Language Charter discussed above). HEI must acknowledge and move beyond the adoption of covert language policies, to a situation where language policies specify the nature of EMI policy's implementation and the role of Arabic in this policy is explicitly formulated and communicated (Phillipson, 2009b).

With more specific language policy at the university, a key implication would be the university's reassessment of the current EMI model's feasibility as it is currently interpreted and implemented. The university currently outlines the students' development of bilingual skills as a core objective, though an analysis of the university's language policy in practice, and the very limited role of AMI does not reflect this as a priority. Whether the current language model is actually producing bilingual graduates, with sufficient command of English and Modern Standard Arabic has been questioned by this thesis.

Another key implication of this study is to question the role of students' first language, and the manner in which MSA can and should play in the MOI policy. Apart from being the first language of these students, strongly and inextricably tied to their cultural, religious and national identities (Dahan, 2013), proficiency in MSA remains an important skill set for employment (Yaghi & Yaghi, 2013). Over a half of employers preferred candidates with good communication skills in both Arabic and English, particularly in the contexts of banking and government,

according to a Bayt.com survey, a popular job search website (“Could Learning Arabic Boost Your UAE Job Prospects?” 2014).

The study questions the extent to which the current EMI model sufficiently emphasises Arabic, or provides enough learning opportunities to develop academic proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic. There needs to be a move towards ensuring a “balanced cohabitation with additive (as opposed to subtractive) English” (Phillipson, 2009b). Phillipson (2009b) emphasises that “English needs to be seen in relation to multilingual competence and cultural diversity” (p.2). At the university in question, only a handful of courses are taught in Arabic, and these tend to be isolated in specific faculties, where it is perceived to be pragmatic to utilise AMI (e.g. the Faculty of Law, and the Arabic Department). There is a need for the delivery of more university courses in Arabic, a move also recommended by the Federal National Council (Salama, 2010).

Apart from these important considerations, the exclusion of Arabic through the implementation of an exclusive EMI model, serves to increase disparity, and inequity for students with limited English proficiency. From a critical point of view, there needs to be recognition of the role of Arabic not only due to its status as students’ native language, but also due to the issues of access it entails for students with limited English proficiency. There also needs to be some recognition of the role that Arabic can and should play in students’ learning. Apart from learning in AMI, Arabic has also been playing a scaffolding role in the EMI classroom. Though teachers are often allowing the use of Arabic

to ensure student comprehension, this is not sanctioned in the university. There is a need to recognise the place of Arabic within this rigid EMI model. The notion of ‘translanguaging’, or teaching and learning strategies which utilise different languages for input and output to ensure deeper comprehension (Baker, 2000) needs to be recognised as a naturally occurring phenomenon for multilingual students and one which “cannot be completely restrained by monolingual education policies” (Canagarajah, 2011, p.402). Translanguaging can help students to improve their proficiency in English (Baker, 2000) and allows the university to achieve the goal of producing bilingual graduates. Given the high percentage of Arabic-background teachers including the growing number of Emiratis, this model is feasible in the university where almost all students are of Arabic background.

However, despite the importance of Arabic, and in support of previous studies on EMI in the UAE (King, 2015; Raddawi & Meslem, 2015; O’Neill, 2014; Van de Hoven, 2014), I do not believe that the adoption of a monolingual Arabic-medium instruction model is an effective way to solve the challenges that EMI policy has created for the various stakeholders of education. Besides, even nations that have resisted strongly to the encroachment of English upon the high status of their native languages, have acknowledged the need for English education. For instance, industrialised nations such as France, Japan, Germany and China have acknowledged the need for partial EMI in higher education (Gill, 2008). An AMI model would hence disregard the undeniable role that English plays as the *lingua franca* in the UAE. Moving solely to AMI policy will not fully prepare students to function in the UAE’s diverse society, nor will it provide

them with the English communication skills needed to effectively participate in its workforce (Al-Ali, 2008). Furthermore, it is not a model that students or teachers would support, as is evident in the literature (Van de Hoven, 2014; Findlow, 2006). Within the university in question, the AMI model would not be in alignment with the university's goals for international accreditation, and its goals for graduate outcomes. Furthermore, given the multicultural and linguistically diverse nature of the student population and teachers at the university, moving to an AMI model is not feasible.

However, given the difficulties that students are experiencing with the current EMI model resulting from limited English proficiency, the university might also consider a more flexible approach to EMI policy more broadly, with the possibility of giving students the option to study more courses in Arabic, as opposed to the current almost exclusive implementation of EMI (Lau & Yuen, 2011). An alternative model of EMI, which incorporates bilingualism is preferred by not only teachers but by students (see Hopkyns, 2014; O'Neill, 2014; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Findlow, 2006). O'Neill's study (2014) which examines female university students' perceptions of Arabic and English highlights their preference for both languages in the tertiary setting as a result of "growing awareness among Emiratis of the critical importance of safeguarding the Arabic language while still developing substantial capital in English" (p.19).

In summary, this thesis recommends a shift towards a more balanced bilingualism rather than a continued, almost exclusive focus on English in the tertiary setting or solely on Arabic as has occurred in the past in many primary

and secondary schools (Raddawi & Meslem, 2015). In this way, Arabic is no longer marginalised and students are given opportunities to develop Arabic language proficiency (Raddawi & Meslem, 2015; Ebad, 2014). Many societies and systems of education have made bilingualism, even multilingualism a reality, with successful models that enable students to learn their native language competently, and adopt a foreign language as a MOI (Amin, 2009). In his analysis of science teaching and language use in the Arab world, Amin (2009, p.70) argues that mandatory schooling (and indeed by extension tertiary schooling) must allow students to;

access and engage with scientific information through both Arabic and an international language. This assumption addresses both the widely recognized need to be able to participate in science and technology related fields that are dominated by international languages (mainly English but also French) and the importance of the use of Arabic to reinforce national and regional identity. The use of Arabic also addresses the equally pressing need that general scientific literacy of a society requires the capacity to engage in science related discussions and debates in the native language.

Kim's (2011) study of EMI in the Korean context also draws similar conclusions, based on the students' limited language proficiency and recommends the revision of universities' blanket policies on EMI classes. Kim (2011) calls for the adoption of "adaptive policies of voluntarily teaching EMI courses which are more fitting to the individual colleges or departments. Rather than expanding EMI classes, they should offer a broader range of choices and more flexible and effective classes" (p. 739).

In the UAE context, it appears that there are few initiatives in the tertiary sector aimed at creating a more balanced bilingual university. In 2001, ZU introduced *Arabic across the Curriculum (AAC)* programme, which aims to develop students' language production skills both through an Arabic composition course taught as a compulsory subject, and within the other content courses in the different colleges of the institution (Hedaiat, 2004). A relevant alternative possibility can be adopted as was the case at the University of Qatar, which replaced English with Arabic as the MOI in a number of courses. By incorporating Arabic in this manner, the university can more effectively produce bilingual graduates better equipped to participate in the UAE's workforce.

6.4.2 Raising English Proficiency in the Secondary Schools

As was discussed in this thesis, current English proficiency levels expected upon entrance to undergraduate study do not equip students with sufficient language proficiency to perform the linguistic requirements demanded in an academic setting. Improvements in English language ability due to current pedagogical developments in English language instruction at the primary and secondary levels in Abu Dhabi (see section 2.4.2) will require time to positively influence the situation at the tertiary level. Cummins and Man Yee-Fun (2007) estimate a period of five years of exposure to academic English for EFL learners to reach native speaker norms. In the meantime university teachers need to be cognisant of these barriers and continue working to minimise their impact upon their students.

6.4.3 Developing University's Academic and Language Support Structures

The key finding in the study was the limited range of support offered to meet students' language needs, which has implications for the degree to which students can develop English proficiency, and inevitably affects the quality of their learning. A key recommendation that this study makes is the need to develop the support systems for academic language learning throughout the course of students' undergraduate study, which parallels the findings of Rogier (2012). Beyond the foundations programme and the few ESP courses that students must complete as part of their studies, there seems to be a sink or swim approach to learning development. HEI in the UAE must expand the necessary support structures to reduce the struggles that students experience in acquiring the linguistic conventions of their disciplines, and to reduce student drop out or failure rates, which have resulted from limited language proficiency (Abdulla & Ridge, 2011). These support structures recommended for expansion comprise of: introducing more parallel language courses designed to develop students' language skills, which are specifically designed for the respective departments/ faculties in the form of more ESP courses; further funding and expansion of existing language support centres to provide intensive one-to-one or group support for students; and the provision of quality professional development for content teachers for literacy and language support. These are discussed further below.

Introducing more Parallel Language Courses

There needs to be more recognition of and efforts to reduce the barriers to learning that limited language proficiency of students upon university entry means. Among other initiatives, it needs to take the form of more academic literacy and language support throughout students' university studies to address students' gaps in academic language skills.

The English foundations programmes and 2-3 semester long parallel EAP courses may not provide sufficient exposure to academic English for students who start university studies with a band 5 IELTS. The current EAP requirements (one generic academic reading/ writing course, one oral presentation course, and for some faculties an additional specifically designed course) need to be expanded to include more courses. Furthermore, as discussed in the findings chapter (see section 5.4), there is a need for providing more content-based EAP/ ESP courses at a higher level of language complexity, which can “equip students with appropriate language skills to survive in their EMI courses” (Chang, 2010, p.77). Similarly, Chang's (2010) study reports on students' criticism of disparities between language levels of EMI subject courses, with complicated and difficult language, and that of General Education courses where English is “sheltered and simplified” (p.73), a finding which echoes other EAP researchers' findings (Evans & Green, 2007). In Chang's (2010) study, students identify specific language needs required of EAP/ESP courses, the most relevant of which are English communication and discussion skills, workplace English, English lecture and speech comprehension. Others identified are English report writing, English presentations, English research

paper and thesis writing, and critical reading and writing. Though the current EAP courses in the university address some of these skills, these tend not to be faculty-specific, and the duration of these courses is insufficient to provide language support at a higher level of complexity for students beginning their studies with an overall band 5.0 IELTS English proficiency profile.

Support Services for students and Remedial Language Support

Teachers raised concerns about students' limited language and literacy proficiency and the need to support students to address this through Learning Centres, or through remedial language classes offered at the university. The university's academic support unit, which provides academic advising and learning support centres has in the past largely catered to foundation-level students, but have expanded their services to target undergraduates and post-graduates (see section 4.5). However, despite the valuable services provided, they are based on a 'remedial' approach to support that is at times inefficient, and many language and academic support programmes are moving away from this model of support due to its time and resources-consuming nature (Ransom & Greig, 2007; von Randow, 2005). However, notwithstanding this limitation, they continue to provide much-needed individualised services to the university community, and have been able to reach large numbers of students annually with small-scale staffing and financial funding. Increasing university support for these services and expanding their capacities will allow them to continue to provide a valuable language and academic support network for more students.

Professional Development and Liaison to Integrate EFL Support

There is also a need for developing content teachers' skills to effectively implement EMI policy. To do this, content teachers need to develop skills to effectively embed academic literacy and language support in their content teaching. O'Neill (2014, p.19) makes the following recommendations for content teachers:

It is important that we provide opportunities for students to read and write as part of our courses. For example, rather than simplifying course materials in order to 'get the point across' (e.g. in the form of PowerPoint slides) we can include required readings in our courses, ideally as a regular classroom activity, that present key course content. These readings should be carefully selected (possibly with the help of language teaching or learning specialists) so that they are sufficiently challenging but not overwhelming for our students. It is also essential that key vocabulary items be taught prior to reading.

However, integrating literacy and language skills into content teaching is a demanding task for teachers, which goes beyond the simple recommendations discussed above. Skills for teaching academic writing and reading skills within disciplines can be gained through professional development, and through liaising with EFL specialists and academic support staff. Marsh (2006) emphasises the degree to which the relative successes of educational policies are dependent upon teachers' professional development and training:

Regardless of what language or educational policy-makers decide, it is the social microcosm of the classroom which reflects the successes and failures of any nation's citizens in the future...Teachers from pre-primary to higher education can upgrade their work when language acts as some form of barrier in the learning context, but they need access to the knowledge and skills now increasingly available. (p. 31)

There is a need to move towards a model that “encourages targeted conversations between faculties and learning support units”, and promotes liaison between different academics “to identify where literacy integration might be most effective, and co-design instruction to suit specific contexts, needs and interests” (Purser, Skillen, Dean, Donohue & Peak, 2008, p.3). Developing this type of language and literacy support collaborations between content teachers and academic support staff could be conducted by the University's professional development centre (see section 2.5.4) in collaboration with EFL instructors in the foundations, and/ or professors from the applied linguistics Programme and education faculty. They can also be conducted through the learning support centres, which can expand their services to incorporate closer collaboration with teachers across the university.

Though it would require human capital, financial resources and significant planning to develop such training programmes,]the university's professional development centre and the language support centres can begin by giving teachers opportunities to reflect on current practice and consider, with the mentoring support of EFL trained teachers, how language and literacy support can be better embedded in their teaching practices. Richardson (2007, p.13-14)

points out the importance of embedded professional development, and reflecting on teaching practice:

On-going support for integration of new teaching strategies, formative assessment, personal goal-setting, mentoring, conference attendance, in-service day, may also serve to support meaningful teacher growth.

By developing teachers' skills to address their EFL students' language needs in the areas discussed above, student learning will improve as will their English proficiency.

In summary, I have outlined above some of the gaps in the university's support structures which need to be addressed for a more effective implementation of an EMI policy. Without addressing some of the key areas outlined above, language will continue to be a source of inequity and students will continue to be challenged with language and learning the academic content of their undergraduate courses, and will continue to graduate without sufficient proficiency in English.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This study provided an exploratory account of teachers' perceptions of EMI as it is currently implemented in a higher education institution in the UAE. Teachers described their perceptions of the rationales and challenges of this language policy, how these were addressed, as well as the place of students' first language in this model. By examining these pertinent topics, the thesis provided an in-depth account of EMI from teachers' perspectives, and also drew

important implications and recommendations for stakeholders and for future practice. This study is important in highlighting to stakeholders the current limitations of the language policy as it is being implemented in federal tertiary institutions in the UAE. It calls for the need to address the discrepancies between government policies promoting Arabic on the one hand, and the growing influence of EMI at all levels of education on the other. It highlights the issues of access and equity that are associated with language-medium policy and the need for government and HE bodies to address these. In doing so, this study makes an important contribution to the growing body of knowledge in the field of language policy in education in the UAE.

This study also calls for a number of further areas of study that are needed in the future. In recognising the appropriate scale of the study, I decided to focus on one group of participants, namely content teachers at a university. Though teacher contributions were valuable in gaining an understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by EMI in HEI, further studies should explore the perceptions of other stakeholders of higher education including students at various stages in their tertiary education, students' parents, and heads of programmes and administrators within the university. Accessing a range of sources of data will provide studies with diverse insights and experiences. Furthermore, accessing a range of sources of data will enable multiple perspectives and accounts, and a more evenly balanced narrative. It would also be useful to examine practices at a range of institutions to compare the effectiveness of alternative models and practices. Furthermore, it is important to conduct ethnographic research consisting of classroom

observations where teachers are implementing EMI. This type of data collection will provide rich and in-depth insights into the daily challenges of EMI in an EFL context for both teachers and students.

Also, because this study was based on teachers' perspectives, the data primarily focused on EMI and its role in teaching and learning. This was a logical choice of focus, in light of teachers' experiences with this language policy. However a continuation of this study from the perspective of students would enable a focus on much broader issues, such as the effect of EMI on cultural identity and first language maintenance, topics which are relevant to students' experiences with EMI and language policy in general.

Apart from the HE context, it is also important to examine the efficacy of English language programmes and initiatives that have been launched at the primary and secondary levels of education. Significant material resources have been expended by Abu Dhabi's ADEC to improve students' English proficiency as discussed in the contextual background chapter. It is imperative to critique these programmes to ascertain their effectiveness.

6.6 My Doctoral Journey

I do not claim to have a unique doctoral journey when I say that the process was a challenging and insightful one. All doctoral candidates would describe the project as an intense exercise in the will power required for sustaining a continuous focus on one research project over several years. However, despite the challenges associated with completing a project of this magnitude, the

experience has equipped me with some invaluable research, writing, and analytical skills that will be indispensable for future research projects.

In conducting this study, I have also had the opportunity to reflect on language trends in this region of the world and how they are shaped by broader social and political forces. Conducting this doctoral thesis and my review of the literature in many respects confirmed my general beliefs about language policy and EMI in the UAE. The participants in the study reported a strong correlation between students' English proficiency and the success in the delivery of quality higher education in the UAE. Arabic-background teachers in particular also reinforced the need to apply real and practical measures, beyond lip service, to the preservation of Arabic in the academic sphere, both in the UAE and in the MENA region, which has in recent times been largely neglected.

With the rapid policy developments that have occurred in the UAE education sector over the past few decades, I have witnessed the gradual improvement of students' English proficiency profiles in the course of my decade of employment in the UAE's tertiary education sector, as higher proportions of students skip the remedial English programmes and begin their undergraduate study. However, the rate of improvement has been quite slow. I remain hopeful that the current EMI policy and the nature of its implementation in the many higher education institutions are reassessed in light of the findings of research projects such as this.

These concerns have been a source of focus for me during the doctoral journey. As I near the end of my doctoral studies, these issues remain as relevant and as controversial as when I began.

6.7 Conclusion to chapter and thesis

In the course of conducting this study, a number of important research projects concerned with the theme of English-medium instruction have been published internationally (Sultana, 2014; Al-Bakri, 2013; Chang, 2012; Evans, 2009; Coleman, 2006), but particularly with reference to the specific context of the United Arab Emirates (see Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; King, 2015; Van de hoven, 2014; Rogier, 2012; McLaren, 2011; Sanassian, 2011). These studies have contributed significantly to giving stakeholders of education in the UAE some clearer insight into the complexities, and challenges that have arisen as a result of adoption of English-medium instruction in higher education. This study has further contributed to the debate, by providing more 'evidence' of these complexities and challenges in the UAE based on teachers' perspectives. This exploratory study aimed to raise awareness of teachers' beliefs and experiences concerning EMI in the UAE, where often teachers' voices are not valued or heard in the broader context of policy-making.

By doing so, the study raised some important findings, which reinforced the outcomes of more recent research in the area of EMI in the UAE's tertiary sector. It is hoped that these outcomes provide further impetus for governmental and institutional reassessment of current language policy and practices in the UAE's tertiary education sector.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedule

Background information

- Name
- Teaching experience
- Teaching experience in the UAE
- Length of employment at the institution
- Proficiency in English/ Arabic
- Experience of working in the UAE.

EMI

- What is the university's policy on language use by academics and students?
- What is your faculty's approach to language policy in your teaching?
- Are there documents specifying language policy at your institution?
- In your department, is there any specific reference to a rule governing students'// academics' language use in the content, delivery, interactions and assessment?
- What is your opinion of EMI in this context? Do you agree with or disagree with this policy? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

The students

- What are your perceptions of your students' proficiency in English?
- What aspects of language, if any are areas of weakness for students?
- If there are identified weaknesses, how do these affect students' learning in your courses?
- Does students' limited language proficiency a challenge in your teaching/ students' learning? Does it affect:
 - Students' contributions in the classroom discussions
 - Quality of work produced by students

- Capacity to perform well in examinations
- How can these issues be addressed in your opinion?
- Does it affect students' motivation levels?
 - How do you think students perceive EMI at your institution? Has this issue been raised by your students during discussions?
 - Do you think these factors will have any effect on students' post-university work options?

Your Teaching

- Does students' limited language proficiency affect your teaching? How?
 - In your content delivery
 - Assessment procedures?
 - Expectations of students (their depth of learning, etc)?
- Do you do anything specific to assist students with the language component of the course? What? If not, what factors limit your capacity to do this?
- Do you have sufficient proficiency in Arabic to draw on it as a tool for students' learning? If not, do you think it is useful to use the students' mother tongue for content delivery?
- Are there any support networks that you are available at the university which you access, or you ask your students to access? What are these, and what services or support mechanisms can the university provide to better support you and your students?
- Any concluding remarks?

Appendix 2: University of Exeter Ethics Clearance

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses.



Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications> and view the School's Policy online.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Mouhamad Mouhanna

Your student no: 009091

Return address for this certificate: UAE University, PO Box 17172 Al Ain Abu Dhabi UAE

Degree/Programme of Study: Education Doctorate

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Salah Troudi

Your email address: mm352@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 00971 559592 547

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed Mouhamad Mouhanna.....date: 20th October, 2014

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: March 2013

Certificate of ethical research approval

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT:

EMI In Higher Education in the UAE: Teachers' Perspectives

1. Brief description of your research project:

The study explores teachers' experiences of implementing the policy of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in UAE higher education where English is a second/ foreign language. In general, many students do not have sufficiently high levels of proficiency in English to study through EMI. The study seeks to examine this from the perspectives of teachers from one tertiary institution in relation to how their teaching practices are shaped by EMI policy. The study adopts an interpretative qualitative approach and utilizes qualitative methods for data collection. It draws on semi-structured interviews with teachers working in one higher education institution in the UAE.

This research informs language policy in higher education in the UAE. Though studies have examined language policy in the UAE generally, fewer studies have examined the specific challenges associated with implementing this policy by teachers (King, 2014). This study adds to the small body of literature in this particular area of inquiry.

2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Participants in the study are teachers who are working in higher education institutions in the UAE, with Arabic-speaking students. There will be no children or adolescents involved in the study. Teachers (females and males) from various faculties at one institution will be invited to participate. I will interview between 15 and 20 teachers, as this will provide me with a representative sample, and will also ensure higher levels of confidentiality for the participants. The invitation to participate will be sent via email, which allows individuals to refuse to participate in a face-saving manner, and hence ensures genuine consent. Potential participants will be in their mid-twenties and older.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

3. informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents: Each consent form **MUST** be personalised with your contact details.

I am aware that the teachers I am interviewed are not permitted to disclose private information about specific students, or to use their position to do so. Teachers will be asked questions generally and will not name particular students or specific incidents, which can identify the students or people concerned.

4. anonymity and confidentiality

Participants will be ensured the utmost respect for confidentiality by the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used for individuals, institutions and specific locations. Furthermore, potentially identifying details for participants will be omitted or altered in the writing of the thesis (e.g. specific programs in faculties,

which will limit the number of potential people interviewed, etc.). Measures will be taken to limit the use of identifying information about the institution, the students, and the teachers. Data (including audio-recordings and transcripts) will be filed using the pseudonyms, plus the data will be de-identified and codes will be stored separately. The data will be stored in a secure location in the researcher's place of residence, and on the researcher's personal computer protected with passwords. Conducting interviews with 15 participants will also mean that it will be more difficult to identify particular participants.

5. Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Interviewees at the outset are informed that they may withdraw from participating in the study at any stage if they are concerned about potential harm as a result of participating in the study. Furthermore, participants will also be informed that they are not obliged to respond to particular questions if they feel that there may be possible harm in this. Participants will also be informed about audio-recording of the interview. If they are uncomfortable with this, then I am willing to take detailed notes in the course of the interview.

Furthermore, if I sense any discomfort on the part of the interviewee concerning a particular question, he will reassure the interviewee that he/she is under no obligation to respond to a particular question. I am in the process of piloting the questions to ensure that they are suitable, and don't cause potential discomfort to interviewees. If there are such questions, I will modify or remove them from the interview schedule. On the whole however, given the nature of the research focus, I am confident that the questions would not be a source of discomfort or detriment to the interviewees.

It is very important to maintain the participants' confidentiality, as perhaps negative responses about the institutions or departments can potentially affect their work. Hence, in this situation, it is even more imperative that the proper ethical procedures are carried out. However, as discussed earlier, I will preserve the trust of the participants by maintaining their confidentiality, and ensuring that they are not intentionally or unintentionally misrepresented. I will also ensure that any interpretations that I make are well-verified and are expressed in a sensitive manner.

I have enclosed with this form the information letter, and consent forms, and the text, which will come before the interviews. These have been designed with the above-mentioned considerations in mind.

Another possible ethical consideration is the importance of the researcher's accountability in ensuring that participants are not misrepresented. This can be prevented by referring data back to the participants prior to using it in the research. I will provide all participants with the opportunity to read interview transcripts to ensure that they have not been misquoted.

6. Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project - e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires, or

Informed consent- It is important to provide potential participants with full information about the aims and objectives of the study, and the demands of the research by communicating the data collection methods, their duration, and the means by which the data would subsequently be disseminated. This information will be provided through the information sheets that are sent to potential participants, and reinforced in the consent forms prior to the interviews.

As discussed earlier, data will be de-identified with the use of pseudonyms and will be stored in a secure location. Audio-recordings of interviews will be saved and removed from the audio-recording device at the earliest opportunity, and these files will be filed electronically in my personal computer, which is secured with a password.

7. Special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.

I do not expect that there will be issues concerning interviewees with special needs. However, I have asked potential participants in the information sheets to raise any special needs that they may have in order to be accommodated. Effort will be made to ensure that interviewees are not inconvenienced.

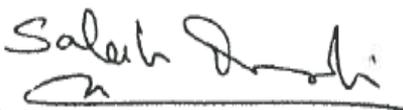
8. Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

I do not foresee any potential conflicts, which may harm individuals who volunteer to participate in this study.

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: November 2014 until: Dec 2014

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): 
.....date: 31/10/2014.....

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference: D/14/15/10.....

Signed: date: 7/11/14.....
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

Appendix 3: Information Sheets for Participants



INFORMATION LETTER

**English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) In Higher Education in the UAE:
Teachers' Perspectives** *Doctoral Study by Mouhamad Mouhanna, supervised by Dr
Salah Troudi, University of Exeter*

Dear teacher,

My name is Mouhamad Mouhanna, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Exeter. I am conducting a research project about English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Higher Education, and I would welcome your assistance. Please read the information in this letter, and ask questions before deciding to participate.

This study investigates content teachers' experiences of teaching through English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in the UAE's Higher Education sector. If you agree to participate in this study, you will take part in an audio-recorded 45-minute interview, at a time and location that is convenient to you. During this interview I will ask you questions concerning your institution's approaches to language use and how this, combined with students' levels of proficiency may influence your teaching. I will also ask questions about how language policy may in turn influence your students' learning.

If you are willing to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without justification for your decision. Every effort will be taken to protect your confidentiality. I will be using pseudonyms for participants, and will avoid the use of potentially identifying information in the doctoral thesis, and in public dissemination of findings. If you are interested in participating or if you have any further questions, I would be glad if you would contact me via email or phone (see below).

Yours sincerely,

Mouhamad Mouhanna

mmouhanna@gmail.com | mm352@uaeu.ac.ae

Appendix 4: Teacher Consent Form

**English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education in the UAE:
Teachers' Perspectives** *Doctoral Study by Mouhamad Mouhanna, supervised by Dr
Salah Troudi, University of Exeter*

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project "English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education in the UAE: Teachers' perspectives" being conducted by Mouhamad Mouhanna, a doctoral student at the university of Exeter.

I have read the information sheet, the accompanying debriefing sheet, and have had the opportunity to ask questions, so I am fully informed about the aims and purposes of the study. I understand that my participation in this research will involve participation in one audio-recorded 45-minute interview. I am aware that I can contact Mouhamad Mouhanna if I have any concerns about the research. There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason, and may also request that my data be destroyed.

I agree that Mouhamad Mouhanna has answered all my questions fully and clearly. I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me. Any information, which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations. All information I give will be treated as confidential, and the researcher will make every effort to preserve my confidentiality.

_____/_____/_____
Signature (participant)

_____/_____/_____
Signature (researcher or delegate)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).

Contact details of the researcher:

Telephone: 00971559592547 Email: mm352@exeter.ac.uk, mmouhanna@gmail.com

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact the project supervisor:

Dr. Salah Troudi Email: S.Troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Alternatively, you may contact my co-supervisor:

Dr. Hania Salter- Dvorak Email: H.M.Salter-Dvorak@exeter.ac.uk

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Appendix 5: Sample Transcript

Ziad

M: Okay, thank you Dr Azid for volunteering to be part of this interview. I'd like to ask you questions firstly about the English Medium Instruction policy. What is the university policy on this language use in the classroom?

Z: Yeah. According to ah honestly I didn't I didn't didn't have any official letter or saying that we have to use English in the person in the classroom, but it's it's the primary language, yeah, for teaching and as a medium for teaching but I didn't seen any official, ahh

M: But, it's well known that English...

Z: Yeah, we as during the supervision and evaluation yes, we have to use English as a, and we are using English as a primary language.

M: By academics and by students?

Z: Both, yeah (laugh)

M: So, it's an English Medium Instruction, English only rule?

Z: Yes, our classes. It's, yeah, English based, yeah.

M: That's the university policy. What about in your faculty? Is it the same policy?

Z: Same policy, yeah. But there is not, I mean, I taught for Business, I taught for Humanities, I taught for Foundation and till now they never released any official letter saying that you have to, or it's a requirement. I mean, no, it's not by policy written down, but verbally, yes, we do and even students, they, I mean, just by example, they, when they try to answer the teacher is it English or Arabic, which mean in their minds, English is the ah instruction language, yeah.

M: Are there any documents specifying this language policy, that you've seen?

Z: Honestly, I didn't ask, when we when we ask the ah supervisors, we don't have like explicit by law or any rule saying that it's a must, no. But as a culture or it's known that the UAE is English based, ah, instruction, yeah.

M: Okay. What's your opinion of this English Medium Instruction in this context?

Z: It depends. I I have many discussions and we debate on on the language. Is it really good? Is it part of it or is it a goal or ah? Some of them, I mean, based on my own experience, ah some courses of some programs, yes, like Engineering, Science, IT, I don't have any problem with the English work. Even the level of students, it's okay, they can cope with the ah but for the Humanities, for ah College of Law and for some, you know, Social Studies, I guess, we prefer, you know, and even students they and the drop out – it's because of the language. We have more around 25% they drop out from programme because they can't even finish their requirements ah IELTS or because they, and they go to each city or and each city for them more convenient than than, for that's my opinion. I mean, if I have ah opinion of choice, I would, yeah, Arabic should be used in specific programmes and it would be by choice rather than imposing it on the language.

M: Okay. Let's talk about the students now. How do you perceive your students' proficiency in English? Would you say they are very proficient, average?

Z: No, they are not ah not what we expect. Not talk about the requirements. We talk about ah how we are assessing them and reality facts. Now, all of them, they should be proficient because of the ah, they are passing the requirements, IELTS and some Foundation level courses – which means we are expecting this level of proficiency. But, honestly, in the class, no. It's below the average.

Everything – what average? Not individual, we have good student but, I mean, in average, yes, if it were the population, everything it is below.

M: So, what would you say the percentage of the good students are? Umm What percentage are good?

Z: In our class, maybe not they don't exceed 10%.

M: And 90% have big issues in English?

Z: Oh, yeah.

M: Okay. What aspects of the language are their areas of weakness? Is it listening, reading?

Z: If you talk about the ah, as a technical teacher I don't pay attention to the morphology or the language itself – syntax and writing. But I can talk about the ah speaking. Speaking, yeah. Speaking and listening ah – I'm not really happy of about the their level of proficiency in this skills, especially when we talk about second third year students. Barely they can communicate as I can give you proof because my expertise in presentations. When you see ah final project presentation, the language, the way how they communicate their idea, how they express themselves – it's not that. It's below the average actually. It should be higher than that. Now, in term of writing, we ah I do some good ah practices but, ah of you talk about the reflective, say what you write – the problem what we are facing ah during all this yearsv we teach them, or they were taught, how to write – not what to write. Now, how to write, they know. I start with introduction and then I develop this and end. But, what to write is not that narrative. Now, in my case, what I do, I don't care about how to write, I care about, because I'm technical teacher – at the end ah they have to produce like two or three pages what they call a reflective – is a reflection on something, reflects not what

happen now. It's with the internet, with the advent of net, most of them, they copy paste from sources. It's then there's more. Now, when we talk about the reflection a or reflect and write your opinion or give idea, it's very tough. They can't explain what they're doing when I ask them what they do, they write in Arabic and they translate. Now, with the tools, they Google Translate. Most of them, they do translation. It's a pure translation. They, it's not correct. The ideas ah not there ah, you know, it's word by word translate, not the... Now you can see and in general ah the the what they produce, it's not really, which means there is a lack in, I can tell you this is writing.

M: Mmm

Z: Because today they don't write, they type.

M: How about their spelling?

Z: It's same thing. They type. It's a good spelling. Why? Because they type in ah computer. Typing is not writing. When you tell them to write by hand, I mean, basic words they ah spell them but when they produce something typing, yes, because there's auto-spelling (laughs)

M: Mmm

Z: You have to be careful as a teacher. Typing is not writing.

M: Okay. But do you think these issues affect the students' learning?

Z: They, ah, this is like philosophic question. Ah, the personal level of perception is not about reality. Now, my perception is this: if they can't produce a written documents, they can't be based, they can't talk for me. It's big issue. Now, is it, does mean they're not learning? No, it's not true because when you ask, when you, when we quiz them or maybe in Ara..., they might answer. Now the the tool; did the language it's a handicap, true. But learning, no, it's doesn't

affect. I mean they, it will affect the way how as such as long as it's a clear idea, perception wise, yes. You have this perception they don't learn because they can't communicate. No. I give you an example. If you have a student, he can't ah talk or he can't discuss or he can't debate, you ask him question and he will not answer because he is shy or, it doesn't mean he is not learning because there is a problem. Now, what you do with this? Should should I talk talk communicate with them and you can see they they're very good which means there's a misunderstanding or misperception on learning. Learning, it doesn't mean if you cannot talk you cannot write, which means that you are not learning. No, they are learning and I can give you many ah facts on that.

M: And that's the next part of the question, huh this limited language proficiency...

Z: It affects

M:...does it affect...

Z:...that is

M:...students' contribution in the...

Z: Yes, that has a huge impact...

M: ...classroom?

Z: Now I want to talk about, we have to distinguish between learning and contribution participation in the learning process. They are not engaged but they are somewhat learning. Now, engagement is different from learning. Now, they are not engaged because of the language. I was teaching in Communication Business ah Course, which is based on ah collaboration between the teacher and student. Both they they collaborate the content. Both they collaborate to learn. It's not ah one way teaching. This new development, it will involve

students. Now, because of the language we are basing the ah the whole concept of enquiry because they can't communicate, they can't produce something a little more than which mean you will be eliminating students from discussion because of the language. Now, they ask me; 'teacher' now I give you one is when I ask them question and then they can't answer. I know, because of the language. Now, when I tell them, okay you have fifteen minutes to express it in Arabic, all of them, they participate.

M: Mmm How about the quality of work produced by the students? Is that affected?

Z: In term of language or the...?

M: Because they have low proficiency in English, does that affect the quality?

Z: Yes, it does affect because sometimes they they mean something but the way of develop is different because they don't pay attention to the ah writing style.

M: So, the quality is...?

Z: I give you something. When we give them assessment, quantitative assessment, they average above the ah scores, above the expectations because it is marked three or twenty-five. When we talk about qualitative work, how to write a reflection on this, it will drop below the average, which mean what is difference between them is the tool. It's the language now but I will tell you something. Maybe, even in Arabic, it's the problem of the language not only English. If the level they are not well ah prepared ah for the level use, I think, in term of the foundation of the language. They talk but the language is not that, I mean, the rules, the grammar, the morphology, it's not that. They can't speak but give an example. Once I give them a paragraph 'cos my ah one of the

course I teach, ah the impact of technology on language writing. When they chat and they write, is it writing or just typing? You know, this view symbols and does this improve your language? When you ask, I give them one paragraph in German as a view – they all of them can read. Do you understand, Mouhamad? But there is sound 'a, b' without pronunciation just um English – which mean the the language is that, the sound is that but the comprehension that is not that. That's the...

M: Okay. Does it affect their performance in exams?

Z: But of course. Yeah. Any test we have set, any test. In IT we have to, we have what we call progressive tests, ah we don't 'cos we want to avoid, we don't want to penalize them because of the language. We used to have scenario based exam, which mean there is scenario and then they give ah solution. All of them, most of them, they fail this question but when I give them ah tests of meta choice question they do well, which mean they do do well, which mean of course it will. Again, it's ah what I'm talking about, testing – it's not learning. Learning learning they might learn by their own Arabic, English, Chinese, but tell, yes, if we use testing and use this (in a great space?) of course, it will drop because of this. I can tell you maybe there is a gap of 10 15% dropping from because of the language, yeah, or sometime, they don't even answer the question. Because of the language, they ah skip the question.

M: So, how can these issues be addressed in your opinion?

Z: Now, what they are doing, in my ah case, I was doing this ah for a long time, how can improve the class, improve the delivery, improve contact, ah knowing that English is not the... Sometime, what we do ah we prepare, you know, ahead of time, prior knowledge knowledge. We prepare a list of vocab, give

them this list – technical word. They have to research, that we do some parses, we do some practices just to improve their language. Ah, we change the methodology package to mobile learning where they have access to ah some apps, if it would them to translate, help them to improve their their language. Ah we try, but it's not the problem. I haven't the time for my content. I don't have time to produce – ah, we try to help them out but it's not it's not my goal. I don't care about the language. I care about what they can produce in term of the content because I I, at the end of the day, I have some goals and to achieve. That's why we are in in between. We pay a price for the language. I have to spend 15 minutes just to recap and ah but, what is missing now, ah yes I can spend time to to explain the words and to explain the... But this is on on the back of ah the discussions and the engagement in the class. We are taking their time from, sometimes we put them in groups. They can speak, they can talk each other in Arabic because I want them to learn, not because of the language – mean we, I have some practices where they can sometimes, I can ask any student to to explain to them in that ah language.

M: Mmm But do you think this affects the students' motivation levels?

Z: Yeah

M: Do do perceive EMI as a good thing?

Z: I'm telling you, they drop out because of the language.

M: Have any other students raised this issue with you?

Z: Yes

M: Why are we learning English?

Z: Many times. But they don't want to ah officially, they don't raise this question because of the to because of the to some culture ah in the... But if you,

honestly if you ask them one by one, all of them. I can tell you right now, do a survey, anonymous survey 90% they will tell you they prefer, even the ones they they are good – they are coming from Chouefat or coming from private schools, they will tell you they prefer, yes. But coming from public schools...

M: They prefer? They prefer...

Z: Arabic language as instruction, as the main language.

M: Why do you think?

Z: Because it's the culture. I mean we they they they are using English only during the class.

M: Mmm

Z: 45 minutes. Outside the class there is no English. None. There is no English zones. Go home; Arabic. Read the newspaper; Arabic. Chanting in Arabic. Thinking in Arabic. But in the class they are given 24 hours in Arabic and you take 45 minutes and tell them you have to learn in English. Ah, this is a mad thing.

M: Do you think these factors will have any effect on their post university work options?

Z: I cannot ah I can give some ah I can give some ah briefly but ah as an academician, as a talk with numbers, I cannot make judgement on the without having the facts and figures. This is, it should go to ah career centre and we ask data and ah what they problem they are facing in the the job outside. Ah, but we did some research, 'cos part of my ah, I was doing some research on alumni how, I mean what, I mean, they're missing when they go to get the, what skills they are missing. Umm. Most of them, when you ask them, most of them, they are soft skills. Not hard skills. Let's say, if they are from Physics or Math, they

have basic foundations of science or engineering but the problem they are facing now – um, the first problem facing is communication. They can't write a report when they, I have one student, he is now from Business. Now he is a department head. One of the problems he was facing challenge, is how in during a meeting sometimes with foreigners and they can't talk because they are shy to. Oh, the first skill missing post – graduate is communication. Writing, speaking they can't...

M: In English that is?

Z: Okay. In English, yeah, not in Arabic.

M: Mmm Okay. Let's look now at your teaching. Because you have students with limited proficiency in English, how does it affect your content delivery?

Z: Yep. A different ah process now. First one, you have to lower your level, all your expectations, I was expecting to finish this by this, this 25% by this week. Or, now you you have to revise your content. Instead of teaching 10 chapters you'll end up with 8 chapters. We used to teach 14 chapters. We dropped to 12, then dropped it to 10, now it's it's in fact to 8. They can't cope with this the pace of the delivery, which means for me ah we have to lower the the expectations. It's ah but because you are dropping 20% of the content. Number two, you have to sacrifice some of your time. Instead of teaching 40 minutes, you have to teach now only 20 minutes – 50% because they can't cope with the with the language. I can't just read slides, and you know, when you read the slides, every word you have to stop for 20 seconds.

M: Do you give them the slide beforehand or no?

Z: To ah, one of the solutions, that's why we are opting for mobile learning, which mean, they have access to content any time anywhere. They don't. How

many they read slides before coming? That's the ah one of the ah goal of mobile. Class should be only for discussions and engagements.

M: Mmm

Z: Not for ah reading slides. Reading slides, they should do it. Now, they don't read 'cos 'Teacher, I can't understand' even though they can translate and they can do this problem of of reading. And plus, in the class you cannot discuss because they they can't unless in Arabic. Now in my class, I have some native Arabic native non-Arabic native coming from Fiji, and which mean I have to use the language a high level for this type of student but I have to lower my within. In my class I have like two or three classes.

M: So, you have to speak slower as well?

Z: Sometimes, even Arabic. I have to use Arabic. I can tell 20% of the of the content is translated in Arabic.

M: Why?

Z: Because I I make sure they understand. Now, when I talk about, let's say, I'm teaching, ah I management information system, if you don't translate the word 'management information system' in Arabic, you cannot advance to the next level, which mean I have to do it. Now, maybe some of them, I have one of them, he make this comment. He said; 'Azid' (He's from ah Pakistan, I guess) said ah ah 'Sometimes you explain Arabic and I don't' and I said; 'Yes, don't worry because I do it in English first and then I will do it in Arabic, which mean you don't um' He was afraid of he miss he is missing something. I said; 'No, I'm just re reinforcing.' This reinforcing, it takes time from others. It's not my job to, since my role I have to teach in English, it's not my concern. But as a teacher, educator, I take care. I mean ah it doesn't make any sense. This is the big

(mile?) between us and management. What's my role? To make sure they comprehend or they understand or I don't care and just because of the the policy I have to use English? Non educating. I'm in between.

M: Okay. What about your assessment procedures? What do you do for exams?

Z: You mean ah how test?

M: How do you you assess them? Do do you have to modify your testing?

Z: Um um I, maybe have different ah, because I teach my courses and I take humble (?) of my courses. Ah, my ah paper which totally different from the, what is delivered now. I'm using what we call The 21st Century Framework Support Systems, which mean my testing, my assessment is based on on an on-going process of giving feedback. Which mean, I have normal distribution, it's not it's ah ah formative ah assessment. Formative assessment doesn't mean you have mid-term. I don't have mid-term finals. I have progressive ah testing, ah participation in the class, how how engaged they are, the short – they ask and they answer and I have, of course, to keep them focused on the content, I have two tests. They are at present only 20%. I have writing – reflect, reflection on their learning, a reflective piece of record. I have projects. Project, it gives them the chance to collaborate to to communicate, give them in Arabic, or in the class they are talking about, outside the class they can use any language, which mean, it is not ah. This one will give me chance to to not penalize the one not native. It's not fair. If they can learn then, why should penalize them on ah because of the language. That's what I am avoiding the. Now, even the tests, barely they can go through it. About the use, it maybe only 5%. They have scenario base. They have to read scenario, comprehending of the content and

then they have to write. Now, when I do ah my testing, sometimes I toss in ah two three questions, short answers. 90% they fail that questions.

M: Why?

Z: Because of the language. But other questions, they are fine.

M: Like multiple choice or?

Z: Multiple choice, multiple answers. I don't use Multiple Choice here but that means they have to read the multiple choice, multiple choice you have 50% chance to to get the right or wrong. But sometimes I I give them some short answers. Short answer ah I can give you some samples I have, I mean it's (laughs)

M: Mmm Okay. What about your expectations of the students? And their depth of ...

Z: In what, language or learning?

M:... learning? Does your expectation change? Their depth of learning? Are they learning in depth or no?

[There was some whispering going on here which wasn't picked up by the mike. All I can hear is ' I don't, what, so ask so say something about]

Z: Aah. This is not in question (laughs) It certainly needs research (laughs) Learning deeply, it depends ah I can't answer this question. Ah but ah but in my classes...

M: What do you expect from your students?

Z: Yes.

M: Mmm

Z: In my classes, I moved from ah this content based teaching or one way teaching or ah stage on stage, to more ah collaboration in the class. They

prepare the the content, they have to read outside, give them articles then they discover, give them the theme and then discuss. I have seen seen some nice ah improvement er because learning, it's not only your class content, it's how well they are prepared for higher education...

M: Mmm

Z:...That's why I cannot answer, why I cannot say they're not learning from me because I'm not the only one, the only component – parameter. I mean there are various ah factors. I have one year foundation and it's the whole process, the whole system. I can't answer this question because I don't know what the the the story of ah. But, in my classes, what I can do, my job of my responsibility, I want to make sure, when they exit my class I have mon 90% of successful student in terms of learning, Usually, I have 10% drop out or fail. It's not because of the ah the content of the course, because of the attendance and because of some personal issues. When I ask them, because I follow up with them, ah it's not not the learning process. When I talk about learning, which mean teaching, content, assessment. No, it's mostly attendance and some person and time management. They can't manage their time. They miss classes. They they can't solve their personal issues which mean that as teacher we have to be careful. We don't blame the learning process because of some ah, what you call like academic case and social ah issues. That's why we have to be careful we don't make these judgements without any research. It needs some research. Really. But in my classes, I can talk about myself. I'm really happy. Ah, yes, it took the ah too much time and efforts to develop this system and I can give give you some indicators. All my class are fully packed for the last 3 years. Ah, my next class is already already fu.. packed.

M: Hmm

Z: Which mean, when you put the choice between you and the window, if there's no choice between you and students...

M: Okay

Z:...then you are...

M: Do you do anything specific to assist students with the language component of the course?

Z: Again, ah what we do, we send them to ah, if there's a big issue, we send them to ah ah centres. We have writing and learning centres and independent. We try to help them learn. Ah But me, I never refused any assistance when they – I have part of the course, they have to do some surveys and they have a research components. I spend too much time with them in realizing the questions and yes, and but again, I don't spend time on ah, I mean how to write a complete sentence. But ah in general, in lots of...

M: So, you help them with spelling and vocab?

Z: Every, even more than that. I help them even how to...

M: And you have time for that?

Z: Ah er I I manage to, yes. During the class and when I have like a hall I, yes, I do and even mostly what I do, again the mobile, the beauty of the mobile we we have a closed network, now, social network between us and them. They send. I'm receiving thousands of requests and questions, writing them. I have what we call a research question. They have to come up with the, they have to imagine an fiction question for the research. This is, it took maybe three weeks just to come up with, yes, they think about something. But when you tell them, writing ah small paragraph about the idea of this research question, it's a challenge.

But well we manage to but we have the resources, we have the centres, we have ah some online tools. We try to ah I mean ah...

M: Do you have time to do it?

Z: Um, First it's not my it's not my ah responsibility because as a third second third year student, it's not the issue. It's an excuse. They should be ready.

M: Mmm

Z: But as an educator, I have I have to. I will will manage to by email by ah what free time evenings. Sometimes I go to my ah email and check and they answer them ah. In the class, if I have like ah spare I can spare some minutes, yes and usually they take you after the class. I have to spend like ah in my break I will kill this break because of them.

M: Okay. But do you have sufficient Arabic to draw on it as a tool for students' learning?

Z: For me, it's not the issue because I, my background is Arabic, yeah but for as you know the university, maybe 30% 40% are native non-Arabic, which mean it's bigger, yeah, this is one..

M: Do you think it's useful, as a useful tool to use?

Z: Arabic, um I think if if you talk about learning, Arabic is the primary language. It should be used except in medicine, engineering and science. I don't understand why it should not be used in other subjects. Why should we penalize the students because of the language. Now we talk about learning. Language, it's not, it's a vehicle for learning, not not it's the objective of learning. You can learn and I mean I can give you you ah, the best example ah with Aristotle and Plato. He was against writing – if you write your mind, you write your opinion, you are killing your imagination. Which mean, I didn't mean he

wasn't the best philosopher in the..., which mean the language for me, it's not ah, I mean the goal of learning. So, it's a vehicle. It's a tool.

M: So, Arabic is useful, you think in the...

Z: It is useful for I can give you many examples. If you go to China, there is Chinese Mandarin there. If you go to Finland, there's Finnish. I give you...

M: In in the actual classroom, would you use the Arabic?

Z: No. No, I don't. I use ah some words, yeah to a to mmm I can tell you I use about 10%

M: Would you allow the students to use Arabic?

Z: Yes, I would.

M: So, it's a useful tool?

Z: Of course. I, and and I can tell you when you open the gates for Arabic, all of them, they they will jump.

M: Mmm

Z: Why why should ah I mean, it doesn't make any sense.

M: Why do you think they jump? Is it is it...

Z: Because they feel, they feel they are in their ah own place: "Yes, I am. I can't I I want to express myself ah, Teacher, I am not stupid. I am here but if I don't have the language, I can't but if you give me chance I will." That's what the... that's my perception. When I open a discussion in Arabic oral, I will allow them to use Arabic, they express themselves and the one you think is out of line they he you will be amazed.

M: Okay. Are there any support networks available at the university that you ask your students to access?

Z: In our our problem in ah in the college, we don't have, but we have this writing centres and that's what we do. The only ah support but they cannot support ah 2,000 students. No way.

M: So, you do send your students to where?

Z: To the to the ah independent learning centres and some online tools but it's not ah it's not ah it's not ah, I mean it doesn't solve. It will not solve because you know, ah, I don't know about your research. To solve this equation you have to study all parameters. It's not at this level, c college level (both laugh) for a start. No. This is the whole system. What they learn before. I mean it's no system from KG to it's whole system. It's not part of our discussion but we cannot make any judgments – no way, it's impossible scientifically speaking. If we don't have the history, we can't we cannot just make a judgment now. I can make judgment in my class. Yes. English, it's the tool to use for some subjects but it's not the only tool. Why should, why we shouldn't have blended class? I mean, yes, and for some specific subjects 100% are right of for Arabic language.

M: Would you like to add any final comments at all?

Z: Final comments? Ah I would like to share your finding later on (laugh) But my my s suggestions ah, on my, if I can suggest something, ah yes I was for a long time I really interested in this. I taught in Canada, I taught in the States, I taught, I can talk ah. There is a universal problem about the language. I went to Canada as with student and I went to and in Canada, part of Canada, French, ne never I heard somebody speaking French in person in Canada. They use English Arabic ah English French. Even at college year level...

M: Mmm

Z: And there is a huge problem of the language, the French. In France now, according to the results in Baccalaureate French, I have seen some samples of writing, I don't know it was leaked in the internet. I mean, the drop out and the level of writing! If Moliere is alive, he would cry. It's not only UAE. It's universal problem because we have a new tool of communication – this technology. Now, technology is it killing the language? Yes. I don't see an improvement in the language. For me, yes, there is an improvement in typing speed and this, but the writing is not that.

M: Mmm mmm

Z: Now, how how much we write handwriting (laughs)? – even ourselves, we don't write. But, it's a challenge, it's not, it's a challenge.