Effects of English medium instruction on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

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ABSTRACT

This study critically explores the perceptions of students on the implementation of the English as a medium of instruction (EMI) policy at a public higher education institution in Oman and its effect on the quality of their learning experiences and academic performance. Although the Gulf has recently witnessed an increase in research on EMI, such research is rather scarce in Oman in particular from a critical approach. Through the focus on students’ perspectives, the study gives a voice to otherwise voiceless students whose insights have been largely ignored by language policy planners. For the study, a critical exploratory methodology was adopted where in-depth qualitative data were collected through a two-phase sequential mixed methods approach that consisted of a questionnaire distributed among 328 students studying in seven different faculties, 14 classroom observations and 14 students’ interviews.

The findings suggest that the majority of participants either supported or accepted the EMI policy for pragmatic reasons based on the utilitarian function of English as a lingua franca in Oman and its requirement for future jobs. However, the participants acknowledged that they faced great difficulties in their study which was mainly caused by their insufficient language competence. It was also acknowledged that Arabic as a medium of instruction (AMI) would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and would most probably lead to better academic performance. Few participants found that the
endorsement of EMI negatively influenced their ability to use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and marginalised the role of Arabic in their society.

Overall, the implementation of EMI had a disempowering effect on students with low English language proficiency and had a negative psychological impact on them. Based on the findings, the EMI policy has been contested since it does not provide students with equal opportunities to study at tertiary level. In addition, the quality of education has been compromised in response to assumed market forces. Also, a strict EMI policy does not allow students to enhance their Arabic competence which is relevant for future employment. The pedagogic competence of teachers has also been questioned and gaps in the support system for students with language deficiencies have been identified.

The study makes several recommendations that are expected to improve the learning conditions of students studying at tertiary level through EMI. The recommendations include the enhancement of English language teaching (ELT) in schools to better prepare students for their academic study in English. In addition, AMI courses should be offered in all faculties due to its support in gaining profound comprehension of the subject matter and its relevance for students’ future jobs. Teachers should be given the opportunity to develop their pedagogic competence that would allow them to use a student-centred approach in teaching through EMI or AMI. Finally, the college should increase students’ support in their study especially in EMI through creating support centres where they could resort to in case they face any difficulties in their study.
DEDICATION

With love to my children
Hashem, Hazem, Khaled and Lana.

It is never too late to follow your dreams.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this doctoral journey that I started in Syria, continued in Oman and finalized in Germany would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. For this reason I would like to acknowledge their support that helped me reach my final destination.

Most importantly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Salah Troudi. Without his invaluable support and guidance, his belief in me and his encouragement over the years, I would have never been able to complete my doctoral journey. He helped me stay positive in difficult times and kept me on the right track when I was about to lose my way. I am also in debt to him for inspiring me to look into my own knowledge and to question my own assumptions that allowed me to grow academically.

My gratitude goes also to my institution in Oman that facilitated easy access to the research site and to all participants who volunteered to participate in this study. My special thanks go to all students who were generous with their time and offered valuable insights into their learning experiences with EMI. I would also like to thank my colleagues who provided me with feedback on the questionnaire items and who proofread the Arabic versions of all documents.

Special thanks to my beloved family to whom I dedicate my thesis: I am indebted to my children, Hashem, Hazem, Khaled and Lana for their endless support and encouragement that gave me the strength to complete this long and strenuous journey. My deepest appreciation goes to my parents who taught me to be a fighter and never to lose hope. I owe you all my love and gratitude.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMI</td>
<td>Arabic medium instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BICS</td>
<td>Basic interpersonal communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALP</td>
<td>Cognitive academic language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>College of Applied sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGPA</td>
<td>Cumulative Grade Point Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELC</td>
<td>English Language Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English language teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>English medium instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNC</td>
<td>Federal National Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFP</td>
<td>General Foundation Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCT</td>
<td>Higher College of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher education institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LP</td>
<td>Language policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First language (mother tongue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSA</td>
<td>Modern Standard Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>Native English speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nvivo</td>
<td>Qualitative research analysis software tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>Post – Foundation Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQU</td>
<td>Sultan Qaboos University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>Test of English as a foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW1</td>
<td>Technical writing one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TW2</td>
<td>Technical writing two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 The nature of the problem

The global spread of English has had a great impact on language policies all over the world. The Arab world, especially Gulf countries are no exceptions. In order to participate in the globalised world where English has become the language of business, communication, science and academia, many Arab countries found it necessary to reform their educational systems. One of the steps taken was to adopt EMI at tertiary level. Gulf countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman replaced AMI at public and private colleges and universities and adopted the EMI policy. Students who would like to pursue their higher education especially in scientific subjects have no other choice than to study in English. This can be problematic in particular for students who studied in public schools where the medium of instruction is Arabic and English is taught as a second language (Baporikar & Shah, 2012; Mouhanna, 2016; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). The rationale for this decision seems to be the belief that education through English prepares students best for the multicultural world of employment. Policy makers also perceive English to be the key that facilitates the national policy of Emiratisation, Qatariisation, and Omanisation, i.e. the process of replacing expatriate workforce in the public and private sector with Gulf nationals. Moreover, there is a common held assumption in the Gulf that studying through English will improve the English language proficiency of students (Ismail, 2011;
In addition, Troudi (2009) points out that Arabic is seen by some educationalists in the Arab world and especially in the Gulf as not adequate to be used for scientific subjects mainly because of lack of resources and textbooks in Arabic.

The EMI policy has stirred concerns and debates among researchers, academics, administrators and officials. Some expressed their concern about the impact of the EMI policy on the Arabic language, culture, identity and Islam (Ahmed, 2010, 2011; Findlow, 2006, 2008; Karamani, 2010; Solloway, 2016, 2017; Troudi, 2009; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017). For example, Ahmed (2010: 285) contends that “Marginalization of Arabic and its culture is beginning to be evident” while Findlow (2006: 21) raises the case that “Arabic is relegated as non-useful, and Arabic culture is cast as ‘other’”. It has also been observed that students’ Arabic language proficiency lags behind as a result of EMI (Guttenplan, 2012; Troudi, 2009). A special news report in the UAE (Pennington, 2015) announced that Arabic is in danger of becoming a foreign language. In response to these concerns, and in the effort to revive Arabic as a scientific language, a decision has been taken by the Supreme Education Council in Qatar in January 2012, to adopt AMI in four of the colleges of Qatar University: law, international affairs, mass communication, business and economics (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015). Similarly, members of the Federal National Council (FNC) in the UAE are planning to “call for a law to ensure Arabic is the language of instruction in state schools and universities” (Salem, 2014).
Another concern is the impact of EMI on the quality of education and learning experiences of students. It has been observed that many students graduate from schools with low command of English (Al-Ali, 2008; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a; Al-Mamari, 2012; Sergon, 2011). This requires them to study in General Foundation Programmes (GFPs) at their higher institutions for up to 2 years before they can start their tertiary study (Baporikar & Shah, 2012). GFPs are designed to support students to improve their English language proficiency to the level required for the success in their academic studies. However, many students graduate from GFPs with poor English skills, but are still admitted to study in their degree programmes. For example, Ismail (2011) explains that students with equivalent scores of IELTS 4.5 are allowed to enter a degree programme in the College of Applied sciences (CASS) in Oman. International English Language Testing Service (IELTS, 2015: 12) would describe the student with such a score as “limited user of English”. It is worth mentioning that the foreign western university, which has been contracted to run the GFP, only admits students into their own programme with IELTS 6.0. The English Programme Manager at CASS admits that “IELTS 4.5 is too low a level but that it is necessary to ensure that an acceptable number of students progress onto the degree programmes” (Ismail, 2011: 253). This clearly shows that social and political considerations also play a role in educational decisions. In fact, research has shown that students face many difficulties studying in English such as comprehending their lectures, reading their textbooks, participating in classroom discussions and writing their exams (Al-Bakri, 2013; Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; Troudi & Jendli, 2011).
1.2 The rationale of the study

I was a faculty member at the post-foundation programme (PFP) at a Higher College of Technology (HCT) in Oman. The vision of HCT as declared on its official website at the time of the study is to provide “high quality teaching and learning to prepare and empower the Omani professionals of the future so that they can contribute to national socio-economic development” (College Vision and Mission, 2015). One of its graduate attributes is that graduates “Can gather and process knowledge from a variety of sources, and communicate effectively in written and spoken English” (College Goals and Values, 2015). Qorro (2006: 3) emphasises that “Quality education requires that learners take an active part in knowledge creation through critical thinking, discussion, dialogue, asking questions and solving problems”. She provides the following argument (ibid: 3):

Only when teachers and students understand the language of instruction are they able to discuss, debate, ask and answer questions, ask for clarification and therefore construct and generate knowledge. These are activities that are a pre-requisite to learning and whose level determines the quality of education. Thus, the language of instruction is an important factor in determining the quality of education.

At HCT students can enroll into their degree programmes after they pass the last level in the GFP which is an intermediate level. From my own teaching experience I would classify the English level of some students as elementary at its best. To further support students with their English language and their academic studies, they are offered some courses in the PFP. At the same time
students have to attend courses in their specialisations. Most content teachers are non-native Arabic speakers coming from India, Philippines and Pakistan and classes are held in English. Content teachers, unlike English teachers, might not see it as their responsibility to support students with their English language and might rather be concerned about delivering their course material. Considering these factors, I wonder how students will be able to discuss, debate or ask questions in order to take active part in knowledge creation. Although it seems that the EMI policy has been adopted as a means for modernisation and development, it is crucial to view this policy from a critical perspective. In fact, Ricento (2006) warns that language policy is not ideologically free and is affected by social and political forces, a concern shared by Shohamy (2006: 77) who notes that language education policy “cannot stand alone but is rather connected to political, social and economic dimensions”. Research on EMI in Oman is rather limited and is mainly concerned with its effectiveness. For example, considering the difficulties which students face through the EMI policy, it has been suggested by Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014: 485) that “Higher education institutions should foster and encourage student use of English on campus” and “Arab professors should adhere to the ‘English only’ policy in their classrooms”. Considering the current practices at this college, and building on the findings of a small-scale study that I conducted in another College of Technology in Oman (Al-Bakri, 2013), this research aims at challenging the belief, which seems to have become common sense, that high quality education is best provided to students through English rather than their first language which is Arabic.
1.3 The significance of the study

Most research on EMI, in Oman in particular, has adopted the apolitical approach which serves to maintain the status quo, i.e. the belief that EMI is necessary for the modernisation and development of Oman. Although it has been acknowledged that EMI can be problematic for students due to their low English language proficiency (Al-Mashikhi, Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014; Baporikar & Shah, 2012; Sivaraman, Al-Balushi & Rao, 2014) and does not prepare students well for the job market (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014), it is assumed that increasing the quantity and quality of their English studies could solve these problems. This research is significant in that it explores and puts into question the very concept of EMI through reporting on students’ learning experiences that are mostly affected by the EMI policy but whose insights are not considered in language education policy planning. In particular, this research aims to shed some light on the psychological effects which the EMI policy could have on students which in turn could have an impact on their learning experiences – an area which has been rarely addressed in the literature. It further aims to explore the strategies which students employ in reading and writing in a foreign language which are main skills for academic achievement and which have so far rarely been explored in a tertiary setting. Tollefson (2013: 308) argues that in order to reduce inequality in education, it is necessary to find ways “to ensure that individuals and groups who are affected by policies have direct involvement and power in policymaking”. The context of the study is also significant because many Gulf countries have implemented the EMI policy and
governments invested huge human and financial resources to support teaching in English (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a; McLaren, 2011). The context could also be significant to societies where the language of instruction (English) is different from the language of communication (mother-tongue) outside the learning environment of students such as Turkey. I hope that this research will raise awareness among policy makers, administrators and teachers to the detrimental impact such a policy could have on students’ learning experiences and academic achievement which could hinder students from contributing effectively in the socio-economic development of the country.

1.4 Contribution to knowledge

This research aims to contribute to existing knowledge on EMI in tertiary settings, in particular in the Omani context where research in this field is still in its infancy. It also aims to contribute to the work of other researchers who have taken a critical stance towards the EMI policy such as Findlow (2006, 2008), Ismail (2011), Karamani (2010), McLaren (2011) and Troudi and Jendli (2011) among others. Although literature on EMI is vast, most of it has been dominated by research conducted in East Asia such as China (Hong Kong), Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam. This study is conducted in a context which had never been a British colony and where students share the same first language (Arabic) and the same religion (Islam). Although there has been a recent increase in research on EMI in the Gulf (Al-Kahtany, Faruk & Al Zumor, 2016; Habbash & Troudi, 2015 in Saudi Arabia; Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015 in Qatar;
King, 2014; Mouhanna, 2016; Solloway, 2016, 2017; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017 in the UAE), research regarding EMI in Oman is scarce especially from a critical stance. Providing students studying in different faculties with a voice about their learning experiences with academic subjects and acquisition of English would help in filling a gap in the literature on EMI, in particular in the Omani context. Through exploring how the EMI policy is appropriated at the grass-route level by students, possible gaps between the intended policy aims and their actual outcomes could be identified. This could support policy makers in their future language policy planning.

1.5 Research questions

The aim of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of EMI from students’ perspectives at a public tertiary institution in Oman. The term “content areas” used in the research questions below refers to students’ major field of study such as Engineering, Information Technology, Business Studies, Pharmacy, Applied sciences, Photography and Fashion Design. This research has an exploratory and critical agenda and attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Omani students in content areas perceive EMI?
2. Does the EMI policy have an impact on the quality of their academic experience?
3. Do students in content areas face any difficulties in reading materials related to their specialisation?
4. Do students face any difficulties in writing effectively in English?
5. Does the EMI policy have an impact on students’ academic performance?
1.6 Structure/Organisation of the thesis

This research is organised in six chapters. Chapter two, which follows this introductory chapter, is designed to describe the context of the study which includes information on cultural, socio-economic and political issues related to Oman which have had an impact on education. It also provides a description of the educational context and the population of the study. In chapter three, I will present the theoretical framework that informed my study and I will review the literature on language policies and research studies on EMI. Chapter four examines the methodology of the study which includes the presentation of the research framework, research questions and research design. This chapter also discusses the ethical dimensions, challenges and the limitations of the study. Chapter five aims at presenting and discussing the findings of the study in relation to the research questions. In chapter six, the final chapter, I will present a summary of the main findings and discuss implications and recommendations in addition to providing suggestions for further research. I will also discuss the theoretical and pedagogical contribution to knowledge. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection on my thesis journey.
CHAPTER TWO – CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This chapter focuses on the context in which the study was conducted. It looks into the relationship between Oman and the English language through presenting factors that have supported the spread of English. It also elaborates on the current status of English, especially in regard to education in schools and higher education institutions and it discusses the effectiveness of ELT in Oman. Finally, it presents the contextual background of the tertiary institution in which the study was conducted.

2.1 Oman and its relationship with the English language

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that include the UAE, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain. It is located in the eastern part of the Gulf area, bordering the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Yemen from the west. From the south and east it borders the Arabian Sea whereas form the north-east it borders the Gulf of Oman. The coastline, which stretches around 1700 km, allowed coastal areas such as Muscat and Mutrah to come into commercial contact with foreigners mainly from India, Pakistan, Iran and East Africa. Some of these foreigners settled in the coastal areas which required the Omanis living there to become tolerant towards different languages, religions and lifestyles (Al-Busaidi, 1995). Although the national language of Oman is Arabic, some Omanis are bilingual or even multilingual. Omanis who have their roots in Zanzibar speak Swahili and those who have their ancestors in Baluchistan (Pakistan) speak Balushi. Luwati is
spoken by people who have their origins in Iran whereas Jibbali is spoken in the northern mountains of Dhofar. However, they all share Islam as their religion.

2.1.1 Factors promoting the spread of English

The spread of English in Oman did not happen by chance but can be related to historical, political, social and economic factors. Al-Busaidi (1995) provides an overview of the relationship between Britain and Oman which can be traced back to 1646 when the British were granted trading opportunities with Sohar. Unlike other GCC countries, “Oman had never been a British Colony or a Protectorate or a Mandated territory” (ibid: 90). As early as 1800, Britain has been involved in Omani affairs and in 1924, only Britain was granted the right to search for oil. However, Al-Busaidi (ibid: 91) notes that “there were no English-medium schools in Oman. There was no British-inspired education. There were no educated Omanis”. This can probably explain why Oman depended mostly on expatriates to run their business. Abdel-Jawad and Abu Radwan (2011: 127) in this regard stated:

In fact, up to 1970 and even after that, there was a total dependency on non-Arabic speaking expatriates, who were the dominant workforce, with English being not only the language of wider communication among them but also the main official language for them.

Another factor for the spread of English is related to Omanis returning to Oman after living in Zanzibar, which was under the rule of Oman from 1832-1964, where they received their education in English. Although most of these Omanis had finished only primary education and were mostly traders, shopkeepers and
transporters, they had good command of English. Al-Busaidi (1995: 95) remarks that “The return of Omanis to Oman from East Africa resulted in a major increase in the use of English in the labour market; perhaps no other linguistic group has been more influential in this process than the Swahili speaking Omanis”.

The Indian community in Oman also had a great influence on the spread of English in Oman. The Indians have been residents in Oman since at least the 16th century (Allen, 1987 in Al-Busaidi, 1995). Due to their advanced technical and linguistic (English) knowledge, they were able to act as local agents between Europeans and the Arabs, with English as the operating language between them (Landen, 1967 in Al-Busaidi, 1995). Until present, Indians form the largest expatriate workforce in Oman and are especially involved in education and the English medium media (De Bel-Air, 2015; Poole, 2006).

The great number of expatriates from a variety of countries further reinforced English in Oman. After the discovery of oil in Oman in 1963, there was a great need for foreign expertise (Al-Jadidi, 2009). When Sultan Qaboos took power after overthrowing his father in 1970, the revenues of oil were mainly used for the social, economic and political development of the country which demanded the support of expatriates from different countries. This has contributed to Oman’s rapid growth from 654,000 inhabitants in 1970 to over 4 million in April 2014 according to the National Centre for Statistics where Omanis constitute 55.8% of the population whereas expatriates make up 44.2% (Times of Oman, 2014). The expatriates are mainly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Philippines who
largely dominate the private sector (Al-Issa, 2006a; Al-Mahroqi & Tuzluova, 2014; De Bel-Air, 2015). Therefore, English functions as a lingua franca and is “widely used in business, particularly in banks, chemist shops, medical clinics, showrooms, general trade stores, restaurants, factories, hotels, insurance agencies and companies” (Al-Issa, 2006a: 201). In addition, Al-Busaidi (1995: 107) points out that “It has never been a policy of the government, or indeed of any private organization, to enforce a law of requiring the imported non-Arabic speaking labour force to learn Arabic”. From my own observation I noticed that most expatriates residing many years in Oman do not even learn the basics of Arabic. The lack of interests of expatriates to learn Arabic can be attributed to the fact that all facilities and services in Oman are available in English such as sign boards, menus in restaurants or newspapers. In addition, most nationals have at least some knowledge of English which makes communication possible.

2.2 The status of English in Oman

The status of English has been further promoted by Omani government’s official policies in which “the Omani government recognizes and stresses the important and fundamental role English language is playing worldwide and that it is the language of science and technology and an effective tool for modernization” (Al-Issa, 2006a: 199). English in Oman receives political, economic and legislative support from the government (Al-Issa, 2002). It has institutionalised domains such as business, media and education (Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Issa, 2002). In general, English is seen as vital for the national development and is considered
as a fundamental tool for Omanisation (Al-Issa, 2006b; Al-Hamadi, Budhwar & Shipton, 2007). In fact, Al-Shmeli (2009 in Buckingham, 2015: 183) notes that in reflection of the country’s Omanisation policy, “the administrative and management positions are predominantly filled by Omanis”. Competence in English is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for finding a white-collar job in the private and public sector (Al-Balushi, 2001; Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Mahrooqi, Tuzlukova & Denman, 2016). In addition, Abdel-Jawad and Abu Radwan (2011: 130) explain that “English has been perceived as a symbol of prestige and an assertion of a superior social status”.

2.3 English and education in Oman

2.3.1 ELT in schools

In education, English has also received a great deal of attention. From 1970, English was embraced as the only officially taught foreign language in schools (Al-Issa, 2006a) and it has been taught in higher education since 1986 (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014). In fact, Al-Mahrooqi (2012a: 263) states that ELT “is seen as a key element in the development of the country and its effective integration into the modern world”. From 1970 – 1998 English was taught starting grade four. This system is now referred to as General Education. From 1998 onward English has been taught as a foreign language starting from grade one at an average of 3 – 4 hours per week and is called Basic Education. Several researchers in Oman (Al-Issa, 2006a; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Ismail, 2011) indicated that the decision to increase ELT in schools was taken in response to the
important Ministry of Education document entitled *Philosophy and Guidelines for the Omani English Language School Curriculum* (Nunan, Tyacke & Walton, 1987) which emphasises that English is a source of national development and economic progress of the Sultanate of Oman. For public schools, all textbooks are locally produced at the English Language Curriculum department by British authors and editors (Al-Issa, 2002). In contrast to public schools, private schools use imported materials mainly from Britain or the USA. English is also taught as a school subject with the exception of few bilingual private schools that teach all science-based subjects in English. It is worth mentioning that the majority of Omani students study in public schools where education is provided for free to all students. English teachers consist of Omani nationals and expatriates who come mainly from Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Sudan and India (Al-Jardani, 2012). Most expatriates do not stay in Oman for more than four years so there are constantly new teachers arriving to Oman who are not familiar with Oman’s educational system. Al-Jadidi (2009) states that there is a shortage of qualified Omani English language teachers and that only few native English language teachers teach at schools. In primary schools for example most female teachers are from Oman.

### 2.3.2 ELT in higher education institutions

During the 1990s, English became the medium of instruction in all science-based subjects in public and private higher education institutions. Therefore, students who would like to enroll in a public or private higher education institution need to
have adequate English language proficiency before being accepted to study in their degree programmes. It is worth mentioning that in most Omani tertiary institutions, female students outnumber males (Buckingham, 2015). The entry requirements in regard to English language proficiency might differ from one institution to another. All public higher education institutions are fully funded by the government. Students do not only study for free, but also receive a financial allowance (90-100 Omani Rials equivalent to 170 £ per month) to cover for accommodation and living expenses. Female students are also provided with free transportation.

2.3.3 The effectiveness of ELT

In its effort to improve education, Oman “poured large recourses into language teaching” at schools, colleges and universities (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a: 263). However, these efforts have not yielded the desired outcome because it has been noticed that students graduate from school with weak English (ibid; Al-Issa, 2011). A study by Al-Mahrooqi (2012a: 263) reveals that the major factors for students’ weaknesses in English in schools are “ineffective teachers, inadequate curricula, uninterested students, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, unsupportive parents, a poor school system, and peer-group encouragement”. Al-Issa (2006a: 202) notes that English is taught as a school subject “to memorise and pass and is characterized as text-book based, production-oriented and teacher-centred”. Most importantly, students’ weaknesses in English are mainly related to the exam-based system which
encourages teaching through memorisation (Al-Balushi, 1999; Al-Hammami, 1999; Al-Issa, 2007; Al-Toubi, 1998). This can explain why students who enter higher education institutions have “very limited knowledge of functional language” (Babrakzai, 2001 in Al-Issa, 2006b: 228). Baporikar and Shah (2012: 15) point out that 80% of students in Oman entering higher education institutions are first required to study in GFPs because “school education provided to the student is very weak to fit them for higher education”. Sivaraman et al. (2014: 28) who conducted a small-scale study in an Engineering college in Oman, note that “even after such foundation program training, it is observed that the students do not feel comfortable in classes taught in English, as medium of instruction”. The findings of the study (ibid) show that many students have difficulties understanding the lectures, taking part in class discussions and understanding exam questions. A study by Al-Mashikhi et al. (2014: 111) conducted at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the only public university in Oman, also reveals that over 60% of the students “avoided expressing their opinions in classroom discussions because they are afraid of making mistakes” and that they claimed difficulty in comprehending the content of their classes. In regard to students’ overall academic achievement through EMI, Ismail (2011: 261) concludes that “academic performance is negatively affected for the majority of students” and Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014: 474) note that “Higher education graduates emerge weak in English and thus with communication skills inadequate for the job market”. From my own teaching experience in Oman in foundation and post-foundation courses, I can only confirm these observations and concerns.
2.4 Institutional context of the study

The public college (HCT) where this study took place was established in 1984 and is one of seven colleges of technology operating under the patronage of the Ministry of manpower. It is the second largest higher education institution in Oman catering almost 14,000 students (male and female) and employs almost 1000 staff. Beside the English Language Centre (ELC), the college has seven academic departments: Engineering, Information Technology, Business Studies, Applied sciences, Pharmacy, Photography and Fashion Design. It follows a credit hour system which allows for four levels of graduates: Certificate, Diploma, Higher Diploma and Bachelor. It should be noted that the faculties vary in regard to the levels which they offer. The faculties of Applied sciences, Engineering, Information Technology, and Business Studies offer all four levels (Certificate – Bachelor degree). Fashion Design offers three levels whereas Pharmacy and Photography offer only two levels.

Subject teachers are recruited internationally and are mainly from India, Philippines and Pakistan. Some come from Arab countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia and Syria in addition to few Omani nationals while teachers of native speaker origin are very rare. As a requirement to join the college, teachers need to hold a PhD or Master degree in a specialised field with minimum of four years teaching experience and they are expected to teach up to 20 hours per week. In addition, they have three hours office hours per week where students can meet their teachers. In regard to English, a good command
of English is required according to a document for employment at this college although English proficiency is not formally assessed. Teachers are not provided with any kind of training to deal with students’ linguistic challenges but are regularly observed in their classes by their superiors. In the academic year 2015/2016, when the study was conducted, 13 960 students were enrolled in different faculties where female students (n=7470) slightly outnumbered male students (n=6490), (Ministry of Manpower, 2015). Most students are Omani nationals while few come from Arab countries such as Iraq, Bahrain, Egypt or Syria. Very few students come from non-Arab countries such as China. Therefore, the majority of students share a similar background in terms of first language, culture, religion, and education. Since the medium of instruction is English, it is necessary that students have the linguistic ability to study in English. The ELC is designed to support students in improving their English language proficiency through the provision of non-credited courses in the GFP and to enhance their academic writing and communicative ability through credited courses in the PFP. The key goal of the ELC is “To develop learners’ skills in English, including speaking, reading, writing, listening, and study skills so as to prepare them for higher studies in different areas of specialization” (HCT, Student Handbook, 2015/2016: 4). The materials used in the ELC and other departments are both imported and in-house prepared and all exams are conducted in English.
2.4.1 Admission to HCT

Students’ registration at HCT is dependent on ministerial decisions that might vary from year to year and is therefore not dependent on students’ personal choice. The main criterion for students’ enrollment at HCT is that they have achieved the minimal mark in their high school certificate set by the ministry of higher education. However, a pre-requisite for the admission in the specialised programmes is to meet the English language requirement of the college. Therefore, students have first to take an in-house prepared placement test and are placed in 4 levels accordingly. Students who score above 86% in the placement test are allowed to sit for level 4 exit exam. Students can be exempted from taking the placement test if they provide evidence of a score record of an international accredited exam such as 400 in Test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL) or a band score of 4:0 in IELTS. However, they still have to pass the level 4 exit exam. In addition, students have to meet Information technology (IT) and Mathematics foundation programme requirements. The GFP is offered in 3 terms. Each term lasts for around 14 weeks, but term 3 is an intensive summer term and lasts for around 10 weeks. In level 1, students have 20 contact hours of English whereas in level 2-4 students have 18 contact hours of English. For students to pass from one level to another, they need to score 50% of the total assessment score. In addition, students are allowed to fail a level only once. If they fail twice, then they will be dismissed from the ELC. However, they can appeal for readmission. This is why some students need up to two years to finish the GFP. Finally, when students pass level 4 exit exam and
Mathematics and IT foundation courses they are allowed to enroll in their specialised undergraduate programmes.

2.4.2 Undergraduate programmes

Students study in one of the seven undergraduate programmes for 2-5 years after foundation depending on the level of graduate and the department. This means that it may take up to 7 years for some students to graduate with a bachelor degree. In addition to their content courses, students have to take 4 English language courses in the PFP that are designed to enhance their academic skills needed at this stage such as academic writing, presentation skills, and public speaking/communication skills. All courses are credited and there are four hours per week for each course over a period of 14 weeks average. Teachers in content courses use mainly English to deliver the content and use mainly in-house prepared materials related to each subject that are distributed to students in the form of handouts and power-point presentations. All exams are conducted in English and students’ grades are not negatively affected for making linguistic mistakes. However, students need to score 55% to pass. For students to be promoted from one level to another, they have to fulfill certain conditions. Students who have completed the diploma level and would like to proceed to the higher diploma level need to achieve the required Cumulative Grade Point Average CGPA (2.5) and an IELTS score of 4.5 or its equivalent TOEFL, while students need to achieve the CGPA (2.75) and IELTS score of 5, if they would like to continue to the bachelor degree level (HCT, Student
Handbook, 2015/2016: 8). I need to clarify that in reality students have to do an in-house English level exit exam when they finish one level of graduate. These scores are then converted to equivalent IELTS scores. According to these results students are permitted into the next level of graduate if they would like to continue their study.

### 2.4.3 The role of IELTS at HCT

It seems that the college has adopted IELTS, which is a British standardised language proficiency test to evaluate the English language proficiency of students. IELTS scores are reported in bands from 1 (lowest) – 9 (highest). The table 1 below shows the candidates’ abilities based on band scores 4 and 5 (IELTS, 2015: 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 5</th>
<th>Modest user</th>
<th>Has 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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>Limited user</td>
<td>Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Candidates’ abilities based on Band scores**

The IELTS (2015) guide also provides information for institutions on the English level needed for students to study effectively in specific academic disciplines. The lowest acceptable score for linguistically less demanding courses is 5.5 (ibid: 15). Although the IELTS (2015: 15) guide acknowledges that “many diverse
variables can affect performance on courses, on which language ability is but one”, and that individual institutions should decide on the appropriateness of the level of English for students, I would like to argue that the entry requirement for students to study content courses in English with a band score of 4.0 in IELTS is too low for university studies, thereby supporting Sergon (2011: 23) in his argument that tertiary level education in English in Oman “must necessitate more than, at best, a ‘modest’ ability in English”.

2.5 Conclusion

Within this context I intend to conduct my study. The participants of the study consist of a monolingual group of students who are mainly Omani nationals who studied in public schools in Arabic but who have to study at college in English. Although EMI has been implemented in Oman for nearly 20 years, students’ views regarding EMI have been rarely investigated. Since they are mostly affected by this policy, their experiences should not be ignored when formulating language policies. This study is an attempt to provide students with a voice regarding their learning experiences with EMI.
CHAPTER THREE – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter first considers the theoretical framework that informed the study. This is followed by the discussion of the relevant literature and insights from it are drawn and related to the current study. First, language policies and their mechanisms will be discussed, and the main approaches to research on language policies will be presented. In line with the theoretical framework of the study, reasons for the implementation of the EMI policy at higher institutions will be discussed from a critical perspective. Then critical issues related to the EMI policy will be highlighted and the challenges teachers and students face under this policy will be explored. Finally, different views regarding EMI will be presented before the chapter ends with concluding remarks.

3.1 Theoretical framework

This study is informed by a postmodern critical approach based on critical applied linguistics. Philosophically, critical applied linguistics has been affected by critical theory, neo-marxism, postmodernism, post-structuralism and feminism. The agenda of critical theory in order to foster the establishment of an egalitarian society was developed by scholars such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Benjamin, Fromm and Habermas of the Frankfurt School (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Crotty, 2003; Pennycook, 2001). Critical theory also includes works of Freire, Foucault, Giroux and Bourdieu among others. Although these critical theorists represent plurality of critical theories, they share the conception that unequal economic and political power relationships exist in society which serve the
interests of the dominant hegemony (Talmy, 2010). Therefore, critical theory is
mainly engaged in questions of inequality, injustice, rights and wrong
(Pennycook, 2001). The research approach consists of an action agenda to
promote change of inequality through sustained critique and emancipation of the
individuals. In fact, most research being done in critical domains related to critical
applied linguistics adopted the stance of emancipatory modernism (Pennycook,
2004) which stems from the assumption that “an adequate critique of social and
political inequality can lead to an alternative reality” (ibid: 7). Such an approach is
seen as problematic since it is prescriptive which implies that is does not
acknowledge the limits of its own knowing (Spivak, 1993 in Pennycook, 2001).
Unlike Marxism, which relates human class struggle to mainly economic reasons,
critical applied linguistics goes beyond Marxism because it considers the
elements of the local context. The main concern of critical applied linguistics is to
relate “aspects of applied linguistics to broader social, cultural, and political
domains” (Pennycook, 2001: 5) from a view-point that social relations are
problematic. Its aim is to problematize and question assumptions and practices
that have become naturalised and are taken for granted in the field of applied
linguistics of which critical language policy is part of. The critical questions are
related to “access, power, disparity, desire, difference and resistance” (ibid: 6).
This critical questioning can be linked to postmodernism which should be
understood “as a way of thinking and doing, a skeptical view of the world that
tries to take nothing for granted” (Pennycook, 2006: 62). This critical practice has
been suggested by Dean (1994: 4 in Pennycook, 2001: 8) and is called “the
restive problematization of the given”. It is important to mention that Pennycook (1999, 2001) argues for a self-reflexive stance on critical theory since the notion of critical in applied linguistics indicates an awareness of the limits of knowing.

In line with this approach, I will adopt a postmodern-problematizing stance in my study in which an alternative truth to the issue of EMI is not sought. Instead, it aims to challenge and problematize the seemingly taken for granted assumption that education at higher institutions in developing countries such as Oman is best provided in English, with the hope to offer possibilities that could influence future decisions on language education policies. Ernest (1994: 32) points out the difficulties that can be encountered when questioning or challenging assumptions which are seen as “common sense” by institutional bodies. He warns that “If there is no progress, and there is little of the knowledge that the other two educational research paradigms seek to establish, then the danger is that there may be no worthwhile outcome for the time and energy invested”. Researching the appropriateness and effectiveness of the EMI policy in Oman from a critical stance is not a simple task considering the top-down nature of the EMI policy decisions. I am well aware that an immediate change in the EMI policy might not occur in response to my research. Nevertheless, raising awareness to critical issues related to EMI and providing students with the opportunity that their voices are heard could have a positive impact on change for a better situation. In fact, Troudi (2015: 96) argues that it is “essential to acknowledge that changes to attitudes, practices and policies is often very slow and necessitates vital stages of problematization and raising awareness”.

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3.2 Language policy

Language policy can be defined in many ways as Skutnabb-Kangas (2006) notes. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996: 434) state that “Language policy is a broad, overarching term for decisions on rights and access to languages and on the roles and functions of particular languages and varieties of language in a given polity” whereas Tollefson (2000: 13) clarifies that “Language policy refers to a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actions to influence language acquisition and language use”. A more critical and detailed definition has been provided by Shohamy (2006: 45) who maintains that “language policy (LP) is the primary mechanism for organizing, managing and manipulating language behaviors as it consists of decisions made about languages and their uses in society”. She further explains that through language policy decisions are made about which languages should gain status and priority in society such as global, national, local, regional or others; which languages will be considered as official, standard, correct and national and which languages will be considered as important for economic and social status such as English. It can also help in legitimizing the revival of marginalised languages.

Examples of language policy can be seen in India, Philippines and Singapore where the official language is English, in the European Union which acknowledges twenty-five languages as official languages and in the United Nation, which as a result of a complaint made by eighteen states against the monolingual United Nation, acknowledges six official languages to be used
Language policies can be stated explicitly through official documents or they can be derived implicitly through the examination of a variety of practices (Shohamy, 2006). Schiffman (1996 in Shohamy, 2006) differentiates between overt (explicit) and covert (implicit) policy. He argues that it is not sufficient to study the overt and declared policies but it is necessary to study the covert and de facto policies. Ricento (2006: 10) notes that an overarching theory on language policy and language planning does not exist due to the “complexity of these issues which involve language in society”. However, a useful framework for language policy that distinguishes between policy and practice has been introduced by Spolsky (2004) in which he identifies three components of language policy: belief, practice and management. Beliefs refer to the ideologies about language that affect language policy. Practice is related to the actual language practice, regardless of the policy and management is related to specific acts to manage language behaviour in a specific context. Spolsky (ibid: 222) further argues that “real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than its management”. Shohamy (2006) clarifies that ‘real’ language policy (LP) is manifested through multiple types of mechanisms. She defines these
mechanisms as “overt and covert (i.e., hidden) devices used as means of affecting, creating, and perpetuating language practices, hence de facto LPs” (ibid: 57). Examples of these mechanisms and devices are laws, rules and regulations, standardisation and officiality, language education policies, and language tests. She explains that these mechanisms or policy devices are used by all groups in a society in a top-down or bottom-up approach although those in authority are more powerful in their use of these mechanisms. Often people are not aware that these devices are powerful tools to influence language behaviour and practice. Therefore, people comply with these mechanisms unquestioningly or without resistance, unaware of their sometimes negative influence on language rights and democratic processes.

Examples of overt policies that differ from real or covert policies can be seen in multiple contexts. For example, although Arabic is an official language in Israel, its presence is very limited. It is not used in public places where Jews live and there is no use of it in government agencies or even in Parliament (Shohamy, 2006). Another example is related to Europe. Coleman (2006: 1) notes that “Individual plurilingualism and societal multilingualism are the principles which underpin the language policies of both the European Union and the Council of Europe”. However, covert practices in regard to language in education especially in higher education reveal that English has been promoted at the expense of other languages. Phillipson (2009a) argues that internationalisation in fact means English-medium higher education. Finally, in Oman, there is no overt policy that explicitly states that the language of instruction at tertiary level has to be English.
Nevertheless, the EMI policy is practiced in most public and private higher education institutions and can therefore be seen as a covert policy.

Tsuda (1994) states that there are two language policy paradigms: diffusion-of-English paradigm and ecology-of-language paradigm. They should be regarded as two opposing paradigms. Language policy can be implemented to serve one end or the other. The diffusion-of-English paradigm is mainly characterised by monolinguism, modernisation, ideological globalisation and internationalisation, linguistic, cultural and media imperialism. In contrast, the ecology-of-language paradigm promotes multilingualism, equality in communication, maintenance of languages and cultures, promotion of foreign language education and protection of human rights. Language policies such as EMI in higher education in the Gulf belong to the diffusion-of-English paradigm. So far, the diffusion-of-English policy paradigm has been dominant for the past two centuries (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Language policies that promote the use of English in education all over the world, increasingly in higher education institutions in Europe, can only confirm this observation. I add my voice to Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) who argue that the ecology-of-language policy paradigm should be promoted to encourage linguistic diversity.

3.2.1 Research approaches on language policy

Until the 2000s, language policy approaches could be divided into two main periods (Tollefson, 2013). Research within the first period began in the 1960s and early 1970s and focused on language policies of the nation-state. This
traditional approach, or neo-classical approach as termed by Tollefson (1991), stems from the widely held assumption that language policies are adopted to “enhance communication, to encourage feelings of national unity and group cooperation, and to bring about social and economic equality” (Tollefson, 2002: 5). This approach remains dominant in research on language policies. The emergence of critical applied linguistics as a field of study in the 1990s which focuses on the role of language in power, control, dominance and equality has led to the emergence of a critical approach on research on language policy, which rejects this apolitical, positivist approach. Language policy research within this period has adopted the historical-structural approach as termed by Tollefson (1991). Critical language policy research has been affected by critical theory, which includes work that examines “the processes by which systems of inequality are created and sustained” (Tollefson, 2006: 43). It therefore stems from the premise that language policies perpetuate socioeconomic inequalities and that policy-makers usually adopt policies that serve the interests of dominant social groups (ibid). The critical approach stresses that language policies are ideological although it might not be apparent (Tollefson, 1991). The main tenets of critical language policy research are power, struggle, hegemony, ideology and resistance. Moreover, Tollefson (2002: 4) argues that “a critical perspective aggressively investigates how language policies affect the lives of individuals and groups who often have little influence over the policymaking process”. Recently, the historical-structural approach has been criticized for focusing on top-down policy planning while emphasis should be paid to “local decisions of individual
language users, teachers, parents, administrators, and communities” (Tollefson, 2013: 27). The historical-structural approach is seen as too deterministic that leaves little space for human choice. This has led to the emergence of the public sphere approach that emphasises agency rather than structure. Language policy research has also been affected by Phillipson’s model of linguistic imperialism (1992, 2009b) and research on linguistic human rights (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2006).

### 3.3 Language education policy – EMI

According to Shohamy (2006: 76) language education policy “is considered a form of imposition and manipulation of language policy as it is used by those in authority to turn ideology into practice through formal education”. An example of language education policy is the adoption of EMI in higher education. The impact of the global spread of English has affected language policy and language education policy in many countries all over the world. In Europe, Ferguson (2006) pointed to the escalation in the number of EMI programmes offered at European universities such as Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and Denmark. Wächter and Maiworm (2008 in Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013) note that there was a 340 percent increase in EMI programmes in European higher education between 2002 and 2007. In China, which is a newcomer to EMI in comparison to European countries, the implementation of EMI is seen as essential for improving the quality of undergraduate University programmes; a view that has been questioned by Hu, Li and Lei (2014) and Kirkpatrick (2011). Due to the rapidly
growing global phenomenon of EMI, a research centre on EMI has been established with the collaboration of the British council in 2014 called “EMI Oxford”. A study conducted by the centre on 55 countries concluded that “the general trend is towards a rapid expansion of EMI provision” (Dearden, 2015: 2). The adoption of EMI at tertiary level is also very common in Asian countries as a review by Hamid, Nguyen and Baldauf (2013), Nunan (2003) and Fenton-Smith, Humphreys and Walkinshaw (2017) shows. In regard to the status of English in the Arab world, Habbash and Troudi (2015: 57) assert that “English has gained a higher status than ever before, particularly in the Gulf States where English, it is believed, unquestionably brings many advantages to the millions who learn it”. Therefore, most public and private higher education institutions in the Gulf have opted for EMI. Unlike universities in Europe, where only some programmes are taught in English, students in the Gulf often have no other choice than to study at tertiary level through English especially for scientific specialisations.

3.3.1 Reasons for EMI

Several reasons for the adoption of EMI have been reported in the literature. Tollefson (2002: 5) asserts that the rationales provided by policy makers should be viewed critically:

Too often, policy documents and the rationales offered for them by policymakers and state authorities are taken at face value. A critical perspective toward language policy emphasizes the importance of understanding how public debates about policies often have the effect of precluding alternatives, making state policies seem to be the natural condition of social systems.
The first argument in favour of the adoption EMI especially at tertiary level is related to the global spread of English. Since most resources on the internet and academic resources in different fields are mainly in English, many people see English to serve a global purpose especially in academia and business (Crystal, 1997). For example, Graddol (1997: 45) notes:

> The need to teach some subjects in English, rather than the national language, is well understood: in the sciences, for example, up-to-date text books and research articles are obtainable much more easily in one of the world languages and most rapidly of all in English.

This is a rather simplistic view and has been contested by many scholars such as Phillipson (1992, 2009b), Tollefson and Tsui (2004), Pennycook (1994), Shohamy (2006), and Kumaravadivelu (2006). In Europe globalisation and internationalisation are seen as key factors for the increased use of EMI at higher institutions (Coleman, 2006; Doiz et al., 2013). Research has shown that the main reasons for offering programmes in English at European universities are “to attract international students, to prepare domestic students for the global market, and to raise the profile of the institution” (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011: 347). It is even seen as necessary to attract domestic students (Kurtán, 2004 in Doiz et al., 2011). In addition, universities are able to augment their revenue by charging international students with higher fees than domestic students (Barnard, 2014). The income from international students does not only serve the universities but also the State’s economy (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008 as cited in Doiz et al., 2013). Therefore, economic, financial and political reasons rather
than educational seem to be the driving forces behind the promotion for EMI at universities (Tollefson, 2015).

Another reason for the use of EMI is the assumption that learning content through English will promote students’ mastery of English (Ali, 2013; Becket & Li, 2012; Chapple, 2015; Macaro, 2015; Shohamy, 2013) which is perceived to be “intertwined with the overall economic development of a country, and therefore is a desirable attribute for national governments to promote” (Ali, 2013: 73). This can be seen in most colonial and post-colonial countries in Africa and Asia where local languages are taught at school but English is used at tertiary level which is viewed as more prestigious. This can also be seen in countries that do not have a colonial history such as Oman where English has been recognised by the government as a tool for technological and scientific advancement and modernisation. Such a view inevitably sends a message to the Omani youth that Arabic is not adequate for the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed in the globalised world. I support Troudi (2009: 6) in his position that “the direct implication of EMI policies is that Arabic will be sidelined and will play a minor educational role”. In fact, Shohamy (2013: 203) points out that extensive research is needed “to explore how much language is being gained by such programmes as well as how much academic content is being achieved”. However, research findings in this regard are rather inconclusive. For example, while the participants in Chang’s (2010) study in Taiwan reported that EMI helped them to improve their English language proficiency, especially in listening, a study by Lei and Hu (2014) in China found that EMI had no significant effect on
students’ English level. In fact, Chapple (2015: 3) in Japan argues that there is “an inherent danger in the naïve and simplistic assumption that merely equates classes taught in English as leading automatically to increased overall language proficiency”. He emphasises that studies which found a correlation between English-medium learning and language proficiency such as Wong (2010) have been mostly conducted in elite institutions where students have already linguistic competence. In the aforementioned study, only few students reported a gain in their linguistic abilities. In contrast, 34% failed to complete the course due to language deficiencies. Findings in the Gulf also suggest that language improvement occurs over time as a result of studying in English (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014 in Oman; Belhiah & Elhami, 2014 in the UAE; Pessoa, Miller & Kaufer, 2014 in Qatar). While these studies depended mostly on students’ perceptions regarding language improvement, a study by Rogier (2012) in the UAE investigated students’ language gain through the comparison of IELTS scores at entry and exit level. He found that after four years of EMI, students’ language proficiency has increased in speaking, reading writing and listening. Still teachers found that students’ writing and listening skills lag behind. It is worth mentioning that while teachers in King’s (2014: 145) exploratory study in the UAE also noted an improvement in their students’ language, they believe that “the level is still not good enough at the end”. Overall, findings seem to be inconclusive since many variables other than EMI could affect students’ language proficiency such as context, individual learner differences and teaching style.
Enhancing the quality of education is also one of the goals of introducing EMI, especially in developing countries where good education is often perceived as English education (Hamid at al., 2013a). This view has been contested by scholars such as Brock-Utne (2001, 2006) and Quorro (2006) who argue that a pre-requisite for meaningful and effective learning is the use of the first language as medium of instruction. Similarly, Markee (2002) and Bruthiaux (2002) state that research has not supported the view that education through EMI guarantees success or equivalent level of academic knowledge gain as when education through mother tongue is implemented. In fact, Habbash and Troudi (2015: 59) mention that some studies at university level have found that “education in a foreign language will not necessarily augment students’ potential to acquire the subject knowledge; nor will it result in competent users in that language”. A study by Becket and Li (2012) which explored Chinese students’ experiences and perceptions of EMI showed that the majority of students expressed their concern of the shallow content that was delivered through EMI. Nevertheless, the students supported EMI as they believe that the spread of English in China will benefit the people and the nation. It could be that they were supportive due to pragmatic reasons considering their career prospectus in the future.

3.4 Critical issues related to EMI

3.4.1 Domain loss of L1

Several researchers have voiced their concern that European languages are experiencing loss of domain in “research publication, in higher education,
business and international relations” (Phillipson, 2009a: 337). Macaro (2015) warns that teaching science subjects in English will inevitably lead publishers to stop publishing science material in the home language. Therefore, national languages will lose their status as language of science. Concern about domain loss and the decreased role of L1 has been mainly voiced in Germany, Belgium and the Netherland (Wilkinson, 2013) as well as Sweden (Airey, 2004). Wilkinson (2013: 12) clarifies that “Domain loss is a critical concern, in that it entails an entire academic discipline no longer being available in the L1 at a national level”. However, domain loss seems less of a concern of the individual institution that benefits financially from attracting international students. Similarly, it might not be of concern for students who seek to prepare themselves for an increasingly international job-market (ibid). The fear of domain loss is not restricted to Europe but is also apparent in Asia. For example, Kirkpatrick (2011) expresses his resentment that six out of eight government-funded universities in Hong Kong are officially English medium universities. This undermines the Chinese language which is not “some un-regarded minor language of few speakers and with no tradition of scholarship” (ibid: 9).

In the Arab world, arguments about domain loss are also evident. Habbash and Troudi (2015: 62) state that several studies in the Arab world showed that teaching through English only, could lead to linguistic-cultural dualism where English is viewed “as a symbol of technology and modern life, travel and employment, while Arabic is educationally marginalised and is seen to represent tradition, religion and even worse, backwardness”. For example, Findlow (2006)
conducted a qualitative study at three higher institutions in the UAE to explore 500 students’ perceptions on EMI through the employment of a survey and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that the participants tend to associate English with notions of modernity, internationalism, secularism, business and material success, while Arabic was closely linked to localism, religion, tradition and emotions. In a similar line, Al-Rubaie (2010: 263) in Kuwait explored over 200 trainee teachers’ views on English through the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and found that the “participants associated Arabic with religion, history and local traditions, while English was linked to technology and science”. Finally, Habbash and Troudi (2015) conducted a small-scale qualitative study in Saudi Arabia to critically explore the effect of the spread of English on students’ and teachers’ views regarding the use of English in public education. The research methods employed were document analysis and semi-structured interviews with eight male secondary school students and ten male English language teachers. The findings indicate that the reliance on English in particular as a language of instruction relegates Arabic to a “second-class status” (ibid: 71). These studies in particular are relevant to my own study since students’ views regarding the use of English versus Arabic in higher education are sought.

The concern that English poses a threat to Arabic has been expressed by many intellectuals (Ahmed, 2010; Al-Askari, 2002; Al-Dhubaib, 2006; Al-Jarf, 2008; Hunt, 2012; Ismail, 2011; Pessoa & Rajakumar, 2011; Suleiman, 2004; Troudi, 2009; Troudi & Jendli, 2011; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017). In the UAE in particular this concern also received some attention in the media (Pennington, 2015;
Salama, 2010; Salem, 2014). Similarly, the article by Guttenplan (2012) in Qatar highlights the concern that university students in Qatar are weak in Arabic. Al-Jazeera news also presented several articles where the author (Al-Jundi, 2013) questioned the practice of studying scientific subjects in English instead of the mother tongue Arabic. Not only intellectuals are concerned about the loss of Arabic, but also some students expressed their concern about their inability to use MSA (Pessoa & Rajakumar, 2011; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). While Qatar University in 2012 reacted and switched from EMI to AMI in four colleges (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015) a decision that seemingly aroused a great deal of debate (Lindsey, 2012), Oman does not seem to show great concern about the domain loss of Arabic. To my knowledge, only very view voices regarding the impact of EMI on Arabic has been risen with the exception of Ismail (2011), Al-Bakri (2013) and Abdel-Jawad and Abu Radwan (2011: 147) who question “in face of this hegemony, one may wonder what the future holds for the native language”. The effect of EMI on the national language should not be taken lightly. If English is seen to serve global needs while the use of Arabic becomes restricted to local use then Arabic will be inevitably sidelined. The discussion above shows that the EMI policy further promotes the hegemony of the English language; it does not only increase the spread of English but most importantly it gives English a superior status and prestige in relation to the national language.
3.4.2 Benefits of EMI

Critics of the spread of English have argued that the benefits of English are not distributed equally (Tollefson, 2000). This could be applied to the benefits of EMI. Shohamy (2013: 189) contends that “the teaching of English at HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) actually leads to discrimination against students whose English proficiency is not high and who are prevented from maximising their academic knowledge”. Marsh (2006: 30) states that “the adoption of English as a medium of learning is responsible for school wastage in various continents” and that learning through English has led to “confusion, despair, and high dropout rates”. It is worth mentioning that Marsh (2006) relates the failure of EMI to its inappropriate implementation. In addition, EMI serves as a gatekeeper to higher education in the Gulf at least because students have to meet certain language proficiency requirements in order to be admitted to some colleges (Al-Bakri, 2013; Troudi, 2009; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). The EMI policy could also have an impact on students’ career choice. Students who find it difficult to study in English might choose a major that is offered in Arabic but which might not be compatible with their interests (Troudi & Jendli, 2011). Moreover, Tsui and Tollefson (2004: 2) point out that the EMI policy “determines which social and linguistic groups have access to political and economic opportunities”. Barnard (2014) elaborates on this view and states that teaching in English widens the gap between the middle classes which can afford learning in English and the working classes who have to put up with it. In the Gulf, students who can afford to study at private schools through English are advantaged when joining higher education.
institutions in comparison to students who studied at public schools through Arabic (Troudi & Jendli, 2011). Moreover, learning through English does not necessarily provide equal job opportunities and benefits for their learners. For example, the field of education in the Gulf has witnessed biased recruitment processes (McLaren, 2011). Many tertiary institutions advertise for teaching positions with a notice that native speakers or graduates from western-based universities are preferred. This disadvantages those who graduated from universities in the Gulf or other Asian countries despite having studied their specialisation in English. In Oman, students who graduate with higher English language proficiency are more likely to get a well-paid job than those who are less proficient since the knowledge of English is one of the basic requirements for getting a white-collar job (Al-Balushi, 2001; Al-Busaidi, 1995).

3.5 Challenges related to EMI

3.5.1 The changing role of content teachers

Shohamy (2013) points out it is assumed that students would be motivated to learn in English an academic subject they are interested in, while improving their language skills at the same time. This implies a paradigm shift in language planning in which content-area lecturers have become responsible for the development of students’ language proficiency, suggesting a shift away from the present paradigm in which English lecturers are responsible for this (Ali, 2013). However, content teachers do not emphasise on language learning in class (Aguilar & Rodríguez, 2012 in Spain; Costa & Coleman, 2013 in Italy; Kerklaan,
Moreira, & Boersma, 2008 in Portugal). In fact, Doiz et al. (2013: 217) indicate that “Heed is usually paid to vocabulary, but grammar is hardly ever worked on in class, even by those teachers who have a background in linguistics”. The reason could be that content teachers do not see themselves as language teachers but expect students to have the necessary language requirement to focus on content (Airey, 2012; Ali, 2013; Dearden, 2015; Rogier, 2012; Wilkinson, 2013). A study conducted in 55 Asian countries shows that EMI teachers “firmly believed that teaching English was not their job” (Dearden, 2015: 28). In contrast, they believed that English proficiency would develop as a by-product of the content lessons and they thought that students should be responsible for their language development. King (2014) in the UAE explored 45 content teachers’ views on EMI in the tertiary sector though the use of an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with nine of them. King found that content teachers did not acknowledge their role as English teachers and most of them would direct a student to an English teacher for help. There seems to be a gap between the goals of the EMI policy at the macro-level (nation) and the implementation of these goals at the micro-level (classroom) which should be considered by policy-makers.

### 3.5.2 Content teachers’ linguistic and pedagogic competence

Another crucial issue is the linguistic and pedagogic competence of content teachers to effectively deliver academic content through EMI. It has been reported in the literature that many content teachers, especially in Asia, have
limited language proficiency to teach in English (Hamid, 2011; Hamid, Jahan & Islam, 2013; Zacharias, 2013). Likewise in Europe, teachers seem to struggle with language proficiency (Airey & Linder, 2006; Wilkinson, 2013). For example, Vinke, Snippe and Jochems (1998) in the Netherland reported that teachers found difficulty in expressing themselves effectively in English. Griffiths (2013) in Norway explored teachers' perspectives on EMI and their practices through the employment of interviews with 20 teachers and 5 classroom observations. She reported that many teachers felt challenged teaching in English and that “limited vocabulary caused challenges for all disciplines” (ibid: 100). In addition, Barnard (2015: 9) argues that those who have the linguistic ability might not have the pedagogic ability “to deliver conceptually complex matters in a second language” a concern shared by Griffiths (2013) who found that teachers lack the pedagogic competence necessary for the multi-cultural classroom. Another example is a study by Wilkinson (2005) who notes that Dutch content lecturers needed more time to deliver lessons through EMI due to their weaker linguistic ability which they felt was frustrating. Also it was found that content teachers often adopt the strategy to stay closely to the text book while delivering the content (Airey & Linder, 2006; Hu et al., 2014; Zacharias, 2013) most probably “to minimize spontaneous interaction and improvisation” (Hu et al., 2014: 35). Therefore, EMI classes are seen as boring and lacking sparks and humour (Barnard, 2015; Sert, 2008). Alidou and Brock-Utne (2011) argue that in fact teachers feel more comfortable in classes where they can use their mother-tongue. Another crucial issue is that in most English medium settings teachers hardly receive training on
how to teach through EMI (Dearden, 2015; Williams, 2015; Zacharias, 2013). Vu and Burns (2014) indicate that the only criterion to be a lecturer at an EMI programme in a Vietnamese public university is the ability to use English. In Zacharias’ (2013: 105) qualitative study in Indonesia, 12 teachers reported through semi-structured interviews that “the training that they received was only dealt with daily English and not the English for the specialised purpose related to their subject matter”. In contrast, the need for pedagogic training for EMI was not seen as necessary by teachers in Griffiths (2013) study. Williams (2015) points out that the instructors’ inadequate level of English seems to be a global problem which has so far not received much attention. Ibrahim (2001: 125) went so far as to label instructors’ lack of proficiency as a “threat” to EMI. I would argue that these are serious issues that have to be considered by policy-makers because this will inevitably have a negative impact on the quality of education the students receive and on students’ academic learning experience, an issue that has been rarely discussed in the literature on EMI.

### 3.5.3 Students’ English language proficiency

The inadequate linguistic competence of students studying through EMI has been widely discussed in the literature. A pre-requisite for comprehending academic content is that students have adequate linguistic competence. According to Barnard (2015) an IELTS score of 6.5 – 7.0 is needed for students to join an international university. Hellekjær (2009) argues that the development of basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) is not sufficient for students to
cope with the demands of higher education in English, but they need to develop
cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). There is evidence in the
literature that the majority of students in Asian contexts graduate from school
with low English language proficiency (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Evans & Morrison,
2011a). Students with low English competence will most probably lack the ability
to use English in an academic context where they are required to read, write,
comprehend and interact in the classroom and conduct oral presentations. In
South Africa, van Wyk (2014) has pointed out that at the University of Free State,
65% of students encounter great difficulties to comprehend the academic content
because of their low English proficiency. In addition, research has shown that
interaction in EMI classrooms among teachers and students is very limited
and Kagwesage (2012) used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in
their research, Brock-Utne (2006) employed class room observations to gain
insight into an EMI classroom, a data collection method that has been rarely
employed in research on EMI and which I will consider using in my own research.
In addition, it has been noted that students find it difficult to take notes during
lectures and prefer to copy notes from the board or the teacher (Airey & Linder,
2006; Kagwesage, 2012). In the UAE, it has been reported that many students
are linguistically not ready to continue their higher education in English. For
example, Belhiah and Elhami’s (2015) survey of 100 teachers and 500 students
at six universities in the UAE on the effectiveness of EMI found that many
students struggle in class due to the exclusive use of English. In Oman, several
researchers indicated that more than 80% of students do not have adequate English language proficiency to study at tertiary level (Al-Issa, 2011; Baporikar & Shah, 2012). Students are not comfortable in the EMI classes and this is reflected in their comprehension of the modules, class participation, exam preparation and overall performance (Al-Bakri, 2013; Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014; Sivaraman et al., 2014). It should be noted that the study that I conducted in 2013 was a small-scale study which consisted of semi-structured interviews with 10 students studying in different specialisations and 5 classroom observations, while Sivaraman et al. (2014) employed only a survey that was distributed to 132 students and 85 teachers at an Engineering college. Similarly, Al-Mashikhi et al. (2014) used a closed-ended questionnaire featuring 30 items and 5 open-ended questions that were distributed among 60 undergraduate science students. However, the dependence on self-reports alone is not sufficient to gain deep insights into the challenges which students face. In addition, the above mentioned studies were rather small-scale and were restricted to students studying in one department with the exception of Al-Bakri (2013). Including students from other departments might have yielded different results. This study aims to fill the gaps in this regard. In addition, some studies indicated that students’ comprehension level was also related to teachers’ delivery style, accent and speech rate (Navaz, 2013 in Sri Lanka; Kym & Kym, 2014 in Korea). For example, Miller (2009) reported that the participants preferred Hong Kong teachers because it was easier for them to understand their accent than other English accents. In Oman, this issue has to my knowledge not been explored.
However, Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) mentioned that Omani students are familiar with the accents of Arab teachers and Al-Issa (2005) stated that Omani students are exposed to British and US English accents in their listening material as they are viewed as the correct model for English.

Despite the acknowledgement that students encounter great challenges studying through English, the EMI policy is nevertheless mostly supported in the literature. Macaro (2015: 7), the Director of the Centre for Research and Development in English Medium Instruction, referring to the challenges facing any institution adopting EMI, remarks that:

> Nevertheless my understanding of the current situation is that it is an unstoppable train. Better therefore that we do everything we can to keep it on the rails and allow its passengers to reach their destination safely rather than try to block its progress.

Most research discussing the challenges, also describe how students were able to overcome these challenges or recommend solutions and strategies to overcome these problems. For example, Evans and Morrison in Hong Kong (2011a) investigated language-related challenges that first-year students face when trying to adjust to the demands of EMI through the employment of a survey sent to 3000 students and semi-structure interviews conducted with 28 students. The findings indicate that students were able to deal with these challenges through high motivation, hard work, effective strategies, and peer support. Research also found that in order to cope with the difficulties of EMI, students tend to use surface level learning strategies such as memorising or copying from teachers and peers (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2011; Kagwesage, 2012).
3.5.4 Reading disciplinary content in English

Reading academic texts is considered to be one of the most important skills for L2 tertiary students studying through English (Shen, 2013). Research has shown that quite often students enter higher education without being prepared for the demands of academic reading. Sengupta (2002: 3) defined academic reading as “purposeful and critical reading of a range of lengthy academic reading texts for completing the study of specific major subject areas”. In Norway, Hellekjær (2009) explored 578 university students’ academic reading proficiency through the employment of a reading proficiency test and a questionnaire. The findings indicate that unfamiliar vocabulary and slow reading were seen as the key source for the difficulty of reading. It is worth mentioning that 16-year old Norwegian students performed well in a comparative study on English language proficiency that was conducted in eight European languages (Bonnet, 2004 in Hellekjær, 2009). The author concludes that “This could, in fact, imply that the inadequate level of academic English reading proficiency displayed by the Norwegian respondents in the present study is better than the levels that are found in most other non-English-speaking countries” (ibid: 16). Therefore, it is expected that students in Asia, who often have not even reached efficient BICS, face difficulties in reading academic texts.

In the Asian/South African context, several studies investigated the challenges students face in their academic study through English. An example is a large-scale study by Evans and Green (2007) in Hong Kong where around 5000
students from 26 different departments participated. In regard to reading, understanding technical vocabulary and difficult words (non-technical vocabulary) were identified as the two major challenges which impeded students’ comprehension but which they tried to overcome through consulting peers and teachers or through reading explanations in Chinese. In Taiwan, Shen (2013) conducted a qualitative study with 47 Engineering and 59 English majors to explore students’ academic reading difficulties. The findings indicate that students attributed their reading difficulty to their inadequate vocabulary. Some students mentioned that they also had problems with sentence structure and background knowledge. Shen argues that it is the teachers’ responsibility to support students by choosing texts which are of appropriate difficulty level. I believe that this might not be feasible especially in contexts where the textbooks are chosen by the department and teachers are not flexible to choose their own text. Moreover, most English written specialised texts are written for native speakers of English and not especially designed for L2 learners which could make reading even more challenging. A study by Cheng (2010) on medical and pharmacy students’ cognitive reading readiness for college English texts shows that most students are not ready to learn from texts written in English. Therefore, Cheng (2010: 26) argues that “If the principal mission of a college education in Taiwan is the effective transmission of knowledge, then more research is needed to validate this methodology”. Reading material in English was also a problem for students in a public University in Rwanda (Kagwesage, 2012). However, the problematic aspect varied from student to student. Some students related their
problems to teaching practices. For example, at school, students were supported by their teachers to acquire information while at university students had to read on their own to get knowledge. Unlike other studies on reading where vocabulary was found to be the greatest impediment to reading, students in this study did not mention that vocabulary was a major challenge. It could be that students in this context where rather competent in English since Kagwesage explains that only best performers are admitted to this prestigious public university.

In the Arab world, several researchers indicated that Arab students have great difficulty with reading in English (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012b; Cobb & Horst, 2001 in Oman; Mourtaga, 2006 in Palestine; O'Sullivan, 2010 in the UAE). In fact, in the Arab world and in Oman in particular only very few EMI studies looked into the quality of students’ learning experiences. O'Sullivan (2010) argues that students in the UAE fail to have adequate reading skills, which is of paramount importance to function at higher education through the English-medium. His argument is based on his brief overview on the literature that provides evidence that the students in the UAE face problems in reading in English in general, in addition to the evidence from the institutions own research that indicates that students’ performance in reading is not satisfactory. This is a very broad statement and does not indicate the areas in reading that students face difficulties with. Instead, he discusses possible reasons for this weakness such as lack of reading habits among Arab students in Arabic and outdated methodology at school which is exam based. In Oman, Al-Mahrooqi (2012b) investigated the views of 23 female college students majoring in Education and Arts on their reading problems
regarding literature. This was explored through semi-structured interviews which consisted of two main questions. The findings revealed that vocabulary was perceived as the biggest obstacle in reading literature. She argues that the reading difficulties stem from factors such as “absence of reading culture, low English proficiency, a paucity of vocabulary, lack or ineffective use of reading strategies and poor teaching” (ibid: 26). This claim is based on previous research findings rather than the findings of her actual study. It has also been argued that Arab students are slow readers because they are overly dependent on the text (Al-Barashdi, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012b). Cobb and Horst (2001) note that between 1987 and 1990 at SQU, scientific texts in English and content courses were constantly simplified and shortened for students to be able to comprehend. I would argue that this had a negative impact on the quality of education the students received. Similarly, Bielenberg (2004) in the UAE investigated students’ difficulties which they encountered in Math and Science courses at tertiary level and found that students faced difficulties in vocabulary. Bielenberg explains that students encounter difficulties in understanding mathematics and IT word problems because they lack academic English and are only familiar with school English. Academic English includes items that are of Latin or Greek origin and is syntactically more complex. Moreover, Al-Barashdi (2012) examined reading problems of eight first year students at the Language Centre at SQU in Oman. In this study, unlike the other studies which I have referred to, the researcher employed beside a questionnaire, a think-aloud method to identify students’ reading difficulties. Vocabulary was also perceived as the main obstacle for
comprehension, in addition to background knowledge and organisational structures, whereas syntactic elements were not seen as causing great problems in comprehension. The strategies which the students employed were mainly related to guessing meaning from context and translation. Similar to other studies conducted in Oman, students’ challenges with reading in English were explored in regard to English majors or classes. The reading problems, that students face in EMI classes, have to my knowledge not been explored; an issue that I intend to investigate in the current study.

Overall, reviewing these studies it is evident that vocabulary – technical or general English – is a major challenge for students. This is in line with research on L2 reading where vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading ability (Grabe, 2009). If students do not have adequate English language competence, it is not surprising that they encounter difficulties in reading because they have to decode the text before they can understand the content which is an extra cognitive burden (Troudi, 2009) and time-consuming. One of the rationales for the implementation of EMI is that most scientific resources are in English. Reviewing these studies it seems unlikely that many L2 students at tertiary level are able to make use of these scientific resources mainly because they lack adequate reading skills.

3.5.5 Writing in content courses

Evans and Green (2007: 8) state that “Writing is arguably the most important language skill at university because students’ grades are largely determined by
their performance in written assignments, tests and examinations”. Students studying in higher education institutions through EMI “have been found to face problems mainly in writing, making them unable to cope with the institution’s literacy expectations” (Bacha, 2002: 161). Although research into EFL writing is vast, there seems to be a scarcity into research on undergraduate students’ writing difficulties which they encounter in their content courses. In Hong Kong, academic writing has been found to be the main source of difficulty for undergraduate students (Hyland, 1997; Littlewood & Liu, 1996). A large-scale study by Evans and Green (2007) showed that students’ writing problems were mainly related to language rather than content. In particular, lexical and grammatical aspects of academic writing were perceived as most problematic. As a result, students found it easier to revise content and organisation than to proof-read their written assignments which involves correction of grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Evans and Morrison (2011b) that investigated undergraduate students’ challenges in writing indicated that students found vocabulary and grammar as the most problematic aspect of writing. Although the students were concerned about their lexical and syntactic simplicity in their writing, they reported that teachers were more concerned about the content than grammatical accuracy and stylistic refinement when assessing students’ writing, thereby supporting findings by Zhu (2004). In fact, several researchers have noted that content teachers rarely provide their students with feedback on their writing (Barnard, 2015; Hyland, 2013) although the provision of feedback is seen as a potential tool for learning (Hattie &
In a small-scale study, Hyland (2013) investigated content teachers’ perceptions of feedback through semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of 20 teachers from four faculties at an English medium university in Hong Kong. The findings indicate that although most teachers valued feedback, they often do not provide students with feedback on their writing other than some “ticks, question marks and a grade” (ibid: 247). Hyland (2013) also notes that the faculty teachers did not pay attention to accuracy in students’ writing.

In the Arab world, several studies have found that students face difficulties in academic writing in English (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013 in Saudi Arabia; Khuwaileh & Al Shoumali, 2010; Tahaineh, 2010 in Jordan). For example, Tahaineh (2010) found that students’ errors in writing are mainly related to syntax and grammar, in particular in the use of prepositions. Data were derived from the analysis of free compositions written by 162 students in their first, second and third year of academic study. A study by Javid and Umer (2014) in Saudi Arabia showed that undergraduate students find the use of appropriate lexical items, organisation and grammar as difficult. Data were collected through the use of a questionnaire administered to 108 male and 86 female students in their third and fourth academic year of study. I believe that the findings should be considered with caution since data were collected through self-reports rather than actual text analysis. In Palestine, Hammad (2014) explored undergraduate students’ writing problems through the employment of a mixed methods approach: an open question questionnaire and an essay writing test administered to 60 fourth year
English major students and interviews conducted with 3 English writing teachers. The study found that the writing problems included “grammatical errors, lexical errors, word-for-word translation, cohesion errors, lack of academic style, and lack of content knowledge” (ibid: 13). Students also reported that some teachers only provided them with a score for the essay without providing feedback on their errors. It is worth mentioning that students had to write an essay which is rather personal in nature, since they had to write about their favourite hobbies. The use of a test about an academic topic related to students' major might have led to different results. In Oman, similar to other Arab countries, students encounter many difficulties in writing in English (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014). Al-Badwawi (2011) investigated first year students’ problems in academic writing in a CASS in Oman. A qualitative data collection method was employed and data were collected from 3 main sources: semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers from different departments (English, Communication, Business), seven student focus group interviews and document analysis. The Head of the English Department and the Director of the English Language Programme at the Ministry of Higher Education were also interviewed. The study reveals that the main problems students encounter in writing are related to language skills, research skills, text-managing skills and time management. In regard to language skills, spelling and grammar were seen as the most problematic areas in students’ writing. This prevented students from expressing their ideas clearly. “Other problems include lack of vocabulary, especially technical or academic vocabulary, using informal conversational language,
inability to organise ideas in a logical manner, and using memorised expressions that do not necessarily serve the purpose of their writing” (ibid: 122). Although teachers of all different departments acknowledge the linguistic problems of students, content teachers reported that they focus on content rather than language when assessing students’ writing because they believe that improving language is the responsibility of the English language teachers. This confirms findings in the literature that content teachers do not see that it is their responsibility to support students in their language development. In regard to research-skills, students reported that they faced difficulties in comprehending the references which they had to read. This is not surprising because these references are usually written in a language that is higher than the competence level of the students. As a result of students’ inability to understand references, they listed summarising and paraphrasing as the greatest challenges after grammar and spelling. In addition, students encountered difficulties in using appropriate in-text and end-text referencing. Finally, students mentioned that “they sometimes had to resort to plagiarism because they do not find the time to write and learn from the experience of writing academic assignments” (ibid: 121). In fact, some subject teachers do not mind that students copy material from the internet without rewriting the content in their own words. What they care about is that students study the content and do not ask them to critically evaluate the information. I would argue that such an attitude inevitably sends a message to students that plagiarism is an acceptable practice in academic contexts and that the aim of the assignment is to serve assessment purposes. This could explain
why students do not see writing assignments in their subject courses as learning tools for the development of their language proficiency. Another strategy that students employed to write their assignments was the use of L1. Such an approach is seen to be a compensation strategy adopted by students to reduce the overload in L2 writing (Kim & Yoon, 2014).

The issue of plagiarism in L2 writing at tertiary level has received some attention in the literature (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Hu & Lei, 2015; Li & Casanave, 2012; Pecorari, 2003, 2015). Even in the Gulf, some researchers and teachers have raised their concerns regarding plagiarism in writing (Alhinai & Al-Mahrooqi, 2015 in Oman; Khan, 2010 in the UAE) an issue that attracted the attention of the media (Al-Shaaibi & Al-Alwi, 2015 in Oman; Shabandri, 2015; Swan, 2014 in the UAE). Some researchers argue that students often plagiarise because they are not familiar with the appropriate way to write academic assignments that require the use of resources. Some might lack the linguistic ability to rewrite the collected information in their own words. In addition, Hu and Lei (2015) found that Chinese students had different perceptions about what should be considered plagiarism or not. Therefore, some researchers maintain that it is necessary to distinguish between intentional and unintentional plagiarism, the latter being referred to as patch-writing (Howard, 1993 in Li & Casanave, 2012). I believe that the integrity of writing should not be compromised as a result of low linguistic ability or lack of knowledge how to appropriately reference sources. If students do not learn these issues in their undergraduate studies, they might face serious consequences especially if they intent to continue their higher education.
The literature review shows that most research on students’ challenges in writing seems to be conducted in a traditional approach remaining uncritical of the implementation of EMI. Its aim is mainly to be able to provide possible solutions and strategies for students to overcome these difficulties. In addition, students were not consulted about their views on how to improve their learning experiences concerning the challenges they face while studying through EMI.

3.6 Different views regarding EMI

Research on EMI acknowledges that students encounter great challenges studying in a language other than their native language. Nevertheless, students’ and researchers’ views in a variety of contexts concerning the implementation of EMI are inconclusive although researchers’ views in general show more critical awareness. In regard to students’ views, Kagwesage (2012) noted that students’ limited language competence hindered them to understand their lectures, to take notes, to effectively participate in class discussions and to read texts in English. Still they were positive about EMI and they were determined to work hard in order to cope with EMI. This is in line with findings in Evans and Morrison (2011a) where respondents also were in favour of EMI due to the perceived need of English in the global world. In the Arab world, Charise (2007) reports on research done in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. She states that students developed a positive attitude towards EMI for pragmatic reasons and did not relate the use of English to linguistic imperialism. Al-Jarf (2008) in Saudi Arabia found that 96% of the participants consider English a superior language, being
an international language, and the language of science and technology, research, electronic databases and technical terminology. In Oman, a small-scale study by Al-Bakri (2013) also showed that most students were supportive of EMI despite the challenges they face mainly because it is a basic requirement for employment especially in the private sector. Some students preferred a bilingual approach. For example, Alnajjar, Jamil and Abu Shawish (2015) in Palestine explored 350 university students’ attitudes towards EMI through the use of a questionnaire. The majority of the students expressed their preference for a bilingual approach in teaching where English and Arabic are used to facilitate learning and teaching. In contrast, a recent study by Ellili-Cherif and Alkhateeb (2015: 212) in Qatar found that the 295 university students of various faculties are in favour of AMI because they believed that using Arabic could enhance learning although they agree that Arabic instruction “will affect their job prospects and their chances of completing post-graduate studies”. The preference for Arabic instruction was also expressed by the students in Al-Kahtany et al.’s (2016) study in Saudi Arabia and by most female students in Solloway’s (2017) study in the UAE. In Oman, Al-Mashikhi et al. (2014) investigated 60 undergraduate science students’ attitudes towards EMI at SQU. The findings reveal that more than half of the participants expressed their preference for AMI. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that the “participants did not show negative attitudes towards EMI itself and reported both instrumental and integrative motives for their engagement with the English language” (ibid: 99). Although the findings regarding students’ attitudes towards learning in
English are inconclusive, it seems that the majority of students tend to prefer EMI over AMI especially in the Gulf area. This could be related to students’ perceptions that learning in English will open doors for employment, a belief which they uncritically embraced.

Some researchers are strongly in favour of the implementation of EMI at tertiary level. For example, Nurlu (2015: 14) asserts that Turkey is aiming to become a centre for international education. Therefore, “lingua franca is a must and there is no other way than a well-structured and practiced EMI setting to realize this objective”. In Oman, EMI at tertiary education is considered essential for the development of the country as already discussed (2.3). In contrast, Ismail (2011) urges policy planners in the Gulf region to reconsider the problematic nature of changing from AMI to EMI and to consider bilingual education at tertiary level. Barnard (2014) argues that most students in an Asian context lack the linguistic ability to critically engage with academic content delivered in English only and to produce “original work at the appropriate academic standard” (ibid: 13). He believes that currently only some universities may offer programmes entirely through EMI. He therefore suggests applying a dual-medium model that would better prepare students academically, bilingually and interculturally to meet the challenges of the multicultural world. Similarly, Kirkpatrick (2011: 2) believes that universities in Hong Kong need to adopt a bilingual policy in order to “protect local language(s) and scholarships written in the local language(s)”. Macombe (2015) also believes that it is necessary to replace monolingual language policies with a bilingual one where only selective courses should be taught in English. In
the UAE, Belhiah and Elhami (2014: 21) advocate the implementation of bilingual education where English should be seen as an ally to Arabic, under the condition that English “neither displaces the mother-tongue nor poses a threat to national identity and heritage”. In a similar vein, King (2014) suggests text-heavy subjects to be taught in Arabic and less text-heavy ones to be taught in English while Raddawi and Meslem (2015: 85) argue that implementing bilingual education in the UAE could “help preserve Arabic, and potentially make speakers of Arabic believe in their mother tongue”.

Some researchers advocate the use of the first language for education such as Brock-Utne (2006, 2012) and Quorro (2006). Hu et al. (2014) seem to oppose education through English mainly because EMI functions as gate-keepers to English and the potential benefits from gaining English proficiency. In addition, EMI and even Chinese-English education are seen as perpetuating inequalities in the Chinese society and “further differentiating the Chinese society” (Hu, 2009: 53). Troudi (2009) advocates the use of Arabic to teach sciences at tertiary level and to continue using Arabic at schools due to the detrimental effects EMI has on the status of Arabic as a language of science and academia and on students’ learning experiences. In a recent critical study in Saudi Arabia, Al-Kahtany et al. (2016) assert that the imposition of the EMI policy is a violation of the Saudi language policy, which states that the language of instruction at all levels of education should be Arabic. They explored 702 students’ and 162 teachers’ views regarding the use of English versus Arabic in colleges of Engineering, Medicine and Science. While students preferred AMI, teachers expressed their
preference for EMI, a view which the authors believe to be the result of being blinded by the hegemony of English. Through the support for EMI, teachers do not only sacrifice students’ academic performance but also deprive the students of their human right to study in their mother tongue. The authors call for a more rigorous language planning in the form of upgrading the status of Arabic as a medium of instruction in scientific fields. In addition, they see it as necessary to enhance students’ English linguistic ability through teaching English for special purposes so that students remain familiar with the advances in these fields.

3.7 Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to present the theoretical framework upon which this study is based and to review the literature that informed my study. The review suggests that the driving forces behind the implementation of the EMI policy are mainly ideological, political, financial and social, despite the claim of policy-makers that the reasons for the adoption of such a policy are mainly educational. Reviewing the literature on EMI in a variety of contexts reveals that research that critically investigates the impact of such a policy on students’ learning experiences and academic performance which inevitably also affects their future lives is rather scarce. Considering the challenges that students face through EMI shows that it is necessary to adopt a critical stance towards its promotion. Students who are mostly affected by such vital language education policy decisions are not consulted prior to its implementation. This study seeks to critically explore students’ learning experiences under the EMI policy within their
socio-cultural context in an attempt to raise awareness to critical issues related to EMI. The research framework for such an investigation will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the philosophical and methodological decisions that underpin the research framework of the study and explains and justifies the research design. Then the research questions are reviewed and the research methods are explained and justified. This is followed by a description of the sampling procedure before addressing the data collection procedures and analysis. Finally, the steps taken to ensure the quality of the research are presented before the challenges and limitation of the study are outlined.

4.1 Research framework

The researcher’s philosophical assumptions regarding ontology (the nature of reality and social reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge) have a significant impact on the choice of methodology and the selected methods employed in educational research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 2003). Educational research approaches, also called worldviews (Creswell, 2009) or paradigms (Grix, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) are mainly divided into three different types: scientific (positivist), interpretive and critical. Each paradigm has its own ontological and epistemological assumptions. This study was informed by the interpretive and the critical paradigm.

4.1.1 The interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm stems from the assumption that the social and natural worlds are distinct. Therefore the social world has to be studied from within a
certain social context and cannot be observed objectively from the outside. The ultimate aim is to understand a phenomenon in a particular context. Interpretivism is also referred to as constructivism (Grix, 2010). Richards (2003: 38) explains that “The fundamental tenet of this position is that reality is socially constructed, so the focus of research should be on an understanding of this construction and the multiple perspectives it implies”. Therefore, interpretivism assumes the ontology of social constructivism. It assumes that there is no single reality but multiple realities, which have been constructed through conscious interaction between individuals and the world (Crotty, 2003; Grix, 2010). Realities are mediated by our senses and the context. The epistemological position of interpretivism is subjectivism. Knowledge and truth are not discovered but are constructed. In order to explore the social world, the researcher has to get involved with the participants in a certain context to grasp their viewpoints. Therefore, interpretive research is seen as value-laden and its main aim is to describe and understand “the richness of the world that is socially determined” (Richards, 2003: 39).

4.1.2 The critical paradigm

The critical paradigm, on the other hand, originates from critical theory which was developed by Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Fromme at the Frankfurt school in the 1930s and was heavily influenced by the works of Habermas (1972) and Freire (1972). Critical researchers assume the ontological position of historical realism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This view of reality differs from the positivist view in that it has been shaped by social, historical, cultural, political and economic
forces and is therefore not fixed or stable. The epistemological position of the critical paradigm is subjectivism. However, critical researchers assume that knowledge is not only socially constructed but is also influenced by power relations that exist in society. A liberal view of education assumes that equal opportunities of knowledge are provided to all. From a critical perspective, schools are seen as agents of social reproduction rather than of social change. Freire (1972), one of the most influential critical educators, argues that schools do not exist in isolation from society but embody the collective attitudes that permeate every aspect in that society. Giroux (1983) points out that it is necessary to investigate the actual means by which schooling reproduces social relations and how it could be resisted. He further argues that “schools are not merely instructional sites but are also sites where the culture of the dominant society is learned and where students experience the difference between those status and class distinction that exist in the larger society” (Giroux, 1988: 5/6). Moreover, he maintains that it is essential to realize that knowledge gained from schools is neither neutral nor objective, instead embodies particular interests and assumptions (ibid). Therefore, knowledge must be linked to issues of power which necessitates raising questions about truth claims and the interests which are served by such knowledge. Evidence for such a claim can be seen in contexts where refugees are educated for work in low-paying jobs which offer little opportunities for advancement (Tollefson, 1991). In Oman, graduate students might not be able to compete with foreign graduates with equal specialisations who are linguistically and professionally more advanced than
those who studied in a second language. This might benefit foreign companies to keep the upper hand in the Omani society. The view that knowledge is a pure intellectual act has been contested by Habermas (1972) who argues that knowledge is constituted on the basis of interests that have been shaped by historical and social relations. According to Habermas, research knowledge can serve different interests: technical interest to control and predict (positivism), practical interest to understand a phenomenon through the eyes of the participants (interpretivism) and emancipatory interest to bring about social justice (critical paradigm), which is seen as the highest level of knowledge. Critical researchers reject the objectivist/subjectivist dichotomy and believe that they should rely on objective and subjective knowledge in their search for truth. The main aim of critical research is to emancipate individuals and groups in a society to improve social institutions and conditions. Critical research focuses mainly on marginalised groups and is designed to address issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression and alienation (Creswell, 2009). This could be achieved through critiquing current power structures. The participants and the researcher both share the task of critically analysing power structures and creating knowledge. The researcher does not find solutions for the participants but with the participants (Freire, 1972 in Crotty, 2003). However, this requires first that participants are made aware that there is a problem through awakening their consciousness. This reflection should further lead to action in order to change the status quo.
4.1.3 Paradigmatic position of this study

This research is a combination of the interpretive and the critical paradigm. It seeks to understand students' views in regard to the EMI policy and to critically explore its effects on their learning experiences. The ontological position that underpins this study is that reality is socially constructed and affected by power structures in society. There is no single reality on the effects of EMI on students’ learning experiences but rather multiple realities. Although students share the experience of learning through English in college, they construct and interpret their reality differently. One of the aims of this research is to uncover these multiple realities and meanings which the participants have constructed through their own experiences in a particular context. I support the view that the social world cannot be studied objectively from the outside but can only be understood from the viewpoints of the individuals and their direct experience with it (Cohen et al., 2011). Knowledge is not discovered but constructed through the interaction of the individual within a certain context. This suggests that the epistemological stance that informs this study is that of subjectivism. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm seems to be appropriate for this study. However, I find that interpreting and understanding the participants’ perceptions and attitudes regarding EMI is not sufficient. Language policies cannot be separated from issues such as hegemony, ideology and power relations. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the power structures that played a role in shaping the participants perceptions to the language policy (Fairclough, 1989).
The participants in this study are currently in a weak position in the educational system because they have no voice regarding language policy in education. After studying in school through Arabic, they have to adapt their learning to meet the requirements to study in English. Providing students with a voice to express their perceptions and attitudes and to critically reflect on their experiences with EMI could raise their consciousness to the critical issue of learning in English. This study also attempts to empower students for their voices to be heard in future educational reform. My own position is that I view the current language policy as problematic and that it should be investigated from a critical approach. Nevertheless, the critical approach has not been adopted as a main research framework because decisions regarding language policies are in the hand of the government and usually outside the realm of the students. This thesis cannot advocate an action to change the current educational system. However, raising awareness among students and policy-makers to the critical issues of EMI could be a step forward to improve students’ learning conditions in the future. Therefore, the critical paradigm is embedded in the interpretive paradigm employed in the current study.

4.2 Research questions

In accordance with the research framework, this study aims to address the following five research questions:

1. How do Omani students in content areas perceive EMI?
2. Does the EMI policy have an impact on the quality of their academic experience?

3. Do students in content areas face any difficulties in reading materials related to their specialisation?

4. Do students face any difficulties in writing effectively in English?

5. Does the EMI policy have an impact on students' academic performance?

The research questions were mainly generated from my own experience preparing students to study in an EMI context and from my concern about the consequences of EMI on students' learning experiences, self-esteem, academic performance and quality of education. Question 1 was designed to investigate students' perceptions towards learning in English and Arabic and the rationale for their attitudes. Question 2 explores how students' learning experiences are influenced by EMI; an area that has been rarely addressed in the literature. Question 3 and 4 focus on the challenges students might face in reading and writing in content courses which are of utmost importance in studying in higher education, but which have been neglected in research on EMI. Question 5 touches on the effects of EMI on students' academic performance and is concerned with students' attitudes towards their academic performance. It is anticipated that this thesis will raise participants’ awareness to the critical issue of learning in a foreign language which could lead to some suggestions how to improve the current educational situation.
4.3 Research design and justification

Troudi (2015: 92) clarifies that “methodological decisions are about the overall strategy and design that will guide research in the whole process of the study”. In this study, a critical exploratory methodology was adopted with a two-phase sequential mixed methods approach of data collection and data analysis. The first phase was quantitative and the second was qualitative. The adoption of a critical exploratory methodology reflects the research agenda of the study that seeks to understand the multiple perspectives of individuals in a certain social and educational context regarding their learning experiences under the EMI policy. It also seeks to problematize the effects of the EMI policy on the learning experiences of these individuals. The rationale for using a sequential mixed methods approach is that I support the view that “we can often learn more about our research topic if we can combine the strength of methods focused on quantitative data with the strength of methods focused on qualitative data, while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of each method” (Punch & Oancea, 2014: 339). Quantitative data brings the strength of tracing general trends adopted by a large and representative sample of the population whereas the strength of qualitative data lies in its sensitivity to meaning and context and in-depth study of smaller samples (ibid). In this study, the quantitative phase consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire while the qualitative phase consisted of classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Such a design allows the researcher “to elaborate on or expand on the findings of one method with another method” (Creswell, 2009: 14). Although some might argue that the use of
a quantitative research method such as a closed-ended questionnaire is compatible with the positivist paradigm, this does not apply to this study. As Troudi (2010) notes, using a research method does not reflect an epistemological position or a research agenda. The paradigmatic nature of a study is reflected in what the researcher intends to do with the data. Thus the adoption of a mixed methods design has been chosen to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, which is the purpose of the study.

4.4 Research methods and justification

Several researchers have stressed on the importance of providing a clear account of the research methods as part of displaying the credibility of the evidence (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). Adopting a mixed methods approach in which each method precedes and informs the design of the other would allow for the triangulation of the methods to enhance the credibility and consistency of the data (Grbich, 2010; Richards, 2003). In the sections below a detailed description and justification of the methods employed is provided.

4.4.1 Closed - ended questionnaire

The questionnaire has become one of the most popular research methods adopted in social sciences (Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2003). Questionnaires can be easily constructed and have the advantage of collecting large amount of information about a population through a representative sample. However, they also have serious limitations because they usually provide rather superficial data
and are therefore not suitable for in-depth investigation into a phenomenon (Dörnyei, 2007). Pring (2004: 38) notes that “those being researched bring their own understanding to answering a question”. Nevertheless, the questionnaire is the data collection method mostly used in studies related to EMI (Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014; Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; Chapple, 2015; Kym & Kym, 2014; Sert, 2008). In this study, a self-constructed closed-ended questionnaire was employed. The quantitative data gained from the statistical analysis of the questionnaire served as a starting point to show the general tendencies of the participants regarding EMI. It also provided some background information about the study population and who were willing to participate in the second phase of the study. Most importantly, it supported in the preparation of the classroom observation agenda and the formulation of the interview questions used in the second phase.

4.4.2 Semi-structured classroom observations

Observation is a research method that is rarely used as a central form of data collection method but is often used in combination with other research methods (Ritchie et al., 2014). The main merit of observational data is that it allows researchers to gain direct information about what people do rather than relying on what they say they do (Dörnyei, 2007). Observation can offer insight into interactions and behaviour, processes and communications, whether verbal or non-verbal, that could not be grasped through verbal accounts (Ritchie et al., 2014). Although some might argue that “such data can provide a more objective
account of events and behaviours than second-hand self-report data” (Dörnyei, 2007: 185) and see this as an advantage, others argue that the capture of what is being observed is rather partial and selective and the collected data are the result of the subjective interpretation of what is being observed which is seen as a potential weakness (Ritchie et al., 2014). I support the view that “the very presence of the researcher within the data is also where the richness of observation lies” (ibid: 246). Still, it is necessary to acknowledge some limitations of observations: only observable behaviour can be observed; processes that are mental cannot be observed. In addition, observation does not lead to understanding the reasons behind certain behaviour. However, when observation is used in combination with other research methods, the scope of investigation can be broadened which supports the researcher to better draw conclusions. The adoption of classroom observation as a research method in studies on EMI, however, is rather limited. A study by Brock-Utne (2006) in Tanzania on the use of English to learn content in secondary schools shows that classroom observations can provide a vivid picture of the real life settings of students and can reveal the emotional state of students and teachers. This study aimed to carry out non-participatory observations since I was an outsider, entering each class only once without being involved in the setting. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 144 in Ritchie et al., 2014: 253) point out that “one can never record everything; social sciences are truly inexhaustible in this sense. Some selection has to be made”. Keeping this in mind, semi-structured classroom observations were carried out which was an opportunity to gain insight into the natural learning
contexts of students studying in different faculties in different levels. It gained direct information about students’ behaviour in class such as interaction, note-taking and participation. It also provided insight into the overall atmosphere of an EMI classroom as well as the emotional state of the students. Moreover, the classroom observation data illuminated some issues that have been identified through the questionnaire and supported in generating the interview questions needed in the final data collection stage.

4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The interview is the most prominent research method in qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Punch & Oancea, 2014). Regarding studies on EMI, interviews are sometimes used in combination with questionnaires (Chang, 2010; Evans & Morrison, 2011a; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). Interviews were chosen as the main research method in this study because they allow the researcher to explore the participants’ views and perceptions and how they construct their reality and make meaning of their experiences (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Since there is interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, knowledge is socially constructed rather than transmitted (Kvale, 2007). This is in line with the epistemological stance that informs this study. Moreover, interviews aim to give the participants a voice to make their viewpoints heard which could eventually empower them (Wellington, 2015). For this study, semi-structured interviews with students were found to be most appropriate. The interviews explored more in depth issues that had been identified through the questionnaire and the
classroom observations and led to a holistic understanding of students’ views, behaviours and emotions. It also revealed the reasons behind their views and actions, something which the former data collection methods were not designed to explore. Most importantly, the interviews revealed not only the participants’ common views but also revealed the ones that are not shared by the majority. The interview data were triangulated with the data collected from the other two research methods that allowed best to answer the research questions.

4.5 Sampling

The main sampling approach employed for the three research methods was purposive sampling where the participants were identified according to specific criteria and characteristics (Dörnyei, 2007; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014). The aim was to ensure that the sample is as diverse as possible to be able to identify a full range of perceptions and behaviours that are associated with issues on EMI. One of the criteria for selecting the sample from the target population was that it should include male and female students studying in all the different faculties in the college regardless of how large/limited the number of registered students in each faculty is. The faculties included: Applied sciences, Engineering, Information Technology, Business Studies, Pharmacy, Fashion Design and Photography. I hoped that this would provide a comprehensive picture of the issue under investigation and would allow participants who belong to very small departments such as Fashion Design (24 female students) and Photography (110 students) to express their views and experiences regarding
EMI. Another criterion was that the sample should include students who are in different years of study: Certificate, Diploma, Higher diploma and Bachelor degree.

In order to select the questionnaire sample, I administered the questionnaire in classes that met the above mentioned criteria. The classes were identified with the support of the heads of the different departments after receiving consent from the teachers. In fact, 340 students were present during the questionnaire distribution. However, two students (each in a different class) chose not to participate in the study since I mentioned that participation is voluntarily. During the analysis stage, I had to exclude the questionnaires of 10 participants because they were either incomplete or contained identical responses to almost all items. This left a final questionnaire sample of 328 participants, where the female students (n=209) outnumbered the male students (n=119). Although this is considered to be a large number for a purposive sample, not all the students participated in the later stage of the study. The descriptive analysis of the questionnaire revealed that most of the participants were between 18-25 years old although few were above 25. All the participants but two were Omani nationals and the majority studied in public schools through Arabic. Therefore, it can be noted that the sample was heterogeneous in more than one way. The background information of the questionnaire sample is provided in Appendix 1 whereas the breakdown of the questionnaire sample according to faculties and level of study is provided in Appendix 2.
For the classroom observations, participants were selected based on the same criteria as that employed for the questionnaire (Appendix 3). The arrangement for classroom observations was also done through the coordination with the heads of the departments after receiving consent from the teachers. I managed to observe 14 classes in different faculties but I was not able to observe a class in Fashion Design faculty because classes were only practical during this time. Overall, classes of four different levels were observed: Certificate (3), Diploma (4), Higher diploma (4), Bachelor degree (3). The teachers were mostly non-native speakers of English and Arabic (9) while two were native speakers of English and three were native speakers of Arabic. The sample of the classroom observation consisted of 254 students (79 male and 175 female).

The questionnaire and classroom observation stage helped in selecting the participants for the semi-structured interviews (Appendix 4). Out of the 328 students who completed the questionnaire, 61 provided their consent to be interviewed and wrote their contact details at the end of the questionnaire. Some students during classroom observations expressed their interest in being interviewed and provided me with their contact details. Through purposive sampling, 14 students were selected for the interviews although an element of convenience sampling was also adopted. The aim was to select a group that is as diverse as possible to be able to gather a wide range of information about different views and experiences regarding EMI. Therefore, 6 male and 8 female participants from different faculties and years of study were selected. However, in addition to the criteria employed for the selection of the other two research
methods, the participants’ responses to issues regarding EMI were also taken into consideration whenever possible.

4.6 Data collection procedures

For this research, quantitative and qualitative data were collected over a period of 4 months. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire that was administered to students in November, 2015. Qualitative data were collected through classroom observations conducted in January/February, 2016 and semi-structured interviews which I held in March, 2016. In this section I will provide a detailed account of the data collection procedures in order to increase the trustworthiness of the collected data.

4.6.1 Quantitative data collection

4.6.1.1 Construction of the questionnaire

In order to construct a well-designed 5-point Likert-scale closed-ended questionnaire (Appendix 5), I followed the guidelines provided by Dörnyei (2003, 2007) and Wellington (2015). The questionnaire items were formulated in accordance to the research questions, the relevant literature on EMI and my own knowledge and experience of teaching students in an EMI setting. This helped me to establish content and construct validity of my research tools. The initial version of the questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included 12 items and was designed to obtain background information of the participants while the second part consisted of 50 items that explored students’ attitudes
towards EMI and their learning experiences. Items 1-9, 10-20, 21-31, 32-43, 44-50 corresponded to Research questions 1-5 respectively. For part 1, students were instructed to complete the information about them. For part 2, students were asked to circle a number from 1-5 that reflects the extent they agree with the following variants: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). At the end of the questionnaire, there was a special part for them to write their contact details, were they interested in participating in interviews. The questionnaire concluded with thanking the students for completing it. In order to ensure the comprehensibility of the questionnaire (Wellington, 2015), I requested three of my colleagues to review it. According to the feedback, I provided the students with options for their responses in part 1 that could easily be answered through putting a tick in a box. I also revised the wording of some items. For example, the wording of the item “I believe Arabic should be the language of instruction at this college” was changed into “I believe that all subjects should be taught in Arabic in this college” in order to avoid the use of “language of instruction” which could be ambiguous for some students. Then, I translated the English version of the questionnaire into Arabic to ensure that students would understand all the statements clearly. The Arabic version (Appendix 6) was edited by a colleague who is an Arabic native speaker and has extensive experience in writing in MSA. The questionnaire (Arabic) was then given to the piloting group (n=110) that consisted of 4 different post-foundation English classes of which two of them were my own classes. The students in these classes study in different specialisations and are in different levels in their
studies. Therefore, the piloting sample was similar to the target sample. The data obtained from the piloting group was entered into SPSS v. 22 programme (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to calculate the internal consistency of the items. Chronbach’s alpha for all 50 items showed high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.817$). Nevertheless, I deleted the item “Students who study in English are more successful in life than students who study in Arabic”, because some students found this statement to be confusing; several students asked me to clarify the meaning of “successful in life”. In addition, I deleted the item “Studying in English does not have a negative impact on my grades”, because I realized that the item was repeated in the following question but in a reversed mode (“Because my English is weak, I get low grades”). Instead, I added the item “Because my technical vocabulary is weak I find it difficult to do a writing assignment in my specialisation”. The reason is to differentiate between general and technical English vocabulary, something that was missing in the questionnaire items. The final version of the closed-ended questionnaire consisted of 49 items. Items 1-8, 9-19, 20-30, 31-43, 44-50 corresponded to Research questions 1-5 respectively.

4.6.1.2 Administration of the questionnaire

Dörnyei (2007: 113) points out that “questionnaire administration procedures play a significant role in affecting the quality of the elicited responses”. To ensure that the data be as good as possible I considered the following points: I administered the questionnaire in 20 classes by myself in order to stay in control of the data
collection procedure (Punch & Oancea, 2014). According to the convenience of the teacher, the questionnaire was distributed at the beginning or towards the end of the class. The students were given an information sheet in Arabic (Appendix 7) about the purpose of the questionnaire and what their involvement entails. Two participants who were non-native Arabic speakers were given the English version of the information sheet (Appendix 8). I also informed them orally about its purpose and I conveyed to them the possible significance of the results. I assured confidentiality and anonymity and that completing the questionnaire is voluntarily. However, I mentioned that this study will not be possible without their cooperation. After students provided their consent, they were asked to fill in the questionnaire to ensure a high rate of return results. The administration of the questionnaire took about 20-25 minutes. At the end, I thanked all the participants and the teacher for their cooperation.

4.6.2. Qualitative data collection

4.6.2.1 Semi-structured classroom observation procedures

In order to carry out semi-structured classroom observations, I prepared an observation guide (Appendix 9) that would allow me to take field notes during and after the observation as suggested by Ritchie et al. (2014) and Newby (2010). This included accurate information about the duration of the classroom observation and the number of the participants in addition to some information about the setting, actions, atmosphere and my own personal reflection. I also noted down the origin and gender of the teacher. Prior to conducting the
classroom observations, I made sure that teachers are well informed about its purpose through providing them with an information sheet (Appendix 10) and their consent was sought. Each department sent me a schedule with the relevant information such as the teacher’s name, the time, the venue and the level of study. In most cases I observed the classroom for a whole session which varied between 50-100 minutes. In one department, however, I received permission to observe the classes for one hour only instead of the whole period (100 minutes). Whenever I attended a class, I introduced myself to the students and I explained the purpose of the study. I also gave them an information sheet about the study (Appendix 11). I assured confidentiality and anonymity to all participants and I asked for their consent for being observed. All students welcomed me to attend the class. However, in order to minimize the “obtrusive researcher effect” (Dörnyei, 2007: 190), I usually chose a place that best allowed me to observe the students without being a distraction. I took field notes about the general atmosphere of the class and I focused my observation on students’ behaviour. After leaving the class, I also reflected on my own feelings during the observation. This might have significance during later stages of the analysis and could help me critique and understand my own interpretation of what was being observed (Merriam, 2009 in Ritchie et al., 2014). Two samples of field notes can be found in Appendix 12.
4.6.2.2 Semi-structured interview procedures

Forming the interview schedule was mainly guided by the research questions but was also informed by the preliminary analysis of the data collected in the previous two phases. In order to formulate interview questions that could achieve the coverage of breath of key issues and depth of content I considered the guidelines provided by Wellington (2015) and Ritchie et al. (2014). Although the interview questions were predetermined, the format of the interview was semi-structured. The focus was to cover the topics or themes of the questions and to allow the participant to elaborate on emergent issues as they unfold during the interview. The interview was piloted with one male student to identify ambiguous or confusing questions in order to revise them before their actual use. It was also needed to get an idea about the possible length of the interview. As a result I revised some of the items and others were deleted. For example, I deleted a question about the usefulness of the post-foundation courses. My initial aim was to see whether students found these courses to be supportive but I deleted it because I realized that being a post-foundation teacher could lead the students to provide a biased answer rather than expressing their own opinion. Other questions were deleted because I noticed that they were answered through the conversation and do not need to be asked again. Overall, with fewer items (25 instead of 31) the interview schedule became more focused and manageable. In fact, the schedule was refined several times starting with the feedback that I received from my supervisor, after the pilot interview and from my own reflection on the appropriateness of the research questions. I was also flexible with the
wording and the order of the questions because they depended on the flow of each individual interview. The schedule therefore served as a reference rather than a closed-ended format of questions that have to be strictly followed (Appendix 13). The interviews were all conducted in Arabic for the participants who are all still learners of English to feel comfortable and to be able to express themselves as clearly as possible.

The 14 interview participants were invited for an interview per email or per mobile message. Inviting the participants for the interview was not a straightforward process. In fact, I had to contact over 30 participants before I finally managed to make appointments with 14 of them. All participants were briefly informed about the purpose of the interview, the duration, the venue and that it will be conducted in Arabic. Those who were invited through email were sent an information sheet about the study (Appendix 14). If interested, they were asked to provide their free times during the week in order to fix an appointment. I received permission from my institution to conduct the interviews in a room which is usually used for meeting with students during office hours. Before the interview, I briefed the students about the aim of the research and the interview and they were assured confidentiality and anonymity. I also explained that the interview is not judgemental and that there are no right and wrong answers. I also asked for their permission to audio record the interview. Finally, I asked them to sign two copies of the consent form (Appendix 15), one for themselves and the other for me. In order to audio record the interviews, I used a small digital device which can be barely noticed and therefore did not distract or confuse the participants. During
the interview I tried to listen carefully to the meaning of what has been said in order to ask relevant follow up questions (Kvale, 2007; Ritchie et al., 2014). I also made an effort to stay calm, friendly and neutral as possible and to show interest in what the participants are saying. As in-depth responses were sought, I used probes for clarification and prompts when necessary. Before ending the interview, I asked the participants to add any final thought or comment to ensure that important issues have not been left out. Finally I thanked them for their participation and I briefly informed them about what happens next to the data. After each interview that lasted between 38-60 minutes, I wrote a brief reflection on its mood.

4.7 Data analysis

4.7.1 Quantitative data analysis

In order to prepare the questionnaire data for statistical analysis, I first coded the questionnaires from 1-328 and indicated the faculty and level of study. Then I highlighted the codes that included the participants’ contact details, to ease the selection of interview participants for the later stage of the study. For part 1, the data had to be converted into numerical form. For example, the participant’s gender “male” was converted into the number “1” whereas “female” was converted into the number “2”, which is a usual practice (Dörnyei, 2007: 199). For the age of the participants, a range of ages was converted into a number to facilitate data analysis. Then, all data for both parts of the questionnaires were entered into the SPSS v. 22 programme. The analysis operations included
reliability and descriptive statistics. Chronbach’s alpha value for items 1-49 showed a reliable internal consistency (α=0.773). Although this value is lower than the Chronbach alpha of the piloting stage (α=0.817), it shows an acceptable reliability in social sciences (Cohen et al., 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). Frequency and percentages of agreement and disagreement among participants for each item were also calculated (Appendix 16) while descriptive statistics were computed to ease the reporting of the data.

4.7.2 Qualitative data analysis

Ritchie et al. (2014: 270) argue that “Unlike quantitative analysis, there are no clearly agreed rules or procedures for analysing qualitative data, but many different possible approaches”. In order to analyse the collected qualitative data, I adopted the thematic analysis approach as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) because it “can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (ibid: 81) which is compatible with the theoretical framework of this study. In addition, such a method allows for rich, detailed and complex descriptions of the data (ibid).

4.7.2.1 Data management

First, the handwritten field notes of the 14 classroom observations and my reflections were written on Word documents on my laptop. The word count for the field notes ranged between 206-557 words each. Overall, the data set from the classroom observations mounted to 5436 words. In regard to interviews,
Kvale (2007: 92) notes that recording interviews involves a first abstraction from the “lived bodily presence of the conversing persons, with a loss of body language as posture and gestures” and the transcription of the oral interview into a written form involves a second abstraction. In this study, all 14 interviews were conducted in vernacular Arabic. Transcribing the interviews into written Arabic which differs from oral Arabic and then translating them into English would add a third level of abstraction. In order to avoid this all interviews were transcribed immediately in English whereby every effort was made to represent the oral language with e.g. run on sentences and sentence fragments with the aim to keep the original spirit and meanings of the message (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Richards, 2003). In order to ensure the participants’ anonymity, pseudonyms were used in the transcripts (see Appendix 17 for an example of transcription). Overall, eleven hours and twenty minutes of data were audio recorded from which around 35 000 words of raw data were transcribed. The qualitative data set from the field notes and the interview transcripts amounted to around 40 500 words. All Word documents were uploaded on Nvivo 11, a qualitative research analysis software tool that would speed up the analysis process and would allow for easy access to data.

### 4.7.2.2 Data analysis procedure

In order to analyse the data I followed the six phases of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) that consists of familiarizing oneself with
the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes and reviewing them, defining and naming these themes and finally producing the results.

First, I familiarized myself with the data through careful reading of the written texts. I also took notes of possible codes relevant to the literature and the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2014). The analysis of the classroom observation data was conducted in two stages. The first stage of analysis was a preliminary analysis that I conducted during the process of the classroom observations and which consisted of manual coding of the data available at that stage. The main themes that were identified (Table 2) were incorporated in the interview questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Classroom atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Preparation for class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Classroom activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Peer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delivery of content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teacher voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Teacher feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Classroom observation themes that informed interview questions

The second phase of data analysis was conducted after I finished collecting all qualitative data. I digitally coded the data, which is a way to gather data extracts to a specific category, through creating nodes in Nvivo 11. This is a process
called tagging the data (Newby, 2010). Throughout the coding process, attention was given to specific aspects that are interesting and relevant to the aim of the study. Overall, coding was conducted inductively through assigning text extracts to single and sometimes to multiple codes. For the first text I had to create new nodes most of the time, but I was able to assign some of the following data extracts to existing nodes, besides creating new ones whenever a new category emerged. At this stage the coding was rather at the level of description. The aim was to get sense of the data in order to identify and develop themes at the interpretation stage of the analysis. For the classroom observations 37 nodes were initially identified which were tagged 274 times (Appendix 18). Prior to coding the interview data, I searched for the most frequent words (n=50) that occurred in the data to inform possible codes. I also conducted text searches for specific words such as “translate” to find all the references where that word occurred. This facilitated assigning text extracts to a particular node. For the interviews 48 nodes were initially created which were tagged 576 times. Data were also downloaded from Nvivo 11 into Excel sheets to facilitate further analysis. The initial coding of the interview transcripts is shown in figure 1. After the first round of coding, I reviewed the nodes several times through reading the code summary sheets to ensure that the extracts were significantly assigned. An example is shown in figure 2. This resulted in renaming some of the nodes to better describe the category, assigning some references to a new node for further refinement or merging some nodes with an already existing node.
Figure 1: Initial coding of the interview transcripts

Figure 2: Snippet of code summary sheet
Then I moved to the latent/interpretive level of analysis. Initially I organised the nodes according to their relevance to the research question areas. Then I collated the nodes to potential themes keeping in mind the research questions. During this process some initial nodes formed main themes such as “Reading difficulty” while others formed sub-themes such as “Focus on content”. This stage also involved renaming some themes and sub-themes which were then organised in hierarchies to answer the concepts of the research questions. Full analysis of interview data is provided in Appendix 19. For the final analysis phase, the data from all research methods were synthesized. Throughout the analysis I constantly checked for similarities and differences among the quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, data were also linked to the literature review for discussion. At this stage I realized that I had to increase the literature review in some areas that are relevant to my study but which I had not thoroughly explored before such as the notion of plagiarism among EFL students. A full account of the synthesized analysis is given in Appendix 20.

### 4.8 Quality criteria of the research

Considering that this research used a mixed methods approach, issues over reliability and validity vary between the quantitative and qualitative part of the study. For the quantitative part, I ensured that my research instrument was reliable through the calculation of Cronbach alpha which is a method to measure the internal consistency among all items of the questionnaire. The resulting score
of Cronbach alpha for all items amounted to 0.773 which demonstrates the reliability of the instrument (see Table 3 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.773</td>
<td>.753</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Reliability Statistics**

I also ensured construct and face validity of the questionnaire. Construct validity of this research was enhanced through the use of multiple measures for one construct (Dörnyei, 2007). For example, issues related to reading in an EMI context were measured through 10 items; similarly writing in English was measured through 12 items. Face validity is related to the realm of research participants and refers to the extent the participants are able to recognise the instrument as measuring what it is intended to measure (Gass, 2010). This is necessary for the participants to take their participation in the research project seriously. Face validity was examined through the piloting stage when the questionnaire was revised, translated, piloted and initially analysed before its actual use. Furthermore, validity might be ensured through careful sampling (Cohen et al., 2011). For this study, I tried to choose a sample that was as representative as possible of the target population of the college. However, since my research is exploratory in nature, it does not claim the sample to be representative of all students studying in higher education institutions in Oman.
There is consensus among researchers that qualitative research cannot be judged according to the same quality criteria as quantitative research due to the different ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin both approaches. However, there is disagreement about the components of these criteria (Dörnyei, 2007). In general, “qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extend of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher” (Winter, 2000 in Cohen et al., 2011: 179). In regard to the objectivity of the researcher, I support the view that researchers cannot be completely objective since they are part of the world they are researching. I also support the argument that it is impossible for research to be valid 100 per cent since the subjectivity of the participants and the researchers contribute to a degree of bias. Therefore “validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state” (Cohen et al., 2011: 180). For the qualitative part of this research, I adopted the quality criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, in Cohen et al., 2011). The “trustworthiness” of a research study, a concept suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as an equivalent to the concept of validity, can be established by four major components: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability or consistency (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity).

Credibility is the “truth value” of a study (Dörnyei, 2007: 57) and can be achieved through long-term engagement of the researcher in the field and triangulation of methods. First, I had several years teaching experience in an EMI context in
Oman. Through my engagement in this field and my own observation of the in
genral low English proficiency of students, I became personally interested in
investigating students’ perceptions on the appropriateness of the EMI policy in
this particular context. In order to enhance the credibility of the study, I
triangulated the data collected from three different methods and I presented
perspectives of participants that have been marginalised by powerful discourses
(Grbich, 2010). I also believe that the truth value in this research has been
enhanced through the detailed description of the research design and the step by
step description of the data collection method procedures and data analysis. This
included detailed information about the challenges encountered in conducting
this research.

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the results of a study could
be applied to populations or settings beyond the sample of the study. Although
the issue of generalisability in qualitative research is contested in the literature, I
support Ritchie et al. (2014: 23) in their belief that “qualitative research can be
generalised in terms of the nature and diversity of phenomena, though not in
relation to their prevalence”. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Cohen et al.,
2011) argue that it is not the researcher’ task to generalise but to provide detailed
description of the participants and the setting in which the research took place in
order to help others to determine whether transferability is possible or not. In this
study, I provided a detailed description of the participants and the context.
Although the participants share similar Arab cultural and religious background
with students studying in higher education institutions in Oman and even in the
Gulf area, it cannot be claimed that their learning experiences under the EMI policy is similar, since there are factors that make a particular setting unique.

Dependability and confirmability can be established through documentation of research design, methods and data analysis for other researchers to judge the soundness of the research (Richards, 2003). This has been achieved through the thick description of the context, the participants, the data collection methods, procedures and analysis. I also provided a full transcription of an interview so that the soundness of the research will be open to others. In addition, the employment of a mixed methods design also enhanced the internal validity of the research because “it offers a potentially more comprehensive means of legitimizing findings” (Dörnyei, 2007: 62) by allowing the researchers to assess information from two different data types.

4.9 Ethical dimensions

Ethics should be “at the heart of research from the early design stages right through to reporting and beyond” (Ritchie et al., 2014: 78). I made an effort to follow the eight rules regarding ethics provided in Table 5.2 by Wellington (2015: 115). There is consensus in the literature that research should be worthwhile and should not have any harmful consequences on the participants. Participation should be voluntary and free from any pressure and should be based on informed consent. Participants should be aware that they have the right to refrain from participation and to withdraw at any stage. Moreover, confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained at any stage. Research ethics also involves
legal and institutional requirements. The researcher’s integrity also plays a key role in research ethics. Ethics is not only related to legal issues but concerns “basic human honesty and trust” (Dörnyei, 2007: 66).

Prior to conducting the research it was necessary to apply for permission from University of Exeter to conduct the research. After completing a research ethics form which is based on the guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association, permission was granted by the Graduate School of Education at University of Exeter (Appendix 21). I also received permission from my institution to conduct the study in all faculties of the college. All teacher participants in the quantitative and qualitative stages were chosen by the faculties. However, each participant was given an information sheet about the study and their consent was sought prior to the questionnaire distribution or the classroom observation. Moreover, I respected their preferences for the distribution of the questionnaire. Prior to completing the questionnaire, the student participants were given an information sheet about the study but they were also briefly informed about the aim of the research and clear instructions were given about the procedures. I clearly explained that their participation is voluntarily and that they have the right not to participate. If they choose to participate they also have the right to withdraw at any time. In order to protect their identity the participants were not required to write their personal details. Only those who agreed to be interviewed were asked to give their names and contact details. However, during interview transcription pseudonyms were assigned to them to ensure anonymity. I treated all participants with respect and
thanked them for their participation. Similarly, all interview participants were informed about the aim of the interview and were encouraged to ask any question they have prior to the interview. They were informed that the interview could last for 45 to maximum 60 minutes and their consent was sought for the interview to be recorded. All participants signed two consent forms where one copy was kept with the participant and the other with the researcher and they were ensured that their responses are respected and not judged. During the interview I maintained a professional but friendly behaviour and I attempted to minimise my reactions to their responses. At the end of the interview I made it clear that their participation in this research project is of great importance and that I appreciate their feedback. After each interview, I downloaded the audio file into my computer and deleted it from the recording device. In regard to storage, all hard copies (questionnaire, interview schedules, data analysis, etc.) were kept under locked storage and soft copies and audio files were password protected. All participants were provided with my contact details and were informed that they can receive a copy of the results of the study if they are interested. I also intend to share the findings of my research with my institution once I finish the thesis.

4.10 Challenges and limitations

Collecting data from three sources in a sequential order and from seven different faculties could not be accomplished without some challenges. Data collection was interrupted by periods of mid-semester and final exams in addition to a
period of one month semester break. This resulted in challenges regarding finding interview participants. Although initially over 60 students expressed an interest in being interviewed, I was not able to make arrangements with all the students that I had purposively selected since some of them got busy preparing for the exams. Therefore, the interview participants were sometimes chosen out of convenience rather than purposively which could be seen as a limitation of the study. Another challenge that I faced was related to investigating the challenges that students face in writing assignments. I wanted to explore this issue in depth through real writing samples that students were asked to bring along for the interview. However, out of 14 students only four brought a writing sample. The participants explained that the teachers do not return the assignment once they hand it in and that they usually do not keep a copy of them. Some students who were still in the first or even second year of their study mentioned that so far they were not asked to write any assignment. Even those who brought a sample were not able to articulate what challenges in particular they faced while writing it. Therefore, I was not able to collect in-depth data as I intended through the examination of numerous writing samples but I mostly had to rely on students’ self-report and the analysis of only 4 writing samples which can be seen as a limitation of the study.
CHAPTER FIVE – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is designed to report and discuss the findings collected from the thematic analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data in order to respond to the research questions posed in section 4.2. The findings are organised in five main sections in correspondence to the five research questions. The data collected from the three data collection methods are synthesized depending on the main themes that emerged from the data. In the first section, students’ perspectives on EMI will be investigated. Then the effect of EMI on the quality of students’ academic experiences will be explored. This is followed by the discussion of the difficulties students face in reading and writing in content courses. The final section deals with the impact of the EMI policy on students’ academic performance.

5.1 Students’ perceptions on EMI

5.1.1 EMI enhances English language proficiency - “I kill 2 birds with one stone”

The findings reveal that 74.1% (n=243) of the questionnaire participants (n=328) believed that scientific subjects should be taught in English in contrast to only 17.4% (n=28) who agreed that all subjects should be taught in Arabic. A striking finding is that 78.4% (n=257) of them believed that it is necessary to study in English even if this had a negative impact on their grades. Of the 14 interview
participants, 11 expressed their support for EMI. Regarding this issue, Safaa described her feelings:

It’s a beautiful feeling that we’re learning a new language which we can later use in our jobs so that we do not only have one language. True, Arabic is our mother tongue, but it’s nice if we have another language that helps us when we travel and so.

The evidence of participants’ support for the EMI policy also included a sense of acceptance as the interview excerpt by Amer shows:

At the beginning I couldn’t accept the reality that I have to study in English because for 12 years at school we studied in Arabic and we studied English only as a subject. So after 12 years studying in Arabic the student has to study in English at college. It was hard for me to accept this but when I started the foundation programme – I studied for a year and a semester – I had the basics which I could depend on. With time and practice I tried to adapt myself.

Hussam clarified why students have no other choice than to accept:

I was one of the people who couldn’t accept to study in English, but I wanted to get a certificate. I need it for my future so I became determined to overcome the difficulties of studying in English.

The support or acceptance of EMI could be related to the participants’ assumption that learning in English could help them learn English. In fact, 98.2% (n=322) of the questionnaire participants and all interview participants believed that learning content through English can improve their English proficiency similar to the findings by Chapple (2015) and Belhiah and Elhami (2015). For example, Muzna explained:
It [Studying in English] is a beautiful feeling. When I study my specialisation in English, my English will improve at the same time because I use it in all situations. One can say I kill 2 birds with one stone.

Muzna’s view echoes the participants’ views in Becket and Li’s (2012) study and policy-makers (Shohamy, 2013). An interesting observation is that two participants (Muzna and Safaa) used the adjective “beautiful” to describe their feelings about EMI. Fairclough (1989) argues that language use is not only an individual choice but also socially determined and has social effects. Since the college adopted EMI, the participants unquestioningly believe that this is for their own benefit, unaware that institutional practices often embody assumptions which legitimize existing power relations such as the power of English. In regard to how EMI could enhance students’ English language skills, Aref mentioned that “It has to improve with time because I use English every day and I translate words and learn new vocabulary” while Hussam noted “if we practice every day, after a while English will become easy”. This implies that the participants assumed that language improvement occurs as a by-product of EMI. In fact, one of the reasons for the implementation of EMI at tertiary level by policy makers is based on the assumption that learning content through English could automatically lead to English improvement as indicated in the literature (3.3.1). Chapple (2015) warns from the danger of this naïve and simplistic assumption because of the risk that neither content nor language learning happens. Overall, it seems that the participants mainly supported EMI due to the assumed language gain and were less concerned about how much content they will be able to comprehend in a language they are still trying to learn. This raises the
question as to why English learning was seen as the main goal of learning at college instead of learning the required specialised content. This issue will be discussed in the sub-section below.

5.1.2 The need for English – “we have a lot of foreigners so we need this language”

The participants attached high value to English which was referred to as the “global language, the common language, the world language and the language of the world” similar to Findlow’s (2006) findings. For example, Basil pointed out that “English is the global language. It’s a necessity. It’s in general important in our society. Here in Oman we have a lot of foreigners so we need this language”. It seems that these participants uncritically embraced the uncontested view common in the Gulf that English is a key for development, progress, modernisation, success, superior social and economic status (Abdel-Jawad & Abu Radwan, 2011; Al-Issa, 2002; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a). Although Hussam was the only participant who bluntly mentioned that “English is dominant over the Arabic language”, most other participants alluded that English plays a more important role in their society than Arabic as Huda noted:

My specialisation is pharmacy. Pharmacy makes new drugs and things like that. I have to study in English because the drugs come from other countries so how are we going to tell them that we need a certain drug? They won’t understand in Arabic. Also, pharmacy is full of terminology that is all in English.

Amer pointed out that “when someone doesn’t know English, it is as if this person is ignorant” thereby associating the knowledge of English with being well
educated. In regard to education, Safaa stated that “Perhaps the student could learn in Arabic in school but I don’t feel that it’s possible at college” a view that was shared by Manal. This seems to imply that these participants associated higher education with a superior language which is English. Shohamy (2006) asserts that through language policy decisions are made about which languages should gain status in society such as legitimizing the languages which society sees as important for its economic and social status. Since students have to study through EMI instead of their mother tongue, it is not surprising that students overvalue English and undervalue Arabic.

Students’ support for EMI was also related to the assumed market needs. English was seen as a basic requirement for future employment thereby reflecting a common held view in the Gulf (Al-Balushi, 2001; Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016) In fact, 88.1% (n=289) of the questionnaire participants and all the interview participants shared the view that English is needed for ensuring a good job. An example of such a view is provided by Manal:

Because the institutions that employ people to work for them look at the English language proficiency of the person and the grade one received … If it [the study] was in English and one has a good grade and there is another person who studied in Arabic in the same specialisation and also has a good grade they will choose the one who studied in English.

In contrast, Salim pointed out “When we graduate and want to work with the ministry we don’t need English because all ministries are run in Arabic. This is the official language of all employees. Most of them are Omanis”. In addition, English is seen as necessary for effective communication with the wider
community at work or in their daily lives and while travelling. For example, Safaa noted: “Now we notice that most of the people who work in companies or ministries are foreigners, so when we graduate and get a job we need to have some knowledge in English in order to communicate with them”. Huda shared her view and added that “We need English when we travel”.

The support for EMI was based on the assumption that it is the best approach to prepare them for their professional lives. However, Arabic is also needed especially in the public sector which is predominately occupied by Omanis where the official language is Arabic. Al-Shmeli (2009 in Buckingham, 2015) notes that unlike the UAE, administrative and managerial positions in the private and public sector are mostly restricted to Omanis in support for the country’s Omanisation policy (Al-Hamadi et al., 2007). In fact, 78.7% (n=258) of the questionnaire participants confirmed that they need Arabic beside English in their future jobs. The question that arises is how well can studying through English prepare students for their future jobs which require efficient knowledge of English and Arabic. In addition, English is seen as a lingua franca in Oman, a view that has been established in the literature (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2011; Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2016). Troudi (2009) and some teachers in King’s (2014) study question whether academic English is needed for effective communication in the UAE society, an argument that is worth considering in the Omani context. For communication in daily life situations or travelling it is expected that functional English rather than academic English competence is needed, something that could best be achieved through a well-designed EFL programme (Troudi, 2009).
Overall, the findings suggest that the participants accept Crystal’s (1997) view that the spread of English is neutral, natural and beneficial. Their support for the need of English is pragmatic, accepting that English is needed to join the workforce and to communicate with foreigners. The view that English is a lingua franca indicates that they see the spread of English as neutral and assume that the international status of English is detached from agendas of the powerful (Phillipson, 2009a). It seems that most participants unquestionably embrace the state’s ideology and accept the hegemony of English. Through perpetuating its supreme role in society they unintentionally devalue the role of Arabic as a language of academia and employment in their own society.

5.1.3 Views on AMI – “It’s possible but in our society they don’t accept it”

The questionnaire findings indicate that 36.3% (n=119) disagreed with the statement that English is more important than Arabic in education in contrast to 33.8% (n=111) who agreed, while 27.1% (n=89) were undecided about this issue and nine participants did not respond to this statement. Most interview participants reported that Arabic could be the language of instruction for all courses such as business, medicine, pharmacy, information technology or applied sciences similar to the participants’ views in Troudi and Jendli’s (2011) study. Salem noted that “in other countries such as Syria, they study medicine in Arabic” while Huda assured that “In Jordan, for example, they study pharmacy in Arabic”. Basil referred to the richness of Arabic by saying “The Arabic language has a lot of vocabulary – some of them we don’t even know”. This seems to
contradict earlier findings about EMI. For example, Huda in her quote above asserted that it is necessary to study pharmacy in English because it has a lot of terminology in English. At the same time she acknowledges that other countries teach pharmacy in Arabic. This is an example that her views are affected by the power of English and its high status. Overall, the findings suggest that the participants did not see Arabic as academically inferior to English unlike findings by Al-Jarf (2008) and Habbash and Troudi (2015). Nevertheless, most participants were reserved towards the possibility of AMI at the college. For example, Hussam explained that “it [teaching in Arabic] is possible but in our society they don’t accept it. They don’t want the Arabic language now, they want English”. Basil thought that Arabic instruction would not match the socio-economic situation in Oman:

I don’t know about the college – if it is possible. If we had started from zero point with Arabic, it would be possible; but in this current situation – impossible. All the hospitals are in English – we would face difficulties. The staff in hospitals consists of foreigners. It would be difficult to deal with them.

Basil’s quote above shows that socio-economic factors can have a great influence on people’s view regarding EMI. In fact, 59.1% (n=194) of the questionnaire participants found that Arabic should not be the language of instruction, which is in contrast to some findings in the Gulf where the majority of participants favoured AMI over EMI (Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014 in Oman; Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015 in Qatar). It is assumed that AMI would be an obstacle for future employment and would hinder them from developing their English language competence needed for effective communication with foreigners. Their
views regarding the role of Arabic in education and society were not shaped in a vacuum but were mainly constructed as a result of media rhetoric and educational institutions that promote English as a global language and that the knowledge of this language ensures economic success. Their views were also shaped by the implementation of the EMI policy since language policies are not ideological free but reflect the ideologies behind their implementation (Tollefson, 2013, 2015; Johnson, 2013). Through the imposition of EMI at tertiary education by higher authorities, the power of English and its speakers is perpetuated while the role of Arabic in society is marginalised. This could explain why students undervalued the role of Arabic in providing equal opportunities for students to comprehend the subject matter, unlike studying through English, where comprehension is also related to students’ English language ability. An ethical concern that arises here is the promotion of a language policy in response to assumed market needs at the expense of providing students with equal opportunities to access profound knowledge and to feel comfortable through studying in their own language. Findlow (2006: 34) argues that whether or not the requirement for students to learn English can be seen as a violation or enrichment of human rights depends on how these rights are defined and “what is considered to be a more valid higher educational ideal: providing equality of educational opportunity, subsequent career opportunities, collective cultural heritage or collective capability to take part in a global economy”. I support Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 2006) in her argument that all students should have the right to receive education in their mother-tongue mainly because this would allow
students to receive quality education which should be the aim of higher education. This is inevitability compromised if education is provided in a second language. From an economic perspective, policy makers should consider whether the cost of depriving students from receiving quality education that would allow them to participate in the local market is worth the benefit of providing an elite (those who are proficient in English) with global economic opportunities.

**5.1.4 Negative attitude towards EMI – “studying in Arabic is better”**

A small number of questionnaire participants (17.4%; n= 57) agreed with the statement that Arabic should be the language of instruction at college. An elaboration on such a view was provided by few interview participants (n=3) who questioned the EMI policy such as Aref:

> From my point of view I think that studying in Arabic is better for students. The student doesn’t have to spend a lot of time translating the sentences to understand. When he reads in Arabic he can understand much better. In Arabic is better.

Azhaar explained that studying in English impedes profound comprehension because “before we understand the content we have to learn the language. In English we understand some parts – but others we won’t understand”. Her comment echoes Troudi’s (2009) observation that studying in English is an extra cognitive burden that students have to deal with when studying in a second language in which they are not proficient yet. Moreover, Azhaar and Aref questioned the quality of education gained through EMI. For example, Aref
indicated “Now here we all study in English - and which level are we”? Studying in English was seen as a factor that hinders students from gaining high professional status and even inhibits their country from development. Azhaar’s rather long quote in this regard is worth mentioning:

When someone compares between us and other students in other countries and says that they’re more advanced than Arab students or Omani students in particular, this is because in other countries students study in their own language. So for sure they don’t face any difficulties in their study or life. They don’t have to learn a new language. Not only that, in China or Japan for example, when someone wants to study in their country they have to learn their language first. Here, in our own country we have to learn in a different language – they don’t let us study in our own language. This is why other students have outperformed us – they reach high positions.

Her view echoes the views of few participants in Solloway’s (2017) study who pointed out that countries could only rise if they use their own language such as Japan. A similar view was also expressed by a large number of participants in Al-Mashikhi et al.’s (2014: 110) study in Oman who justified their support for AMI that “no nation can improve its status economically, politically, educationally and culturally unless it strives to maintain or improve the status of its mother tongue across all domains”. Azhaar in her interview excerpt above also alluded that the EMI policy is unfair because Omani students do not have the right to study in their own language unlike students in other countries who are not deprived of this right. Although this was only pointed out by one participant, it is worth presenting. In fact, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 2006) strongly argues that it is one of the human rights to receive an education in the mother-tongue. Language is not only
a means of communication but also a symbol of identity and heritage. Depriving students of their right to study at tertiary level through their mother tongue does not only affect the individual but affects the nations’ linguistic and cultural heritage. Therefore, I support Skutnabb-Kangas (1999: 10) in her argument that educational language rights are most important human rights “for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity on our planet and the development of languages”. In fact, some participants were concerned about the effect the EMI policy has on their ability to use MSA and that its status and role in the society were marginalised. Aref rejected the view that English is seen as more appropriate for education in Arabic. A sense of pride in Arabic which he sees as part of his religious and cultural identity could be noted from his interview excerpt below:

I don’t think that English is better than Arabic. Arabic is the language of the Koran and it existed before the English language which is derived from other languages. Also, people in the past, studied medicine and other specialisations in Arabic and then translated them into English, so the origin is Arabic.

Azhaar felt frustrated that studying in English deteriorated her ability to use MSA, a concern that was shared by 25.3% (n=83) of the questionnaire participants:

I feel that studying in English – and there is not even one subject in Arabic – first, makes us forget the Arabic language. When we were at school, when we were studying in Arabic, if someone asked us to write a report in Arabic, we could do that. We were good at writing in standard Arabic. But after we joined the college, honestly, we cannot write anything in Arabic – a letter – we don’t know the standard Arabic words; we cannot express ourselves correctly, unlike when we were at school. This annoys me a lot because I love the Arabic language.
The concern about the effect of EMI on students’ ability to use MSA has been expressed by other participants in studies by Troudi and Jendli (2011) and Pessoa and Rajakumar (2011). Although in this study these concerns were raised by only a small number of participants they should be taken seriously. Through studying in English, students will not have the opportunity to develop their academic and professional use of MSA. This could have a negative impact on students’ professional lives where the knowledge of sound spoken and written MSA is expected. In addition, students who study through English at tertiary level and are interested in publishing research in Arabic will not be able to do so if they lag behind in their Arabic linguistic competence. In fact, students’ low competence in Arabic was one of the reasons why Qatar University decided to return to Arabic instruction for some courses in 2012 (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). In addition, Azhaar touched on her concern that the Arabs are marginalising their own language by pointing out the following: “We need to strengthen our Arabic language because it’s our mother tongue. If we’re not interested in improving our Arabic language, how can we make the West want to learn this language”? Although the issue of marginalisation of Arabic was only brought up by one participant, it has been a major concern of researchers and academics in the Gulf as discussed in section 3.4.1. Arabic is the official language in Oman and the language of instruction in public and most private schools where students receive their education for twelve years. One of the main objectives of the basic and post-basic education system (grade 1-12) in Oman is to raise learners’ pride in Arabic, to develop their ability to use it diligently and to consolidate Islamic
values (World Data on Education, 2010/2011). However, the same government that is responsible for raising students' pride for their national language Arabic, the symbol of their cultural and religious heritage, found that Arabic was not appropriate for education at higher institutions and therefore opted for English, the “global” language as a language of instruction in all public and private higher education institutions. Since Arabic is not used in education at tertiary level and is used in a restricted way in business, media, and economic affairs, its role in society is being marginalised. This could be confusing and even disturbing to students who are raised to be proud of their Arabic language and identity. Foucault (1991 in Pennycook, 2001: 80) in his vision of power argues that “where there is power there is resistance”. However, in this context no resistance to EMI is evident since none of the participants stated that they have done anything to resist it. Although the decision to implement the EMI policy was not imposed by outside forces on the ministry of higher education in Oman, it is imposed on students who believe they have no other choice than to accept the policy.

5.2 Quality of students’ academic experience

5.2.1. Readiness for EMI – “I expected difficulties but not to that degree”

The majority of interview participants reported that studying English at school did not prepare them well for their study in English at college supporting the literature in this regard (Al-Issa, 2011; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012a; Baporikar & Shah, 2012). Therefore, 93.9% (n=308) of the participants had to study in the GFP before they were able to join their specialisations. In fact, it has been noted by Baporikar and
Shah (2012) that 80% of students in Oman have to study in GFPs in Oman. Table 4 below shows the students’ beginning English levels when they first joined the college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>62.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no foundation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Beginning English levels of students in foundation programme**

As the table indicates, 62.2% of the questionnaire participants had to start with level 2 which means the majority of students had to study for three semesters general English before being able to study in their specialised courses. In fact, all interview participants had to study in the GFP; three of them started level 1, nine started level 2 and two started level 3. Nevertheless, 39.9% (n= 131) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “I feel that my English level is not good enough to study in English” in contrast to 37.2% (n=122) who disagreed with this statement. The interview participants elaborated on this issue. Azhaar was the only participant who mentioned she was not ready to study in English because “learning [English] in the foundation is not enough”. All other participants stated that they felt ready for studying in English although they expected to face some difficulties. Several participants reported that the
difficulties they faced at the beginning were above their expectations. For example, Huda stated: “I didn’t expect that it would be that difficult. I even asked myself how I can continue pharmacy”. I believe that students studying in their own language would not be asking such a question. The interview excerpt by Basil provides an explanation for the difficulties students faced when they joined their specialised courses:

When I started my specialisation, there were things that we didn’t cover. There were new things. They didn’t teach us terminology related to pharmacy or medical terms so we faced this problem; a lot of new terminology, a lot of new vocabulary, a lot of information about pharmacy – all in English. This is the problem that we faced. I expected difficulties but not to that degree. I expected around 20% difficulties but it turned out to be around 70%.

During my 14 classroom observations I felt that most students are not ready to study in English. Students never used a full sentence when asking a question but rather fragments such as “What meaning of …” or “What we do” and did not respond to questions in full sentences. In classes where the teacher was an Arab, few students were not able to form a question in English and asked in Arabic and occasionally responded in Arabic to a question the teacher posed. In general, I noticed that students made language mistakes even with basic English grammar as is evident in the comment “Teacher, it is not work” and “Teacher, not connecting” that some students made to indicate that they are unable to log into the system the teacher has asked them to.

Since all these students passed the required exams (Level 4 and exist exam) which allowed them to study in their specialised courses, it is natural that they
assumed to be ready for EMI. What the participants are unaware of is that unless they passed the exit exam with a band score of minimum 5.5 they are still considered “limited users” of English as already discussed (2.4.3) who have problems in understanding and expressing themselves. In addition, in the foundation courses they study general English. However, it has been argued that the development of BICS is not sufficient for students to cope with the demands of higher education in English (3.5.3). The reason is that in their content courses they come across academic English which they are not familiar with. While students would also come across new terms and concepts if they were studying in Arabic, their comprehension would be easier given their linguistic background and possible ways of figuring out the meaning of unknown words because their schemata in Arabic is far superior to that in English. Bielenberg (2004) clarifies that academic English, unlike general English, depends on interpretation on the text rather than on context, include items that are Latin or Greek originally and are more complex syntactically. This means that beside learning content and English students also have to learn academic English which is full of technical vocabulary each depending on a specialised field. Especially students who are weak in English might not be able to cope with these challenges. In fact, Hussam reported that he was one of the students who was about to drop out of college due to the linguistic challenge of studying in English. While he was determined to defy these challenges, he mentioned that many of his friends at college actually dropped out of college. His interview excerpt highlights this issue:

I know many of them – more than 10 people. I know them very well. They are very good friends and we go out together but they
dropped out. Not because the subjects were difficult – because the study in English was too difficult. They wanted to have a certificate but they just couldn’t cope with the English language.

It is worth mentioning that Azhaar studied business administration for one year but had to change her specialisation because she could not cope with the linguistic challenges of studying business in English which depends on “memorisation in English” in contrast to fashion design which is based on “drawing”. She also believed that this disadvantaged her because “there are more job opportunities for business”.

The findings suggest that the majority of students are not linguistically ready to study through EMI after studying in the GFP which supports Sivaraman et al.’s (2014) findings that “even after such foundation program training, it is observed that the students are not comfortable in classes taught in English”. This raises concerns whether the exit exam which is based on an in house version of IELTS is in fact effective in evaluating students’ readiness to study in their degree programmes. Macaro (2015) notes, that entry to post-graduate education in most Anglophone countries is mainly based on international qualifications such as IELTS. He questions whether IELTS is sufficiently academically oriented in order to predict success on a post-graduate study. A similar concern can be raised in regard to the use of IELTS as an entry requirement for undergraduate studies. Therefore, it seems that the current system does not provide all students with equal opportunities to study at tertiary level which might have detrimental effects on their future carriers and the national development of the country.
5.2.2 Improvement of language – “Speaking - now I can speak”

Most questionnaire participants reported an improvement in their language skills as a result of studying in English at college. In regard to listening, 88.4% (n=290) of them noticed an improvement while 89% (n=292) found that their reading skills have improved. Writing skills have also improved as reported by 73.2% (n=221) of the participants. The interview participants provided more in-depth information regarding their language skills improvement. For example, Safaa explained: “For sure it [English level] has improved in comparison to school. At school we only studied English as a subject. Here at college all subjects are in English so it’s normal that my language has improved”. Huda, like Safaa also compared her language improvement to her English level at school by saying:

Yes, it has improved a lot. Speaking - now I can speak. Reading - if I compare to before at school it was very difficult but with practice and speaking - all the time we speak English - there is no Arabic. Writing also - in comparison to before it has improved a lot.

While all interview participants reported that their English level has increased after studying in the foundation and to some extent in the post-foundation courses their views regarding their language improvement in their content courses varied. There was a widespread belief among most interview participants that their speaking skills have improved most as a result of EMI similar to findings by Rogier (2012) and Belhiah and Elhami (2014) in the UAE. Lamia’s perception regarding her speaking skills has been echoed by almost all participants:
Mostly speaking. In school we didn’t speak but here we have to talk to the teachers. As you know not all teachers are Arabs. Some of them are foreigners I mean they speak in English so I have to talk in English.

Although few interview participants noted a slight improvement in reading and/or listening skills, most of them mentioned that their writing skills did not improve as a result of EMI. Manal explained “There is no writing” a view shared by Lamia who indicated: “About writing, not really. In the foundation I was better I think. Now we don’t write a lot”. Moreover, four participants reported that their language has only improved in the foundation but has become worse after they joined the specialised courses. This issue is highlighted by Mariam’s interview excerpt:

I started with level 2. I benefitted a lot, much more than from school but when we joined our specialisation, our [English] language has deteriorated. Public speaking was useful but it’s only a subject. Also, the subjects that teach writing like TW1 and TW2 were useful. Studying in my specialisation depends on memorisation. There is no focus on the English language.

Salim explained that language improvement in the specialised courses is mostly related to “learning new words”. He continued saying “we don’t focus on the English grammar; the focus is on the content of the subject”.

Research findings that investigated language improvement through EMI are so far inconclusive (3.3.1). The findings in this study indicate that learning in English can increase students’ English level at least in some skills. Overall, the findings suggest that students’ speaking skills have more improved than their writing skills, a view shared by the teachers in King’s (2014) study who believed that their students felt more comfortable in speaking than in writing. However, an
interesting finding is that language improvement according to the participants happened mostly as a result of studying in the foundation or post-foundation courses rather than through EMI courses. Foundation and post-foundation courses are taught by English teachers and are designed for the purpose of English learning. In contrast, content courses are taught by teachers who are mainly concerned about the content which was confirmed during classroom observations. The interview findings also suggest that at least some students did not achieve what they expected in regard to language improvement through EMI thereby supporting findings in Chapple’s (2015) study where 24% of the participants did not indicate an improvement in English language proficiency. According to Chapple (2015) language improvement through EMI has been reported in cases where students have already linguistic competence. In this context, most students started their study with limited linguistic competence. Taking Chapple’s (2015) argument into consideration, this could explain why only limited language improvement has been noted through EMI. In fact, a study by Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014) that was conducted in 14 tertiary institutions in Oman found that students graduate from higher education with weak English skills that are not adequate for the job market. This raises the question whether the EMI policy is appropriate to achieve the purpose of raising students’ English level.

5.2.3 Comprehending lectures – “most of it I don’t understand”

The questionnaire results show that 50.6% (n= 166) of the students agreed with the statement that “Sometimes I do not understand what the teacher says in
class”. The interview findings indicate that students face difficulties in comprehending their lectures at all levels in their study although this issue was more serious at the beginning of their study which supports findings in the literature in this regard (van Wyk, 2014 and Kagwasage, 2012 in South Africa; Evans & Morrison, 2011a in China, Chang, 2010 in Taiwan; Al-Bakri, 2013; Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014; Sivaraman et al., 2014 in Oman). Several interview participants reported that they are able to comprehend only the main parts of a topic but not the details as Hussam asserted: “No, I don’t understand everything. When the lecturer speaks I understand some parts, the easy ones, but not all and it happens that most of it I don’t understand”. Nadia noted “Not only sometimes - more than that. It depends on the teacher. I feel that it’s even better not to attend. I can study on my own”. Students’ language proficiency is considered to play a major role in students’ success in EMI classes (Kym & Kym, 2014). However, most of the interview participants found that beside their own linguistic competence, comprehending a lecture is also related to the teacher as Nadia’s comment above shows. The view that comprehension is affected by the teacher will be discussed in relation to teacher origin and delivery of content in the sub-sections below.

5.2.3.1 Teacher origin – “I feel more comfortable when the teacher is of my nationality”

The teachers in this college come from different places such as India, Pakistan, Philippines, Oman and other Arab countries. While the majority of these teachers come from India, the minority come from Oman or Arab countries. Very few
teachers in the photography department come originally from English speaking countries. Therefore, students are exposed to a variety of English accents which was seen as a major obstacle for comprehending the lectures as Hussam’s quote shows:

The first reason is the English language. This is the main reason. Also the teacher plays a role - when the teacher speaks fast. As you know we’re beginners in English so it’s difficult to understand. Also, teachers with certain nationalities pronounce words differently. You think they’re new words but they just pronounce them differently and this makes it more difficult to understand the lecture.

Most participants indicated that Indian teachers’ accents were the most difficult to understand as noted by Amer:

We have a big problem here at college with the accent of Indian teachers. Their accent is weak. They mispronounce many words. This is a common problem in our department. There are a lot of Indian teachers. Also, they speak very fast. Only some make an effort to slow down.

Several participants felt that because some teachers have “poor” or “weak” pronunciation they are not able to learn the correct pronunciation of words as Lamia contemplated:

The problem is that sometimes teachers teach us something wrong. For example, they pronounce words differently and then, when we use them, another teacher asks us, who taught you this? In foundation especially teachers taught us wrong pronunciation but also here in our specialisation. This shouldn’t happen because we need to learn the correct pronunciation not the wrong one.

Ali thought that some teachers lack the linguistic competence to teach in English which he saw as a “disadvantage of learning in English at this college”. He
complained that “When they want to teach us in English at least the teacher should be competent to teach in correct English. The problem is that the teacher doesn’t know that he’s wrong”. Speaking fast was also seen as problematic regarding comprehension as pointed out by Hussam and Amer above. Aref further explained that “Some [teachers] make an effort and speak slowly and clearly but others not. I think they assume that we should know English after studying English all these years at school”.

The participants’ concerns regarding teachers’ accents, fast speech and language competence were confirmed during my classroom observations. On several occasions the teachers spoke very fast, in particular Indian teachers and some of them had a low voice and I questioned whether students are able to comprehend. I could also sense that occasionally some students were confused and felt disconnected. Students at public schools are mainly exposed to accents of teachers from Arabic-speaking countries and are therefore familiar with them (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). In addition, students at secondary school are exposed to the British or US-accented English through listening texts which are presented as the correct model of English (Al-Issa, 2005). This could explain why students are not familiar with other accents of English and see any deviation in pronunciation of words in English from the norm that they are used to hear as incorrect. I believe that students could be better prepared for their study at tertiary level through the use of listening texts at schools that reflect the English accents of speakers in their immediate environment.
The linguistic and pedagogic competence of teachers is one of the main concerns regarding EMI (Barnard, 2015; Ibrahim, 2001; Williams, 2015.) It has been reported in the literature that teachers, especially in Asia, do not have adequate linguistic competence to teach in English (Barnard, 2015; Hamid et al., 2013; Zacharias, 2013) although this feature is not restricted to Asia but is similarly evident in Europe (Airey & Linder, 2006; Wilkinson, 2015). During my 14 classroom observations I noticed that few teachers mispronounced some words and some teachers made few grammatical errors but overall I felt that most of them were rather competent speakers of English. Therefore, I would argue that the linguistic competence of most teachers was acceptable but their pedagogic competence to teach in English lagged behind. Shohamy (2013) asserts that it is essential to take certain measures to support students to acquire academic knowledge through EMI one of these could be speaking slowly and clearly. I noticed during classroom observations that most teachers did not take the students’ English level into consideration because they did not try to accommodate their speech to a slower pace to make it more comprehensible for students. On several occasions I noted down my concern whether students are able to comprehend with such speed in teacher talk. It seems that this affected the ability of the students to comprehend the lecture. In this context, teachers do not receive any guidance on how to teach their EMI courses. It might be that some teachers, especially those who are new to the context are not even aware of the students’ limited linguistic abilities. The concern about the lack of professional development programmes that include EMI specific pedagogical
components has been raised in the literature (Dearden, 2015; Vu & Burns, 2014; Zacharias, 2013) and should be considered by policy makers in this context.

Several students, with the exception of one, expressed their preference for having teachers of Arab origins because they sometimes could support them to comprehend better through providing explanations in Arabic. An example is Manal who explained: "We have a subject and the teacher is Arabic. When he notices that we don’t understand something he explains it in Arabic". The preference for Arab teachers is also evident in Hussam’s quote:

In my situation I feel more comfortable when the teacher is of my nationality or explains in Arabic because if I don’t understand something and I want to ask the teacher then the non-Arab teacher will explain in English but the Arab teacher can explain in Arabic so I can understand.

The findings indicate that some Arab teachers did not strictly apply the EMI policy but took steps to enact the policy in a way which they thought works best in this context. It could be that they found that the implementation of the policy would be impractical considering the English level of the students. This is not unique to this context as the findings by Griffiths (2013) in Norway show that teachers occasionally used Norwegian instead of English to support students’ comprehension. Since some students and teachers found that the use of some Arabic in class could help students gain academic knowledge and make them feel more comfortable, it might be worth if the college would consider hiring more teachers from Arab countries and reduce the number of teachers from non-Arab countries. Since students are allowed to choose their sections, then the ones
who prefer having an Arab teacher would be able to register in the section taught by an Arab teacher. In addition, Arab teachers are culturally better able to create a bond with their students which could have a positive impact on students’ morale (King, 2014).

5.2.3.2 Delivery of content – “They just read”

The participants also noted that comprehension was affected by the difficulty of the content and the ability of the teacher to deliver the content. Several participants pointed out that the teachers delivered the content mainly through “reading the slides”. In fact, Muzna complained that “Some of the teachers – some have a doctor degree – enter the class and then read the slides from the power point. They just read. But we need explanation, especially in our specialisation – Applied sciences, which is full of practical issues”. She continued saying “I feel very bored when the teacher talks in class and I don’t understand”.

During my classroom observation I noticed that in 9 classes out of 14, the delivery of the content was mainly restricted to the teachers reading the handout which they displayed as a power point presentation. Occasionally they stopped reading to ask students if everything is clear. Few of them asked students a question about the meaning of a word such as “trend” or “cognitive” and then explained the meaning since in most cases students did not know the meaning of these words. Only in one of these classes (Business class) did the teacher elaborate on certain issues which he related to the Omani context and his own experience. Moreover, Safaa reported that “Some teachers are specialised in
electronic management but they teach subjects related to human resources. They have general information about business, but are not qualified to teach a special subject. We notice that they don’t have profound information”. Salim believed that this has a negative impact on students’ comprehension of the subject and the grades they receive in their exams. His interview excerpt highlights this point:

Last term – our specialisation is human resources – we had a difficult subject but the lecturer was specialised in something different. He was not specialised in human resources but in calculation. Most of his explanation was restricted to reading the handout. This makes it more difficult for the students to understand. This is why we got low marks in this subject. We could have got higher marks if the teacher were specialised in this subject.

In addition, all the participants had the impression that the main concern of teachers was to deliver the content regardless whether students have understood or not. Basil’s quote reflects this view: “They explain the lesson and that’s it; if the student understood or not is the responsibility of the student”. In addition, Amer pointed out that “We have a problem in this college that there isn’t enough time. The time of the lecture is short and the semester is short. The student is always under pressure” a point referred to by several participants. The classroom observations revealed that teachers’ focus in class was covering the material of the handout because they were constantly reading or talking without leaving any opportunity for students to interact. In particular, in applied sciences and pharmacy classes, students were provided with a lot of information during one session. In one of these classes, the teacher explained that she was going
over the material quickly because exams are approaching and that classes would continue until one day before the exam. This resulted in an uproar where students complained about not being given enough time to revise the great amount of material for the exam.

In regard to the new vocabulary that students encounter while studying in English, only 18.9% (n=62) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement that teachers spend a lot of time explaining vocabulary in class, in contrast to 50.3% (n=165) who disagreed. Amer noted that he sometimes does not understand the lecture because of the vocabulary the teachers use:

> In class the lecturer uses difficult or new vocabulary. I write them down in order to check the meaning or to ask someone after class about the meaning of the word. Also the teacher sometimes uses specialised vocabulary. I personally don’t understand sometimes. Like when you attended the class of Engineering. Sometimes the students don’t understand the whole lecture.

The classroom observation showed that only two teachers spent some time on explaining vocabulary, one was an Omani teacher who tried to make sure that students understood the meaning of technical and general vocabulary through asking if they know the meaning of words such as “drug tolerance” and “addicted”. If the students did not know them she would explain the meaning of the words in English and on few occasions in Arabic such as “inflammation”. The other teacher was an American who told me that he was an English teacher for some time. He also explained the meaning of key words such as “animation”. In addition, I noticed that students rarely asked about the meaning of a word. Instead, they used their mobiles to check the meaning of words and sometimes
they asked their classroom mates. Bielenberg (2004) argues that it is essential that teachers receive training on how to facilitate students’ access to the meaning of academic English. The findings indicate that teachers in this college do not receive any kind of training in this regard as already discussed.

Spolsky (2004) argues that real language policy can most likely be found in its practices than in its management. It seems that the teachers in this context adopted the use of practices such as staying closely to the textbook and/or using power-point slides to teach content thereby focusing on the simple transfer of knowledge instead of constructing knowledge through interaction with the students. These practices are common in an EMI context (Airey & Linder, 2006; Hu et al., 2014; Zacharias, 2013) and are usually adopted as a strategy to overcome the language difficulties encountered by students and to a lesser degree by teachers (Hu et al., 2014). Another rationale for the adoption of this strategy was provided by Airey and Linder (2006: 557) where teachers adopted a “walking through the landscape” strategy to support the students in learning which the researchers found a “boring and unproductive lecturing strategy” but was appreciated by all students. While it is not clear why the teachers in this study adopted this strategy, it is clear that most students found it boring unlike the participants in the above mentioned study who found it helpful. The fact that EMI classes of this kind can become technical and lack sparks and humour has also been documented in the literature (Barnard, 2015; Sert, 2008) which has an effect on the quality of students’ learning experiences. The classroom observations showed that none of the teachers got critically engaged with the
content or tried to engage the students in any kind of discussion whether as a whole class, group or pair work that could support in the acquisition of academic knowledge. Considering the students’ reports above and the classroom observations it is evident that students are provided with shallow content knowledge thus supporting findings in the literature (Becket & Li, 2011; Hu et al., 2014; Wilkinson, 2015). This raises concerns about the quality of education that these students receive and whether the disciplinary knowledge gained would allow them to perform well in their future jobs.

5.2.4 Interaction in the EMI classroom– “I usually listen”

The classroom observations showed that the interaction between the students and the teachers or among the students was very limited which is a common feature in the EMI classroom (3.5.3). The students’ participation in class was restricted to taking notes (either in English or Arabic), highlighting or underlining some sentences in the handout and nodding to show understanding of a certain concept. Interaction with the teacher was almost restricted to responding to comprehension check questions which few students answered collectively while others remained silent. Very few students stood out and responded individually to some questions although very briefly. In one of the classes the teacher asked 15 questions; some were related to the meaning of vocabulary such as “sedation” and “tolerance” while others were related to questions about their general knowledge regarding addiction to alcohol. Most responses were very brief and grammatically incorrect while other responses consisted of one word and one student answered in Arabic. However, I noticed that in other classes few students
stood out and were able to respond to a question in rather fluent English. I also noticed that when the teacher asked the students if they understood, they almost always nodded or said yes and occasionally they did not say anything. Only in one class, one female student said that she did not understand so the teacher repeated the point.

In relation to asking questions in class, 61% (n=200) of the questionnaire participants stated that they ask the teacher questions in class if they do not understand. However, this did not become evident during the 14 classroom observations since only 11 questions were asked. Very few questions were about the meaning of a word such as “substance”, but most of the students asked clarification questions such as “Why 4”, “What meaning of r” or “what we do”. In one class a student asked a question in Arabic but the teacher responded in English. In two classes a student asked the teacher to repeat a point. On few occasions some students grabbed the opportunity to call the teacher to their place to ask him/her a question when s/he gave them some time to copy something from the board. I also noticed that occasionally the students turned to their peers to seek an explanation most probably in Arabic. Some interview participants mentioned that they ask the teachers questions in class in case they do not understand but most of them stated that they ask their friends in class first. They also provided several reasons for not asking questions. Safaa mentioned that “usually there is no time because then the teacher needs to re-explain” a view that has been echoed by other participants. Mariam explained that “When the teacher asks us ‘Are you understand’ we tell him ‘we do’ because
if we don’t understand the first time we won’t understand the second time when he re-explains in the same way”. In addition, Huda pointed out that this is a cultural issue among students:

We’re not used to ask questions. Not because it’s in English. Even in school in Arabic we never ask questions. Because sometimes we don’t understand in class but when we revise it becomes clear later.

Few participants mentioned that they do not ask questions because they lack confidence asking in English. The psychological effects that EMI can have on students will be further discussed in section 5.2.6. The findings indicate that education in this context is delivered through a teacher-centred approach which seems to be common in Asian Universities (Barnard, 2015) in contrast to the mission of the college to deliver high quality education through a student-centred approach in order to prepare students for the labour market with confidence (College Vision and Mission, 2015). One of the goals of the implementation of the EMI policy is to enhance the students’ communicative competence which is needed in the workplace. It seems that the current teacher-centred approach adopted by the teachers will not lead to the successful achievement of this goal.

5.2.5 Extra effort – “The extra effort is mostly related to learning every new word”

The participants reported that in order to compensate for their partial comprehension in class, they need to make an extra effort such as preparing the lesson before-hand, taking notes in class, asking friends, consulting the teacher during office hours, memorising or self-study as Amer clarified:
Before entering the classroom, the student has to be prepared. He has to translate all the words – there are always many new words especially in my specialisation, chemical engineering, into Arabic in order to understand them. Also, I need to translate the words of problem solving activities.

Translation of new words in order to comprehend the material was an unavoidable extra effort employed by all participants and will be discussed more in detail in section 5.3.4. Considering the effort students need to make in the classroom, Muzna reported:

I usually listen and at the same time I follow the handout and take notes. Even when the teacher asks us to close the handout I can't because I need to follow closely the power point and the handout. Any point mentioned outside the handout I note down.

During the classroom observations I could see that most students highlighted some sentences and occasionally wrote something in English or Arabic (Appendix 22). In fact, 71% (n=233) of the questionnaire participants stated that they can easily take notes in English. As for the interview participants, only Ali and Basil acknowledged that they rarely take notes. The interview excerpt by Salim is an example of what students take notes of:

When he [the teacher] explains the meaning of a word or a sentence – I need to write that down. I underline the important sentences and sometimes I even explain them in my own way. I summarise them in my own way.

Salim also noted that he needs to learn the meaning of every new word “because this new word might come in an exam”. Huda added that “when I learn a word I have to learn the spelling; especially in pharmacy the spelling is very specific. One letter can change the name of the drug completely”. Salim further
maintained that “It happens that I’m writing something, meanwhile he [the teacher] moves to another point but I couldn’t follow because I was busy writing” confirming the participants’ experience in Airey and Linder’s (2006) study that during the process of note-taking students are unable to concentrate on the lecture, which is an obvious learning struggle. Huda stated that “If I don’t understand it [a word] in English, I translate it in Arabic”, a strategy adopted by Lamia who added “I also sometimes write in Arabic how to pronounce a word”. While note-taking is a common strategy adopted by college students in other contexts, it seems that the main reason for taking-notes in this EMI context is to make meaning of the written text. This is another reason to question the readiness of students for the rigour of academic reading.

All participants but Ali mentioned that they consult their friends first before consulting the teacher in case something is not clear as Huda noted: “In most cases I ask my roommates who are 1 year ahead of us. They always help us because they have the experience. If they don’t have time then it’s ok. I ask the teachers”. Some students mentioned that they would ask the teachers during office hours to re-explain something. Overall, I noticed during classroom observations that students would depend first on their friends and then on their teachers. It could be that they feel more comfortable talking to their peers although 62.8% (n=206) of the questionnaire participants mentioned that they feel comfortable asking their non-native Arabic teachers questions outside class. Hussam further pointed out that it might be problematic for students whose English language is weak to consult the teacher. He stated that “If my friend also
doesn’t know then I ask a friend who is good in English to go and ask the teacher and then he explains to me in Arabic”. Few participants reported on the extra effort they need to do on their own. For example, Muzna clarified: “I consult google or youtube to understand issues that I couldn’t understand from the teacher in class. Perhaps they’re not great efforts but for me I think they’re great efforts that I do” while Nadia reported: “Sometimes I borrow school books in physics from grade 12 [in Arabic] and I revise from them and compare it with our study”.

More than half of the interview participants indicated that they have to memorise the content written in the handout. The need to memorise was related to the limited ability to express ideas in English, especially during exams. Huda asserted that “When I study, I memorise what’s in the handout. In Arabic you can express the idea in your own words so it’s easier, but in English it has to be the same as the book”. Manal provided another reason for memorisation by stating: “In my specialisation there are issues that can’t be understood. They’re not clear. You just need to memorise”. It seems that memorising is a strategy employed by a large number of students because 62.8% (n=206) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the item “I memorise the content in order to pass quizzes and exams”. In particular, the participants mentioned: “But if it’s a definition, you have to write the exact words as the book - word for word. This is the problem” (Basil). Amer explained that students will lose marks if the spelling of definitions is not correct.
Research on EMI has found that students need to make an extra effort and employ certain strategies in order to cope with the challenges they face in their study (Airey & Linder, 2006; Al-Bakri, 2013; Evans & Green, 2007; Evans & Morrison, 2011a; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). Although it seems that the participants are able to cope with these challenges, it is worth considering that translating takes a lot of time and effort. In addition, memorising and copying from teachers and from peers are surface level learning strategies that might meet immediate needs such as passing tests but do not foster a profound understanding of concepts (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2011; Kagwasage, 2012). Consulting peers and teachers are also time consuming activities not to forget the emotional impact this has on students’ self-esteem. Some students might not be able to cope well with the burden to study in a language they are not proficient yet as already discussed. This could lead to low academic achievement and might lead to drop-out of college (Marsh, 2006; Troudi, 2009).

5.2.6 Psychological impact – “No, I don’t ask. I get afraid”

The interview findings indicate that EMI can have a psychological impact on students especially those who are less proficient in English. Azhaar was one of the students who has been emotionally affected most by the EMI policy. She reported that she was interested in participating in this study because she felt that “through this study I could express the feelings that are repressed inside me” and she explained that “for the first time in my life I filled in a questionnaire in an honest way”. Azhaar mentioned that she was “one of the top students in Arabic” at school but she was the only interview participant who self-evaluated her
English level as “very weak”. Consequently she is suffering to study in English. She felt frustrated because she failed in all subjects in business and had therefore to change her specialisation. The sense of frustration is evident in her quote: “This delayed me for a year. One year of my life lost – in vain. Students at my age are now in their second year of study”. In addition, she reported how her low English level makes her feel embarrassed during a lecture and that sometimes she feels humiliated in class by the teacher when she does not understand:

Sometimes I feel embarrassed when the teacher speaks in English and is not an Arab - when I don’t understand. Sometimes I feel that she embarrasses me. For example, she asks some of the girls to explain to me because I didn’t understand; those girls who are better in English than me. This upsets me sometimes.

Similarly, Lamia stated that sometimes she feels embarrassed to ask a teacher to repeat a point because the teacher becomes impatient and confuses her inability to understand with being “slow” as her interview excerpt shows: “I notice that they become upset and I can see from their face that they think I’m slow. I don’t like this and then I ask my friends”. Jewels and Albon (2012: 3) in the UAE addressed this issue:

Teachers who have been accustomed to teaching mainly NES [native English speaker] students in Western universities might easily perceive non-NES students, such as the Gulf students in this research, as being either ‘lazy’ or ‘not at a high enough intellectual standard for university life’, simply because of the difficulties they face with the language of instruction.

From my own experience in this college I noticed that unfortunately some teachers confuse the low English level of the students with being lazy or stupid.
This attitude is not restricted to teachers who have been accustomed to teaching NES students from Western universities as Jewels and Albon (ibid) maintain, but is also prevalent among teachers who have experience with teaching non-NES students in contexts other than the Gulf. The relation between language proficiency and success in studying has been established in the literature (McLaren, 2011; Troudi & Jendli, 2011) and can lead to othering of students with low English language proficiency. Moreover, the findings show that some students suffer from low self-esteem as found in Brock-Utne’s (2006) study in Tanzania. An interview excerpt by Hussam highlights this point:

No, I don’t ask. I get afraid; only if the teacher is an Arab. I had a Syrian teacher. I used to ask her in Arabic and she used to respond in Arabic. But if the teacher doesn’t speak Arabic I find it difficult to ask. I imagine how he’ll respond in English and I don’t understand. If the student knows English then no problem but in my case – I don’t understand English well – it’s difficult.

Another example is Nadia, who admitted that she feels afraid to ask or respond to a question as her quote indicates:

In English, when I respond I feel afraid because my sentence structure might be weak but in Arabic I would respond fluently because it’s my mother tongue and I know how to arrange the words in a sentence. In English I’m afraid. I’m afraid to use one word before another – I’m afraid. Especially when the class is crowded – I feel afraid.

There is evidence in the literature that emotions play a major role in learning (Dirkx, 2008; Dumont et al. 2010; Pekrun, 2014). For example, Boekaerts (2010: 91 in Dumant et al., 2010) asserts that students “turn away from learning when they experience negative emotions”. Moreover, they lose face when they fail
despite the effort to succeed. However, the issues of fear and other negative feelings have basically been ignored by EMI protagonists. The emotional experience of the learner does not seem to be on the agenda of those who see the EMI policy as key to economic development and prosperity.

In regard to students’ feelings during a lecture Hussam stated: “I feel 100% comfortable when the teacher speaks Arabic but if the teacher speaks only English I feel confused. I feel afraid”. This feeling was shared by other participants such as Azhaar while Huda noted: “I become headache just because of thinking how I can complete my study. But sometimes I have the willpower to revise and study”. In addition, when students feel that attending does not benefit them, then they are inclined to skip classes. An example is Azhaar who stated: “I didn’t understand anything [during a lecture in business]. This is why I was absent very often. I felt that attending the lectures was a waste of time”. Similar feelings have been reported by the participants in Al-Mashikhi et al.’s (2014) study in Oman. In fact, Mariam’s interview excerpt below shows that students’ attendance is related to students’ perceptions of getting benefit from attending classes and their feeling of comfort:

In the lecture ‘Oman civilization’ we all participate. The teacher asks and we all respond. This teacher isn’t text bound. She has a lot of information so it’s interesting and nobody is absent. We enjoy the class a lot.

This class is taught in Arabic by an Omani teacher. While Mariam believes that the reason that students feel more comfortable in this particular class is related to the content delivery style of the teacher, is could be that the teacher was better
able to elaborate and improvise in class and interact with the students because it was in Arabic. In fact, Brock-Utne (2006) and Alidou and Brock-Utne (2011) observed that students and teachers felt more relaxed when the language of instruction was the mother tongue and that students’ participation in these classes was much higher compared to classes conducted in English. In addition, some students felt alone in their struggle to study in English and that the college does not provide the students with sufficient support. Azhaar was one of the students who believed that “So far I haven’t seen that there is any kind of support [provided by the college]”.

Several participants found that the support for students to learn in English provided by the college is restricted to the GFP and to some extent to the PFP. Ali thought “I think that the English language centre is the only support for students”. Salim further noted that “after the foundation year the student has to depend on himself. There is no support at all. He has to make an effort on his own. He has to improve his own language” while Nadia thought “They just gave us the subjects without being concerned about us”.

Although it might be argued that these are individual perceptions reported by only few participants, it is nevertheless important to highlight these negative feelings because of the negative impact they can have on the participants’ morale and passion to continue their study. Wilkinson (2015) argues that it is necessary to see if there are losers in an EMI context and what they are losing. The findings indicate that studying in English in this context is a plight for some students. There are students who lost their self-esteem because they got delayed in their
study due to failure. Some students lost the chance to specialise in a major of their interest and some students lost the opportunity to receive a college degree since they had to drop out from college. This is a major educational issue that has to be addressed at national level. Students who drop their study cause the country financial loss among others. In line with the theoretical framework of this study based on critical applied linguistics, the aim of raising awareness among policy makers and teachers to these issues is not merely the alleviation of students’ plight but also the possibility of change to a more egalitarian language policy (Pennycook, 2001; Tollefson, 2013; Johnson, 2013).

5.3 The challenges of reading in content courses

5.3.1 Reading materials – “We just have to read the handout”

A large number of the questionnaire participants (86.0%; n=282) agreed with the statement “I have to do a lot of reading in English for my study”. However, the participants’ views regarding the reading requirement varied among participants enrolled in different faculties (table 5 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20. I have to do a lot of reading in English for my study.</th>
<th>strongly agree/agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion design</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied sciences</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business studies</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Participants’ perceptions on the reading load according to disciplines
According to the findings, it seems that more Pharmacy (93.8%) than Photography students (70.4%) believe that they have to read a lot in their specialisation. In regard to the reading requirement, the interview participants clarified that the core reading for each subject consisted of a course book which they referred to as a handout, which is similar to the reading requirement in King’s (2014) study in the UAE. This means that the students in this college are not provided with a reading list that they have to read over a specific period of time as common for college students. In addition, some participants mentioned that they have to read the power-point slides that the teacher prepares for a subject and uploads on the e-learning portal that all students have access to. However, Lamia (fashion design) explained that “we don’t have any course books. But the teachers give us some papers to read” and Ali (photography) stated “We only have to read in one subject, in History”. This could explain the difference between students’ perceptions regarding the reading requirement. During the classroom observations and the interviews I had the chance to look at the handout that students have to read. Some handouts consisted in average of about 50-55 pages and were either prepared by the department or by the teacher. The material was compiled from different sources such as online resources, journals and books. Each student received a photocopy of it in black and white so it did not have any coloured pictures or graphs. In average, students have 4-5 subjects each semester which means they have to read about 4-5 handouts of about 50-55 pages. During the period of one semester (14 weeks), the teacher has to cover the material of the handout because students’
assessment is based on the information provided in it. However, Basil explained “Sometimes they [teachers] give us a summary of the handout. This is in the form of a power point. This is easier. They print it out and give it to us”. Providing students with simplified materials such as summaries of the text and lecture notes have been reported by Cobb and Horst (2001) and Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova (2014) in Oman. Therefore, some students might see that reading the handout is redundant. In regard to reading other resources such as books, few participants stated that occasionally the teachers ask them to check a certain book which is available in the library.

Overall, the findings indicate that the reading load for each subject is rather limited. Shen (2013) points out that most Taiwanese students who study at tertiary education in English, complain about the huge amount of reading assignment during a week. None of the participants in this study raised any complaint about the amount of reading they have to do for a course. Reducing the reading load in content courses could be related to the claims that Arab students in general and Gulf students in particular lack reading culture (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014; O’Sullivan, 2010) or out of concern about the English language deficiency that most of the students suffer from. King (2014) questions whether the degree the students receive in his context in the UAE would meet international standards since accreditation and validation bodies of a degree in regard to reading is dependent on the reading loads in candidate programmes. I would argue that this concern is valid for the context of this study for the same reasons.
5.3.2 Reading online resources – “For an assignment we need to read from the net”

All interview participants mentioned “when we have to do an assignment we have to read from the net” (Huda). In addition, some participants reported that they search for information on the internet in order to support their comprehension of a particular concept. For example, Nadia explained: “I have a subject called Graphics. It’s about drawing. If I don’t understand how to draw, I can just type the name of the drawing and I get a whole explanation of how to draw – step-by-step”. Manal affirmed that “In some subjects we need the internet. There isn’t enough practice in the handout” but she continued explaining “If there is time I read but if I don’t have time I just stick to the handout”. In relation to reading in English or Arabic, Lamia noted that “I often read in Arabic and sometimes in English” while Ali and Aref stated that they read in Arabic but that it is not related to their specialisation. None of the participants mentioned that they read any books or journals related to their field of study if it is not required by the department.

One of the reasons for the implementation of EMI is that students need to learn in English because most academic resources are in English. In fact, 58.8% (n=193) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “I try to expand my knowledge through reading resources related to my study in English”. Although some participants read beyond the required text it seems that their reading in most cases is restricted to understanding the content of the textbook rather than expanding their knowledge in their specialised field. This can be
related to lack of time available but could also be related to students’ English language deficiency as later findings reveal (5.3.3). This shows that the knowledge that students gain in a particular field of study is mainly restricted to the information in the handout which is rather suitable for studying at school than college.

**5.3.3 Reading difficulties – “I don’t understand all the words”**

All participants acknowledged that they encounter great difficulties reading in English whether it is the handout, an online text or a book. While Basil remarked “I understand half of it [English written text]”, Azhaar admitted that “most of the time I don’t understand”. Mariam was the only interview participant who stated that sometimes she does not understand when she reads from the internet “but the problem is mostly related to content rather than language”. In regard to the questionnaire participants, 46.6% (n=153) found reading to be difficult because of the technical vocabulary in a text, in contrast to 20.4 % (n=67) who stated that reading is difficult because their grammar is weak. Overall, the interview participants related the difficulties they face while reading to unknown vocabulary in the text which is in line with findings of research studies (Al-Barashdi, 2012; Bielenberg, 2004; Cheng, 2010; Evans & Green, 2007; Shen, 2013), where vocabulary was reported as being the main reason for students’ difficulty of understanding English written texts. Most interview participants were not specific about the kind of vocabulary they find challenging. For example, Ali noted “Sometimes I face a problem when I read. I don’t understand all the words”. Amer was more specific and explained “I face a lot of difficulties - mostly the
vocabulary of the lesson because each lesson has a different topic”. Aref was the only participant who mentioned that he had problems with “technical terms related to my specialisation. General English vocabulary I don’t have a problem with”. In contrast, Safaa stated that the words can be “related to my specialisation or long words or just words that are new to me so they can be general or specialised vocabulary”. Nadia also admitted that she finds it difficult to understand “long words” and that “These words I need to translate”. In relation to reading long texts, 48.2% (n=158) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “I find it difficult to understand long English texts”. Mariam acknowledged that “sometimes I read from the internet and I find it difficult because it’s often too long and not specific” while Huda explained:

Honestly, when I search in the net and I find a long text I usually don’t read it. I try to find a text that is written in points. When there are points it becomes easier for us. But when it’s a long paragraph it’s difficult to concentrate on a long text.

Most students reported that reading online texts are more difficult to understand mainly because they might come across words they “have not seen before at all” (Huda). None of the students noted that they do not understand a text because of their limited knowledge in grammar, the sentence structure, background knowledge or organisation of the text as observed by the participants in Al-Barashdi’s (2012) study in Oman. This is also in contrast to the findings in Shen’s (2013) study where the participants found that beside vocabulary, sentence structure and background knowledge affected their reading comprehension.
The findings suggest that the participants face problems in understanding general and technical vocabulary which can hamper their reading comprehension, a problem that has been identified by Cobb and Horst (2001) in Oman and seems to be still persistent until now. This raises the question how efficiently students can learn from their reading text. A closer analysis of the questionnaire findings revealed that the participants’ views regarding their difficulties in understanding technical vocabulary varied according to the disciplines as table 6 below shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. I find it difficult to understand technical vocabulary.</th>
<th>strongly agree/agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion design</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied sciences</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business studies</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Participants’ perceptions on understanding technical vocabulary according to disciplines

It is worth mentioning that the pharmacy department is the only department in the college that teaches terminology as a separate subject. Nevertheless, the findings showed that pharmacy students face much greater difficulties in comprehending specialised vocabulary than students who study in other fields. It seems that difficulty in comprehending specialised vocabulary is also related to the disciplines. Therefore, it might be argued that EMI suits some disciplines better than other ones a point that has also been noted by some teachers in King’s (2014) study and might be worth considering by EMI policy planners.
5.3.4 Reading strategies – “I have to translate many words”

All participants reported that the main strategy which they used in order to comprehend a text is the use of translation which is in line with research in this regard (Al-Barashdi, 2012; Chang, 2010; Shen, 2013). In fact 69.2% (n=227) of the questionnaire participants studying in all levels acknowledged that they need to translate many words in order to understand the course material. The interview participants provided information that students use different devices for translation: mobiles or other electronic devices, online translation such a google translate and in rare cases a dictionary. In addition, the findings showed that students apply different translation strategies in order to understand a text. One of the translation strategies was to translate the whole text as Hussam explained: “This can be done with the mobile. I take a picture of the text and translate the whole text with google translate into Arabic. Like this I get a clearer picture”. Few participants noted that online translation is not always accurate and therefore they have to employ a different strategy as Salim explains:

Sometimes, although I translate all the words, I don’t understand the sentence because sometimes the translation is not accurate. The word in the text has another meaning than in the book. It doesn’t match with the translation. So I don’t understand what is meant in this sentence. In this case I need to find another solution and have to ask my friend or the teacher.

Basil, who also uses online translation for a whole text noted that “If some sentences are not accurate, then I translate the sentence on my own with a dictionary”. In addition, Basil referred to a point highlighted by Bielenberg (2004) that “the medical terms are mostly in Latin, not English. Even if you want to
translate them you don’t get an answer” an issue that was confirmed by Huda, another pharmacy student. In fact, half of the participants followed the strategy to translate the whole text. It seems that these students try to understand globally and do not try to understand the meaning of the words in order to revise them. Basil for example admitted that “I don’t have time to memorise them [new words]. For me the most important thing is comprehension. When I understand then that’s it”. This can explain why most of the interview participants could only notice a slight improvement in their reading skills through learning in their content courses.

Few participants followed the strategy to translate every word that they do not understand. The importance of knowing every word has been clarified by Nadia: “I try to understand every single word because every word that I don’t know now might be useful for me later on”. In addition, Amer mentioned that he checks the pronunciation of the word. Other students were more pragmatic in their approach and reported that they only translate some words such as Safaa:

No, not every word, not at all. It depends on the text. If I translate every word I feel that this takes a lot of time. I just read the text, try to understand in general and what I think is important and if necessary I translate some words.

The findings regarding these translation strategies show that the majority of participants try to understand the text globally and do not insist on knowing each and every word which is seen as a characteristic of Omani students (Al-Barashdi, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi, 2012b). However, all participants mentioned that translating
takes a lot of time and effort especially if there is no internet connection as Hussam noted:

> When I read I come across new words so I need to translate. This needs effort and time. I also need the internet but sometimes the net is down so I need to check with a dictionary and this takes a lot of time – it takes time to find the meaning of the word in a dictionary.

Muzna’s comment below shows that translating can be tiring:

> I think I translate about 50%. I usually translate the scientific words. Sometimes if I understand the text in general I don’t translate each and every word even if I don’t know them because I get tired of translating.

Guessing the meaning from the context was also a strategy employed by some participants. For example, Ali reported that he is selective in his approach to translating words because “sometimes I understand from the context”. This strategy was also employed by the participant’s in Al-Barashdi’s (2012) study in Oman. In regard to peer support, 72.3% (n=237) of the questionnaire participants stated that their friends help them to comprehend the course material. Some interview participants mentioned that peer support is useful and might even compensate for translation as reported in Kagwesage (2012). For example, Amer noted “Sometimes I work with a friend whose language is better than mine. This is helpful because it makes understanding faster. He can explain instead of translating”. Another strategy was the use of writing a summary, a strategy adopted by participants in Shen’s (2013) study. For example, Muzna noted that “Sometimes I need to read sentence after sentence. I summarise the idea and then I go on”. In order to reduce the effort made to understand a text, Aref
admitted that “I read the whole text and try to understand the important points but I ignore most of what I think is not relevant for the exam”.

The findings indicate that students use various reading strategies in order to comprehend their reading materials. Translation strategies was by far the most used strategy followed by peer support, teacher support, guessing meaning from context, avoiding reading long texts and writing a summary. It seems that that students have to make a great effort in order to comprehend a text although their teachers read the texts in class and explain part of it. Troudi (2009) referred to the negative effects of the extra burden when students first have to make sense of the text before they are able to understand the content. Therefore one can understand why some students would adopt a strategy that reduces the effort such as trying to comprehend what is necessary to pass exams. However, the specialised knowledge gained through reading is questionable. First, as already mentioned online translation from English to Arabic is not always accurate and can lead to misunderstanding. In fact, some of their teachers complained that students rely on online translation and quiet often misunderstand concepts. In addition, students who try to understand the general points only, will only gain superficial comprehension of the specialised knowledge. The strategies employed by the participants also raise concerns regarding their English language skills improvement. When students translate the whole text into Arabic, they might not be able to learn the meaning of specific words. In addition, when students concentrate on comprehending the text, they are less able to look closely at the syntax of the sentence. These issues should be considered by
policy makers to evaluate the effectiveness of EMI in graduating students who are linguistically and academically competent for the job market or for conducting post-graduate studies.

5.4 Challenges of writing in content courses

5.4.1 Writing assignments

Writing was perceived as an important skill by 67.4% (n=221) of the questionnaire participants. However, their perceptions regarding the importance of writing varied among participants enrolled in different faculties. While 81.3% of Pharmacy students believed writing to be an important skill in their specialisation, only 42.9% of Fashion design students and 51.9% of Photography students believed so. The interview participants explained that writing was mostly needed for reports, projects and power-point presentations similar to the findings in Evans and Green’s (2007) study. The reports were of different kinds. Some students mentioned that they had to write a report about a project they did or about the results of an experiment they conducted. The type and length of the reports differ according to the specialisation and the level of study. For example, Ali (photography) noted that “we had to write a report about pictures we saw. We had to critique a picture or compare between two pictures”. He further explained that he had to write about 5-6 lines for each picture. Huda (pharmacy) explained that the students have to write two reports for each subject per semester. Basil provided an example of such a report when he noted: “I had to write about a drug; everything like ingredients and so on, many things”. Mariam (IT) explained
that “It depends on the teacher and the subject. Sometimes there are 3 assignments. She added that “One assignment is 3-4 pages long and there is a grade!” Nadia (engineering) clarified that sometimes they just have to write a report about the results of an experiment. However, Aref (engineering) in his last year of study mentioned that “At the end of each semester we have to make a project. We have to write a report about the project – about 30 pages”. In regard to the participants who study business, Safaa explained that they have to write “4 assignments per semester”. Salim maintained that “If we have to write an assignment, we need to read from outside resources such as the internet”. He further noted that “in other assignments we need to visit companies and make an interview with the employees about certain issues related to the topic”. During my classroom observations I noticed that students from the IT department have to write a research paper on a topic of their choice. Students were asked to use the internet in order to collect information, but the teacher noted “do paraphrasing; do not do lazy writing”. He also provided them with links to what he called “plagiarism tracker” in order to check their papers for plagiarism.

The participants also mentioned that for some assignments they have to write on their own while for others they have to write in groups. None of the participants reported that they ask someone from outside the college to support them in their writing assignments while 29.0% (n=95) of the questionnaire participants stated that they seek such kind of support. In addition, all students stated that they were provided with clear information about the requirement for each writing assignment unlike the participants in Al-Badawi’s (2011) study. Aref for
example mentioned that “Sometimes the teacher gives us a report that has been previously written – as a sample – and we just fill in the information about our project. We divide the work because we are a group so everybody writes a part”. Few participants noted that their teachers warned them about plagiarism. For example, Muzna stated: “He [the teacher] asked us to borrow books but not to copy/paste the information but to summarise it”.

Overall, the findings show that students are required to write different kinds of assignments that are included in the overall assessment of the students. From my own teaching experience with teaching foundation and post-foundation courses, I noticed that these assignments differ completely from the assignments students had to write before which did not require research and the use of references. In contrast, for most of the writing assignments in their specialisation, students need to search for information from resources such as the internet or books. This implies that students have the linguistic ability to comprehend these written texts, and are familiar with academic writing conventions of summarising, paraphrasing and referencing to avoid plagiarism (Li & Casanave, 2012). In fact, the post-foundation courses such as TW1 and TW2 which I used to teach are designed to prepare students for academic writing purposes. However, there is only very limited practice for students in this regard, especially for referencing from online resources. I also noticed that the majority of the students regardless of their English level found paraphrasing very challenging. Teaching technical skills such as paraphrasing and referencing does not necessarily mean the students learned them well especially when there is not sufficient practice and
students lack the adequate language proficiency in the first place. Considering the limited linguistic ability of the students and their limited knowledge of academic writing conventions raises concerns whether these students are able to avoid plagiarism when writing their assignments, an issue that will be further discussed in section 5.4.3.2. The findings also indicate that students are merely asked to put together information collected from a source or various sources rather than critically integrating information to support an argument or to critically evaluate the gathered information. Criticality was also an element that was not required in writing assignments in Al-Badwawi’s (2011) study in Oman. In addition, students do not have to write lengthy term-papers which are a common requirement in undergraduate studies. The reduction of writing requirements in an EMI context in particular in the Gulf seems to be a common practice (Al-Badwawi, 2011; King, 2014; Mouhanna, 2016). While this could support students in their study, it means that the quality of students’ tertiary education has been compromised. If students are to be prepared for the increasingly international job market, then the quality of education they receive should match the quality standards of international undergraduate programmes.

**5.4.1.1 Focus on content – “If the content is correct, you get a good grade”**

Concerning assessment of writing assignments, 50.6% (n=166) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “My content teacher is more concerned about the content of my assignment than the correctness of my English language” while 29.3% (n=96) were undecided and only 19.8% (n=65) disagreed with the statement. In one of the classroom observations, students had
to do a power-point presentation on a topic related to photography. I noticed that all power-point slides contained grammatical and spelling mistakes. It seemed to me that the teacher did not mind them because he did not make any comment regarding these mistakes. Also, the interview participants clarified that the majority of teachers do not consider the students’ language mistakes in their evaluation of their written assignments. For example, Ali noted: “She [the teacher] tells us this is not a writing class; this is a criticism class, so I don’t evaluate your language when you write - what your mistakes in spelling or grammar are”. He further explained:

In writing I know that I’m weak, but I got a good grade in most subjects; in particular in the subject ‘critique’ I got an A. What I mean is that if the content is correct, you get a good grade. If the content is wrong, you get a low grade.

Mariam pointed out that such a practice leads students to become careless about their language:

In writing we should pay attention to our language such as past tense or present tense but we don’t pay attention to that. We just respond to the question and don’t care about the language. The teachers don’t care about the language. They just look at the content and ignore the language. But there is one teacher who cares about the language.

Ali found that students continue to make spelling mistakes because teachers do not consider the accuracy of the spelling in students’ writing. In contrast, Amer explained that some teachers check the language which has a negative impact on the grades as also reported by Mariam:
Some teachers check the assignments carefully like content or spelling and grammar. Others just look at general ideas and don’t check carefully. I personally don’t like the teacher to check the mistakes because then we get lower grades because there are always many mistakes. When the teacher overlooks the mistakes, the grade will be better.

It seems that there is not a clear policy whether teachers should include language accuracy into the assessment of the written assignments or not and that teachers handle these issues individually which might be confusing for students. Overall, the findings reveal that the majority of teachers were more concerned about the quality of the content than the language in regard to students’ written assignments similar to other research results in this regard (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Evans & Green, 2007; Evans & Morrison, 2011b; Zhu, 2004). While such an approach is justified in order not to disadvantage students with low English language proficiency, it has also a negative impact on students’ willingness to consider the accuracy of their language when writing their assignments. In fact, only very few participants reported to check their spelling mistakes such as Nadia who stated “I make spelling mistakes but I check the spelling with the dictionary to correct them”. In contrast, Manal reported that “the spelling mistakes, any teacher can correct them for me”. In addition, while Evans and Green (2007) relate students’ ability to proof-read and revise assignments to language proficiency, I would argue that students’ willingness to revise is also related to teachers’ practices. If students are aware that teachers do not focus on language issues in their assessment of writing assignments, they might not see it as necessary to check them for accuracy. This can explain why only few participants reported that they revise their assignments whether by themselves of
with the support of their friends. The questionnaire analysis showed that only 22.0% (n=72) of the participants ask their friends to check their writings for mistakes. If teachers believe that students should be responsible for their language development as reported by Dearden (2015), then such an approach does not encourage students to work hard to improve their English language competence. Moreover, the focus of content teachers on content, regardless of the quality of the language, suggests that these teachers adopt the “writing to learn” approach which emphasises the learning of content rather than the “learning to write” approach that emphasises writing development (Zhu, 2004: 43). This indicates that content classes are not appropriate for the development of writing skills, as already noted by the participants. This suggests that there is a gap between the goal of the EMI policy at the macro level to enhance students’ English language proficiency and its implementation at the micro level where content classrooms are seen as sites to enhance the learning of content, an issue that should be considered by policy planners.

5.4.2 Writing difficulties – “I find it very difficult to write”

The questionnaire and interview findings reveal that almost all participants face problems in writing mainly in regard to language rather than content. In relation to grammar, 61.9% (n=203) of the questionnaire participants and all interview participants stated that they make grammar mistakes when they write in English. For example, Ali asserted “I find it very difficult to write. I have many problems. The main problem is how to write in a proper way. When someone revises it then there are always many mistakes – grammar – is a complete mess”. That Ali
faces some grammar problems is evident in the writing sample he provided (Appendix 23). In addition, he faces some problems with punctuation, something he did not mention. Most importantly, the sample shows that he lacks the ability to use an academic style in writing, something he does not seem to be aware of. In addition, he did not give his assignment a title and did not mention the source of the pictures, which are basic requirements for writing academic assignments.

Considering spelling, 59.1% (n=194) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “I always make spelling mistakes when I write in English”, a problem that has been shared by most interview participants. Salim explained that spelling is important because “if we make a mistake in one letter the meaning of the word might change”. The knowledge of technical vocabulary and general vocabulary seem to cause fewer problems for students’ ability to write since only 33.8% (n=111) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “because my technical vocabulary is weak I find it difficult to do a writing assignment in my specialisation. Similarly, only 34.5% (n=113) of them indicated to face problems in writing due to weakness in their knowledge of general vocabulary. Lamia explained that “When I don’t know some words, then I translate them or I check with the internet”. Aref was the only participant who reported that “Most [writing] problems are related to vocabulary that I have to use in English and how to put them in a sentence” a problem also faced by participants in Evans and Morrison’s (2011b) study.

The participants perceived difficulties with grammatical and lexical aspects of academic writing are consistent with tertiary students’ perceptions in other EMI
contexts (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Evans & Green, 2007; Hammad, 2014; Tahaineh, 2010). However, none of the participants reported to face problems with using an academic appropriate style, a concern raised by participants in other EMI contexts or to face any difficulty with academic writing conventions which is common for students in an EMI tertiary context (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Evans & Green, 2007). While it is expected that students with weak English language competence make linguistic errors, only few participants expressed their concerns about the effect of their language deficiencies on their ability to write assignments related to their majors as Lamia’s quote shows: “I have problems in grammar I think, but I manage to write”. This could be related to students’ belief that language mistakes do not have a great impact on the grade they receive, as already discussed. It seems that what is expected from these students is below what is expected from students at Bachelor’s level. This might be problematic for students who intend to continue their post-graduate studies at universities of an international standard where language accuracy is required. In addition, if students are not able to write assignments in accurate English, one has to question the efficiency of these students in their future jobs where accuracy in writing in English is expected.

5.4.3 Writing strategies

5.4.3.1 The use of L1 – “I know how to write the sentence in Arabic”

Writing the assignment in Arabic first and then to translate it into English was a survival strategy followed by 23.5% (n=77) of the questionnaire participants. Two
of the interview participants admitted that they sometimes write first in Arabic and then google translate what they have written into English. Amer in the following interview excerpt explained why he applies this strategy:

The problems are mostly related to how to write a complete sentence. I know how to write the sentence in Arabic. I understand, all the ideas are clear, but when I want to write them in English I find it very difficult. It takes a lot of time. So first I write them in Arabic and then I translate them into English – sentence by sentence.

Aref pointed out that the translation process is not straightforward and still needs further effort:

Sometimes we write immediately in Arabic in google translate and immediately it gives us the translation in English. Sometimes the translation is not accurate so we try to replace some words. When I write I usually write on the computer and there has to be internet.

This suggests that some students do not have the linguistic ability to write in English about a topic related to their specialisation and therefore resort to the use of their L1 in order to write, a strategy that has been employed by students in a similar context in Oman (Al-Badwawi, 2011). The use of L1 to reduce overload in L2 writing has been addressed in the literature (Kim & Yoon, 2014). Such a strategy requires not only effort but also time and might have a negative impact on students’ learning experiences. In addition, as Aref pointed out, the use of online translation applications do not provide accurate translation. In fact, teachers in Mouhanna’s (2016) study in the UAE were concerned about students' inappropriate use of translation applications such as google translate for text
productions because students translate word by word and as a result produce a
text that is not correct.

5.4.3.2 Copy and paste – “I read and copy/paste the information”

The analysis of the questionnaire data showed that 28.0% (n=92) of the
participants admitted that they sometimes copy and paste sentences and
paragraphs from the internet because their language is weak. However, the
interview findings revealed that almost all students adopted at least occasionally
this surviving strategy as Amer explained: “I copy the information. But this
depends on the teacher. Some teachers don’t mind, for others this is not
accepted. You have to read the information and then rewrite it in your own
words”. Basil noted that he does not face any difficulties in writing his
assignments “because everything is there on the net. There is a website, you just
need to write the name of the drug and you get a detailed description of the drug.
So I read and copy/paste the information”. Huda explained that “Sometimes I
write my own sentences but sometimes there are sentences that cannot be
changed so I copy/paste these sentences”. Safaa provided another explanation
for the copy and paste strategy:

When I collect the information, I don’t face any difficulties in writing.
For one of my assignments, all the information I copied/pasted from
the net. We copy/paste because last time we had to write about e-
bay. We don’t know anything about e-bay – where should we get
the information from? From the net, so we copy/paste.

Salim’s writing sample (Appendix 24) is an example of the adoption of the
copy/paste strategy and inappropriate referencing. First, he partially copied
sentences directly from online resources instead of paraphrasing sentences (Appendix 25). In addition, he did not reference the source inside the text and used incorrect end of text referencing style although these issues have been taught in the post-foundation courses.

It has been discussed in the literature that plagiarism is a common feature in L2 writing at tertiary level, an issue that has been noted in the Gulf as discussed in section 3.5.5. It seems that the participants in this study do not see that this strategy is an academically unacceptable practice and therefore unintentionally resort to plagiarism supporting the literature in this regard (Li & Casanave, 2012; Pecorari, 2003). There are several reasons why students adopt the copy and paste strategy beside their inadequate English level. First, some teachers do not mind if students copy and paste the information from a source. In fact, during my classroom observation a teacher told me that she does not assess students’ language in their written assignments because “they copy everything from the net”. Another reason is that such a strategy reduces the effort and time to write and could ensure that students receive good grades as Muzna highlighted: “The teacher might ask for 3 side effects of a drug. So it’s clear, you get them from the net; so no worries about losing grades”.

With respect to referencing the source, Amer maintained that “Some teachers ask for the reference, others don’t ask for them” which has been confirmed by the participants. The participants also noted that in order to reference the source they “need to mention the link” (Azhaar). While Safaa assumed that “There is no way for referencing. We mention the link and that’s it”, Salim clarified:
Yes, we need to mention the source. It’s a bit difficult because there’re certain rules how to write the reference according to last name, then first name and then date. But it’s not that difficult. I can manage.

Although students in their post-foundation courses learn the APA referencing style for different kinds of resources such as books, journals, newspapers and online resources, it seems that not all teachers in the specialised departments ask the students to apply this referencing style and suffice with mentioning the link. Some teachers do not even require students to reference the source. This shows that there is inconsistency between what students learn in their post-foundation classes and what they have to apply in their content classes. In fact, according to the Quality Assurance Manual (2014: 68) available on the college website, “Staff and students must be encouraged to use proper citations and acknowledgements to the work of others in respect of the principle of intellectual property” in order to “keep up with the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty”. The quote by Safaa clearly reveals that students are aware that plagiarism is a way of cheating and has to be avoided:

As you know in writing there can be cheating. Some students cheat. They copy and then paste information. But the college has a programme and knows if there’s cheating. I don’t copy but I get the idea and then I write it in my own way.

While the ELC takes plagiarism seriously, it seems that other departments are rather relaxed in this regard which indicates that there is inconsistency between applying the rules on plagiarism between the ELC and other departments. It seems that the threat to adopt programmes that detect plagiarism in students’ writing is rather a lip-service which is not applied in reality. It could be that these
teachers are aware of their students’ linguistic weaknesses and therefore do not penalise them for the offence of plagiarism similar to teachers’ attitudes in Al-Badwawi’s (2011) study. This is a serious issue and raises several concerns.

First, the benefit of these writings assignments regarding the enhancement of content knowledge has to be questioned. When students just copy and paste information from the internet into their assignments, there is no guarantee that the students in fact understood what they have written and thereby enhance their comprehension of a certain issue. Second, when students do not rewrite what they have understood using their own language, then the benefit of these writing assignments regarding their writing skills improvement has to be questioned. Moreover, students who intend to continue their study in international higher institutions might find it difficult to comply with the rules and regulations regarding plagiarism because in their own context it was considered an academically acceptable practice. From an institutional perspective, Alhinai and Al-Mahrooqi (2015) argue that “The validity of the assessment can be threatened”. I would argue that this could not only jeopardize the reputation of the institution but also the credibility of the educational system in a country which might have a negative impact on students’ future employment opportunities.

Overall, it seems that the writing assignments in this context serve assessment purposes and are therefore not seen by the students as learning opportunities in relation to content or language. In fact, Alaa was the only student who questioned the benefit of such kinds of assignments: “The point of the assignment is to clarify certain issues in our study but for some teachers the
requirement of the assignment seems to be pointless. Just some questions to answer that doesn’t support in understanding a certain concept”. This can also explain why most students did not notice an improvement in their writing skills as a result of studying in their degree programmes. Therefore, the students’ participation in the writing process can be referred to as passing or procedural participation instead of deep participation as argued by Prior (1998 in Li & Casavane, 2012).

5.4.4 Teacher feedback – “We don’t see the paper again”

Feedback is widely seen as a potential tool for learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) since the provision of feedback on students’ writing could contribute to the acquisition of content knowledge and writing conventions (Hyland, 2013; Ng, 2015). In fact, 46.3% (n=152) of the questionnaire participants agreed with the statement “My content teachers help me improve my writing skills through correcting my mistakes”. However, this did not become evident in the interview findings. For example, Safaa explained that “We just submit the paper and then we don’t see it again”, a practice that all interview participants confirmed. Lamia added that “They [teachers] don’t tell us anything about the language”. Muzna’s interview excerpt below is a clear account of what happens after students write their assignments:

I print it and I give it to the teacher and he evaluates it. Not that he takes the report and tells me where my mistakes are. No, he just collects them and then gives us a grade. We don’t see the report again. The teacher doesn’t return the report.
Muzna expressed her disappointment by stating “This is wrong. We need to see the report again. Why? To see our mistakes”. In line with her view Safaa noted:

Another problem is that we don’t understand where our mistakes are when we do an assignment. Only when we keep asking, then the teacher checks carefully and provides us with some feedback. The teachers should always provide us with feedback about our mistakes.

Absence of teacher feedback supports previous research findings (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Hyland, 2013) in particular in relation to language issues. That content teachers do not see themselves as language teachers has been established in the literature (Airey, 2012; Ali, 2013; Costa & Coleman, 2013; Dearden, 2015; Doiz et al., 2013; King, 2014; Wilkinson, 2013). If the rationale for the implementation of the EMI policy is to enhance the students’ English level, then teachers should have a clear understanding of what their role entails. It seems that the college did not take this into consideration when the EMI policy was adopted.

5.5 Effect of EMI on students’ academic performance

5.5.1. Performance in exams - “There are many problems during exams”

The questionnaire findings indicate that 46.3% (n=152) of the participants agreed with the statement “Sometimes I do not answer correctly in the exam because I do not understand the question in English” while 33.8% (n=111) disagreed. Almost all interview participants acknowledged that they face difficulties in comprehending exam questions which is in line with the findings in a previous
study that I conducted in Oman (Al-Bakri, 2013). Some participants referred to the problems they faced due to the use of new words in exam questions. The interview excerpt by Amer highlights this point:

There are many problems during exams. Sometimes the teacher uses new vocabulary in the mid-semester or final exam; vocabulary that hasn’t been mentioned in the class during a lecture or in the handout. This happens in particular in multiple choice questions or a long question… Every semester this happens. I misunderstand a word and I give a wrong answer.

Muzna pointed out: “Sometimes I face difficulties with the question – the beginning of the question – like ‘identify’ or so. I have to read the question several times and this is usually related to multiple choice questions” while Aref reported that he often writes a wrong response as a result of misunderstanding an exam question:

This happened many times. I misunderstand the question and I write a response that is related to another question. Just a week ago I wrote a response to a question and the teacher gave me a zero and he explained that I wrote a response that is related to another question. So he told me that I need to understand the question in a better way.

Overall, 12 participants reported that they often write a wrong response due to misunderstanding a question in the exam. Lamia complained that “When we ask the teachers in the exam they don’t explain the question”. Nadia elaborated on this issue and stated:

When I don’t understand a question in the exam I call the teacher but he just reads the question – he doesn’t explain. But I can read, I don’t want him to give me an answer, I just want to understand
what I should do. No, he just reads the question and goes. But I want to understand! I can read.

According to the college regulations, teachers are not allowed to respond to students’ questions regardless of the kind of question asked. The rationale is to ensure that there is complete silence in the exam room for students to be able to concentrate on their exams. While most teachers unquestioningly follow this order and can therefore be seen as servants to the system (Shohamy, 2006), few teachers seem to question the appropriateness of this rule because Huda assured that “If there is a word I don’t understand I can ask the teacher” an observation that was shared by Manal who simply stated that “If I have a problem I ask the teacher - finish”.

Few participants mentioned that they sometimes understood the question but faced difficulties in expressing themselves in English. A similar observation has been made by Sert (2008) and Brock-Utne and Alidou (2011). For example, Hussam explained: “I understand the question but how to write the answer in English. In Arabic I would know how to answer but how to formulate it in English”? In this case he stated “I leave it blank and hand in my paper”. Azhaar also had great problems expressing herself in English as the following quote shows: “When I was studying business, we had to write in English in the exams. We had to write explanations. I used to fail. I failed in all the subjects in business”.
5.5.2 Satisfaction with academic performance –“I never get a grade that satisfies me”

Most participants stated that they are content with the effort they make to study in English. For example, Hussam noted:

Yes, I’m content. Because I was at a stage where I didn’t know anything in English, zero, but if I want to evaluate myself I would say 4 out of 10. A little bit and I’ll reach a good level. Today I got 7 out of 10 in a quiz. This isn’t a top grade but I made an effort and studied and I’m content.

Similarly, Mariam indicated “Honestly I’m pleased because I make an effort. Even if my grades aren’t very high but I make an effort on a daily basis”. Manal was one of the students who felt that she got what she deserves: “I’m content. I know this is my ability”. However, most participants were not content in relation to their exam results because their hard efforts to study in English did not bear the deserved results. An example is provided by Muzna who stated:

We’re frustrated with the exams this semester. I don’t know if the college has applied new rules or it’s the teacher. We study, memorise and do what we have to do but in the exam we get surprised because the teacher penalises us for trivial things. This happened this semester. And we face problems with spelling. One letter wrong and half the mark is deducted – for one letter!

The feeling of disappointment was also expressed by Nadia when she stated: “I remember that in one of the subjects I revised for 3 days before the exam, not to mention that I revise the subject after each lesson. Still, I never get a grade that satisfies me. Always”! Mariam alluded to the issue of injustice in her quote: “I think that teachers don’t always correct the papers and I feel that students don’t
always receive the grade they deserve”. Salim raised the issue that the low performance of students at the early stage of studying through EMI has a negative effect on students’ overall performance when they graduate:

Honestly I’m not very content because when I finished foundation I wasn’t very good and I faced great difficulties. I didn’t understand the system about the GPA. In most subjects I got a poor grade. But after a while my grades got better. Now, when I reached the BA level I’m content about my performance but my poor performance in the past affected my overall GPA.

The findings indicate that the participants felt that their low achievement is not related to lack of effort from their side. Instead, most participants blamed the teacher for their unexpected low academic performance, similar to students’ attitudes in King’s (2014) study in the UAE. As already discussed, most participants reported that often they do not know where their mistakes are due to lack of feedback from teachers, therefore they felt unable to improve their performance. It also seems that there is no clarity in terms of what is expected from the students in regard to content and language. It seems that students believe that they lost grades for language mistakes rather than content, an issue they are not clear about. Some participants reported that asking the teachers about the reasons for their low performance is not always possible as Lamia’s quote shows: “But when we ask the teacher they tell us that they are not allowed to show us our mistakes. We don’t know what we did wrong”. According to my knowledge, teachers in this college are required to provide students with feedback on their performance. However, meeting with teachers is not always possible as Ali experienced: “When I went to see him the second time he gave
me an appointment but today he travelled so I couldn’t talk to him”. The belief that teachers do not provide the students with the support they expected is also evident in Nadia’s comment: “She just gives us the papers, registers the grade and collects the papers”.

The findings suggest that students do not feel that they are rewarded for their efforts to study in English and feel that they are left alone in their struggle. This could eventually have a negative impact on student’s morale to continue working hard in order to pass their exams since repeated failure “undermines self-confidence and increases negative achievement emotions, such as anxiety of failure, shame and hopelessness” (Pekrun, 2014: 24).

5.5.3 Expected academic performance through AMI – “In Arabic I would have been one of the top students in class”

Regarding students’ expected learning experiences through AMI, all but one interview participant reported that studying through Arabic would be “easier and clearer”. Ali was the only participant who stated: “I would find it more difficult to understand in Arabic because I don’t know the technical terms in Arabic. For example I wouldn’t understand the meaning of ‘exposure’ in Arabic. For me, I understand better in English”. That studying in Arabic would take less time was believed by 48.8% (n=160) of the questionnaire participants in contrast to 30.2% (n=99) who did not believe that. For example, Nadia explained that “there would be a difference in the time it takes to study. It would take us much less time because in English we need to translate. In Arabic we know the words so we can
study easily”. In addition, Mariam assured that “When I leave the class I would have much more information. Also, when I study in Arabic I would remember for a long time. Now we study, do exams and then we forget. Also I would feel more comfortable”. In fact, research has shown that investment in mother tongue learning has long term benefits for overall academic performance (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). Moreover, Hussam stressed that studying in Arabic would be more comfortable and relaxing:

First, I wouldn’t need to make a great effort. I would feel much more relaxed. If I have a question, I would feel comfortable to ask. Whenever I go to college I would feel comfortable. If I meet a person I would feel comfortable because if we talk, it would be in Arabic, my own language. Another thing - it would save me a lot of time and effort. I would understand much better without making a great effort. Also revising for the exam would not be a problem. I would be very happy.

Azhaar elaborated on the importance of feeling comfortable by stating: “When one feels comfortable, one can study better. You don’t do something because you have to but because you like it”.

The questionnaire item “My GPA would be higher if the courses were taught in Arabic” received 46.3% (n=152) agreement and 32.0% (n=105) disagreement which is very similar to the participants’ views in Al-Mashikhi et al.’s (2014) study where 48.3% of the participants felt that their GPA has deteriorated because the courses use EMI. Most interview participants expected to receive higher or much higher grades were their study in Arabic as Azhaar explained: “In Arabic I would have been one of the top students in class. I would have got higher grades. Now
I got B+ but if the subjects were in Arabic I would get for sure A+”. Amer provided an explanation why he expects his grades to be higher: “I would have better grades, much higher grades because there is a difference between learning in your own language and English. I would understand much better in class and I would perform better in quizzes and exams”. Lamia added that “I’m sure I would get higher grades because everything would be clear and we can study easily. Nothing would be difficult”. Few students were not sure whether learning in Arabic would lead to higher grades. For example, Muzna pointed out that “It could be that they were higher but this depends on me and the exam questions” thereby showing awareness that the knowledge of language is not the only factor that affects students’ academic achievement. Aref thought that “there would be a slight difference only because of the content which is mostly related to mathematical equations”. Ali was the only participant who expected to receive lower grades as shown in his interview excerpt below:

My specialisation? Arabic? Look, if my specialisation now decides to teach in Arabic instead of English I expect my grades would become worse 50, 60 or 70% because there is a change of language. I’ve already learned it in English before I joined the college from the net. I learned it all in English, I understood it in English.

Overall it seems that a large number of students believe that studying in Arabic would enhance their academic achievement. In fact, language of instruction has been found to be a major factor in educational performance (Kym & Kym, 2014; Shohamy, 2006). Therefore, several researchers advocate the use of the mother-tongue in education (Brock-Utne, 2006; Quorro, 2006, Troudi, 2009). This raises
concerns whether students’ belief has an impact on their motivation to study. It also raises concerns whether these students who study through English are disadvantaged in comparison to students who could study their degrees in their native language when applying for a job. After all, the GPA is one of the factors that hiring bodies will look at when graduates apply for a job. It might be worth considering whether learning through English in fact provides students with better job opportunities as claimed.

5.5.4. Students’ input to enhance academic performance – “The college should focus on the student”

Overall, 12 participants provided suggestions for improvement of their learning experiences. Since one of the aims of this study is to provide students with a voice regarding their experiences with EMI, I will refer to all participants’ views regarding this issue. First, Ali was the only participant who believed that the college “should get rid of all the Arab teachers or they should be forced to use only one language not two”. He provides the following argument:

What is happening now is that if the student doesn’t know a word in English, the teacher immediately translates the word in Arabic. So I feel that the student doesn’t make any effort to understand or to learn the word or to search for the meaning of a word. If the student searches for himself it might stick to his mind other than when he gets the meaning immediately. I feel if the teachers are all non-native speakers [of Arabic] and the students learn in English in all levels, the student has no other choice than to learn.

Ali was taught English in the GFP by foreign teachers who do not know Arabic, so for him, the key to enhance academic achievement is having adequate
English language skills which he believes is best achieved through a monolingual approach of English teaching. This would support previous findings that the monolingual fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) exists in Oman among students (Ismail, 2012; Al-Bakri, 2013). In contrast, Azhaar stated: “I wish the college would teach some subjects in Arabic or employ teachers from Arab countries so that the teacher could explain in Arabic in case we didn’t understand a certain point in English”. In line with her view, Salim noted: “I don’t know if this is possible but some subjects could be taught in Arabic. At least some subjects”! Nadia suggested that “the college should reduce the number of Indian teachers and instead bring teachers from Syria or Egypt” whereas Hussam believed that “the college should create a centre for students to get support in Arabic”. Students who face difficulties in their study could go there to ask questions in Arabic and teachers could explain in Arabic”. For these students, the use of L1 was seen to support the comprehension of the subject matter. Muzna thought that the college “should open centers where students can get support from teachers and other top students … Then students would be happy”. The belief that the college should care about the psychological well-being of students has been expressed by Hussam:

Also the college should follow the weak students. Perhaps the students have family problems or health problems. When they follow up this would provide the students with comfort because this shows that the college supports them. If not, then the students feel frustrated.

Most participants found that the quality of the teachers and the teaching methods should be enhanced: “The college should focus on the student. They should
make sure to transmit the information to the student. More than half of the teachers don’t do that” (Basil), while Mariam noted “the teachers should change the teaching methods. They should be more flexible and studying should be less stressful for students”. Her view was supported by Nadia, Safaa and Muzna. In addition, Muzna, and Salim felt that the curriculum needs to be changed since they found that some courses are “useless”. Amer believed that teachers could simplify the material by using “simple” language whereas Aref thought it would be best to provide students with more practice instead of overloading them with theoretical issues. Only two participants, Huda and Manal thought that students themselves are responsible for their learning outcomes. For example, Manal explained: I don’t think the college is responsible. It depends on the effort the person makes a view shared by Huda who mentioned: “I don’t think the college should do anything. It depends on the student. If one is motivated then one can manage. It has to come from the student himself”. Since students’ prior experience in schools are relatively teacher-centred (World Data on Education, 2010/2011), it is expected that students are rather dependent learners and therefore assume that poor teaching rather than their own linguistic deficiency jeopardizes their performance at college. However, it seems that some students have intrinsic motivation to overcome the challenges of studying through EMI and feel that they are responsible for their own learning.

Although the majority of the participants seem to accept the EMI policy, it seems that they are less content with the implementation of the policy at the college. Most importantly, the quality of the teachers and their teaching methods were
questioned. Several participants found that the use of Arabic in class beside English and in support centres could facilitate students’ learning of the content. Therefore some participants favoured the employment of Arabic-speaking teachers, echoing the views of participants in studies by Ellili-Cherif and Alkhateeb (2015) in Qatar and Ismail (2011) and Al-Mashikhi et al. (2014) in Oman. An interesting finding is that even the students who did not support the EMI policy and who strongly believed that the language of instruction should be Arabic, did not suggest that Arabic should become the language of instruction at this college. In fact only Azhaar and Salim hoped that the college would reconsider its decision to teach all subjects through English and would decide to teach some subjects in Arabic. Language education policies are usually imposed in a top-down manner (Shohamy, 2006). Teachers who play an important role in decision-making are often excluded from educational policy (Troudi, 2009; Mouhanna, 2016). Similarly, students who are mostly affected by language education policies are also excluded from educational policy decisions. That the participants are aware of this issue becomes evident in Salim’s note when he questioned the possibility of teaching at least some subjects in Arabic. I would argue that it is essential to include students’ voices in any educational policy decision since these decisions do not only affect what and how students learn but also has an impact on their future lives.

5.6 Conclusion

The themes identified in the findings lead to the need to question the current EMI policy whether it serves all students equally and whether it in fact best prepares
them for their future jobs through which they could participate in the economic
development of the country. These concerns will be addressed in the last chapter
of the study where the implications and recommendations of the study will be
drawn from a critical perspective of the findings.
CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to conclude the research process where I first provide a summary of the main findings in regard to each research question before I outline the implications of the study and present the recommendations that are mainly directed at policy makers. Then I explain the theoretical and pedagogical contribution of the study before providing suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with my reflections on my personal experience with my thesis journey.

6.1 Summary of the main findings

The first research question considered tertiary students’ views on EMI in a public college in Oman. Overall, the participants either supported or accepted the EMI policy due to their strong belief that it would help them enhance their English language proficiency which is seen as essential because of its important role in the world and in Oman in particular. AMI was seen as possible but not desirable as it might limit their job opportunities. Few participants were against EMI because they believed it impeded profound comprehension of the subject matter and had a negative impact on their ability to use MSA. One participant expressed her concern that EMI leads to marginalisation of Arabic and is a violation against students’ right to study in their mother tongue.

Research question two intended to explore the effect of EMI on the quality of students’ learning experiences. The participants acknowledged that they faced great difficulties studying in English although they felt ready after studying in the
GFP. There was general agreement among participants that language improvement was noticeable in speaking skills and that it happened mostly as a result of studying in the GFP rather than in content classes. In fact, some participants noted that their English language skills have deteriorated as a result of EMI. All students reported to face difficulties in comprehending lectures which was not only dependent on their linguistic competence but was also affected by the teacher origin and delivery style. Some participants expressed their preference for Arab teachers because they could provide explanations in Arabic. The teacher-centred approach adopted by most teachers, restricted students’ interaction in class. In order to cope with the challenges of EMI, the students had to invest in extra effort such as preparing lessons beforehand, translating the texts, consulting peers and teachers and self-study. Most importantly, EMI had a negative psychological impact on students. Few participants felt frustrated because they got delayed in their study and some felt that teachers embarrass them because of their weak linguistic competence. Some suffered from low self-esteem which hindered them from asking questions in class while others were inclined not to attend classes regularly since they felt bored when they did not understand.

Research question three considered the difficulties that students face in reading in their content courses. The reading load in content courses consisted of reading the handout, summaries or power-point slides and occasionally online resources. All participants faced difficulties in reading especially online resources. Unknown vocabulary was seen as the main obstacle that hampered
comprehension but there was disagreement about the kind of vocabulary. Moreover, comprehending the material was also related to the disciplines. In order to cope with the demand of reading in their specialised fields, students employed several strategies such as translating the text, guessing meaning from the context, peer and teacher support and summarising the text which needed a lot of effort and was time consuming.

The fourth research question was designed to explore the difficulties that students encounter in writing in their specialised courses. The participants found writing to be an important skill since they had to do a variety of writing assignments. There was agreement among the participants that the assignments were assessed according to the accuracy of the content rather than language. Most students acknowledged facing difficulties in writing mainly because of their weakness in grammar and spelling while vocabulary was not reported to be a main challenge. One of the writing strategies was to write in Arabic first and then to translate the text into English. Another strategy was to copy and paste material from a source into their writing assignments. In respect to referencing the sources, the participants indicated that only some teachers asked for the link of the source. They also mentioned that most teachers did not provide them with feedback on their writing assignments so they did not understand where their mistakes are. Also, lack of feedback on language mistakes was seen as a reason why students continue making the same language mistakes.

In respect to the fifth research question on the effect of EMI on students’ academic performance, the participants acknowledged that they sometimes do
not understand an exam question due to some words which are unknown to
them. As a result they provide a wrong answer to the question. Also, some
students mentioned that they are not able to respond to an exam question
because they do not know how to express themselves in English. While the
participants were in general content with the effort they made, they were less
satisfied with the grades they received and the support provided by the teacher
and college. Almost half of the participants expected that AMI would enhance
their academic performance because it would be easier to gain profound
comprehension while few students felt that it would be the same since some
subjects depend on mathematical equations rather than on language proficiency.
Overall, the participants felt that the college is responsible for the improvement of
their learning experiences which in turn would have an effect on their academic
performance. It was suggested that the college should hire more Arab teachers
and create a centre where students could get support in their study. Few
participants hoped that the college would decide to offer some courses in Arabic.
The participants also believed that the quality of the teaching staff and teaching
methods should be enhanced and that the curriculum should be revised since
some subjects are seen as useless. Only two interview participants felt that the
college has done its share and that the students should be responsible for their
own learning.

6.2 Implications

Reviewing students’ views on the EMI policy and how they manage their learning
and considering the effects of the EMI policy on students’ academic learning
experiences and their academic achievement, several implications emerge. The fact that students manage to study in English despite the challenges which they face and eventually graduate from college suggests that EMI might be an appropriate choice for equipping students with the necessary professional knowledge and skills to function efficiently in the local and even global job market. This would also facilitate the Omanisation process where Omani graduates are expected to replace foreign employees who have been initially hired to fill gaps in the labour market which Omanis were previously not able to fill. However, adopting a critical perspective, the current EMI policy has to be contested for several reasons.

The EMI policy which is imposed on students does not take into consideration that they are linguistically not ready to study in English. The fact that students are accepted to study in their degree programmes with an IELTS score of 4.0, which is much lower than the suggested minimum IELTS score of 5.5 for linguistically less demanding courses (IELTS, 2015) can be seen as an indicator that English is an added burden for students. Further evidence is provided through the accounts of students’ learning experiences which show that they are only able to comprehend the academic subjects after translating the content into Arabic. This means that students’ struggle to comprehend the content is rather related to the language in which the content is presented than the academic content itself. The dependence on translation into Arabic to comprehend reading texts and also to write in English indicates that students’ English level is not appropriate for studying a degree programme in English. Moreover, students’ inability to interact
in the classroom and reluctance and fear to ask and respond to questions in class indicates that English is a barrier for effective communication among students and teachers (Al-Mashikhi et al, 2014; Baporikar & Shah, 2012; Mouhanna, 2016) which in turn might have a negative impact on the quality of education the students’ receive (Quorro, 2006).

The findings also indicate that the EMI policy does not provide students with equal opportunities to study in a degree programme of their choice. For example, some students failed to succeed in their study due to language barrier and had to drop out of college. Others had to change their specialisation to join one that was linguistically less demanding but which they would not have chosen were their study provided in their mother tongue. Overall, students’ ability to succeed is not only related to their ability to deal with academic content but also related to their English language competence. Students who have weaker abilities in subject knowledge might still outperform their peers who have greater abilities in subject knowledge only because they are linguistically more proficient, a concern also raised by McLaren (2011).

Considering the argument that both Arabic and English are needed for students’ future employment, the suitability of the EMI policy has to be questioned. The findings suggest that studying over several years through English has an impact on students’ ability to use MSA. Therefore, it is anticipated that students might not be able to use professional Arabic efficiently in work situations which is especially required in the public sector but might also be needed in the private sector. An overemphasis on EMI might therefore not satisfy all students’ needs.
regarding future employment (King, 2014; Mouhanna, 2016). In addition, the suitability of EMI to raise students’ English level is also questionable. As the findings suggest, language improvement happened mostly as a result of learning in the GFP and PFP. In contrast, language improvement due to EMI is rather limited and mostly restricted to the enhancement of specialised vocabulary knowledge. Content classes were students are often provided with incomprehensible input and where interaction and output are limited do not provide students with appropriate conditions for English language learning (Al-Bakri, 2013). Students might therefore graduate from college just to realize that Arabic and English language competence is of insufficient standard for employment (King, 2014).

Some students expressed their preference to study in Arabic but have no other choice than to study in English, a situation that Troudi and Jendli (2011: 41) termed “choiceless choice”. This invokes Phillipson’s theory (1992, 2009b) of linguistic imperialism where he argues that the spread of the English diffusion paradigm poses a threat to indigenous or native languages. While the adoption of EMI was not directly imposed on the educational system in Oman from the outside circle but rather self-imposed by local policy-makers (Troudi, 2009) one of its effects is that agency to resist such a policy is taken away from students. Considering Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) argument of students’ human right to receive education in their mother tongue, these students are deprived of their human right, which should not be taken lightly. Students are raised to feel proud of their Arabic language which is part of their identity and national pride.
However, in order to continue higher education in their own country, students have to study in a language that is foreign to them. This could not only pose a threat on the status of Arabic in education, but could also have serious psychological effects on students’ self-esteem especially those who were successful in their study in Arabic but who are now seen as losers due to their weak English linguistic abilities.

Whether content teachers are linguistically and pedagogically competent to teach in English is also worth considering. First, teachers come from different origins and therefore students are exposed to a variety of accents which they find difficult to comprehend especially since they are not exposed to these accents in their previous study of English at schools (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). It seems that teachers are not aware of the students’ struggle and therefore rarely make an effort to make their speech more comprehensible through speaking clearly and slowly. This has a negative impact on students’ comprehension of lectures and requires them to make an extra effort to comprehend the subjects. The delivery style adopted by teachers is teacher-centred and depends on transmission of knowledge and does not provide students with opportunities to create knowledge through discussion and interaction (Barnard, 2015).

The quality of academic knowledge gained through EMI has also to be questioned since the reading load is reduced and core skills such as reading and writing are almost avoided to facilitate learning as found by King (2014). For example, teachers support their students by reading the handout in class and by providing their students with simplified material. In addition, writing is reduced to
an information gathering activity where students often just lift material from the internet, an activity which is seen as acceptable considering the students’ English level (Al-Badwawi, 2011). I would argue that these measures support students to pass their courses but do not allow them to gain academic knowledge appropriate for undergraduate bachelor programmes. Overall, what is expected from students in regard to reading and writing is below what is expected from students who study in their L1, therefore the quality of academic content knowledge gained has to be questioned (King, 2014; McLaren, 2011; Mouhanna, 2016).

6.3 Recommendations

Keeping in line with the critical agenda of this study, I would like to put forward some recommendations that are hoped to improve the learning conditions of students studying in higher education in this particular context in Oman. These recommendations are based on the analysis of implications of the findings and although they might challenge the status quo they should be realistically achievable.

6.3.1 Enhancement of students’ English language proficiency

The findings suggest that the major obstacle of learning at tertiary level is students’ low English language proficiency. If Oman intends to continue to implement the EMI policy at higher education institutions, then appropriate measures need to be taken in order to better prepare the students for their study in English. Since the findings showed that GFP are supportive in raising students’
English level but are not sufficient for developing students’ language competence to the adequate level for academic study, it is essential that schools enhance the quality of English language teaching (Mouhanna, 2016; Sergon, 2011; Troudi, 2009). This does not necessarily mean increasing the number of English teaching hours but could be achieved through revising the current curriculum, pedagogy and teaching materials. For example, it would be useful to provide students with listening materials where English is spoken by native and non-native speakers, in particular by those who are present in the Omani society. This would allow students to become familiar with the accents spoken by teachers at tertiary level. If students are equipped with profound knowledge in general English, then the acquisition of academic English would be easier. GFPs could be designed for each faculty to further enhance the acquisition of specialised terminology which students might encounter in their study. This would allow a smoother transmission from foundation to disciplinary programmes.

6.3.2 Revision of the EMI policy

Adopting a strict EMI policy is unfair to students especially to those with low English language proficiency who struggle to cope with the challenges of studying in English. This in turn might reflect on their real potentials and they might even have to drop out of college. Arabic is unofficially used by teachers to facilitate learning and plays an important role in students’ learning strategies to comprehend materials. In addition, Arabic is a source of comfort for students which is essential for learning. Therefore, I would recommend the institutions to
introduce AMI in all its faculties. If courses were offered in Arabic, then more content could be covered over a course and students would be better able to gain a deep understanding of the subject matter. They might also be more encouraged to read in a language they understand. In addition, students would be better able to ask and respond to questions and to express their ideas either orally or in writing. Moreover, students would not need to resort to plagiarism in order to write academic assignments. Overall, studying in Arabic would enhance the quality of education the students receive. It would also regain students’ confidence in the ability of Arabic to be the language of academia, an issue that has been promoted by Raddawi & Meslem (2015). However, it cannot be ignored that there is a demand for English in Oman. It is used as a lingua franca and mastering English might maximize students’ job opportunities. Adopting a monolingual AMI policy would not necessarily fulfill students’ needs regarding future employment. Therefore, I would suggest that students’ English level is further enhanced through offering courses for English for academic purposes (EAP) and for specific purposes (ESP) as suggested by Troudi (2009) while students follow their specialised courses in Arabic. Also some courses should be offered in English taking into consideration students’ English proficiency. This suggestion would be in line with other studies where a bilingual approach has been promoted (Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014; Mouhanna, 2016; Raddawi & Meslem, 2015). What I have in mind is an additive bilingual approach where Arabic is further developed and English is added but not at the expense of marginalising Arabic as a language of academia. This would be in line with Phillipson (2008:1)
who argues for “the maintenance of multilingualism, with English in balance with other languages”. Preparing the curriculum in Arabic could be done in consultation with universities and colleges in Arab countries that have experience with AMI. This would also require hiring competent teachers who are specialised in teaching disciplinary subjects in Arabic in addition to increasing the number of bilingual teachers because they would be better able to interact with students in Arabic and English. Due to their profound understanding of students’ cultural, social and religious background they would also be better able to bond with students.

6.3.3 Enhancement of teacher competence

Institutions should make sure to hire teachers that are competent to teach at tertiary level. This does not only include having a degree in a specialised field and having the linguistic competence to teach especially EMI classes, but should also include having the pedagogic competence to teach college students. The latter could be promoted through the provision of professional development sessions where teachers could also exchange their pedagogic experiences. Most importantly, teachers have to replace the teacher-centred approach in teaching where students sit silently and try to absorb the knowledge transmitted to them, with a student-centred approach. Classes should become sites where students learn to question, investigate, think critically, solve problems and make decisions (Quorro, 2006). In regard to EMI courses, teachers should be provided with ongoing support through professional development opportunities that are designed to enhance teachers’ pedagogic competence in a way that is
appropriate for the students in this particular context. The institution should also have clear assessment criteria which all teachers have to follow especially in regard to language issues. This would avoid the current confusion that is prevalent among students regarding assessment criteria.

6.3.4 Support for students

It is recommended to increase students’ support during their study especially in EMI courses. Institutions could create support centers where students could resort to in case they face some difficulties in their study. Teachers and qualified students could be of great help to low performers. This would not only support these students academically but also psychologically, an aspect that is often neglected at higher education institutions. Moreover, teachers should provide students with feedback on their performance so that they could build on their strength and weaknesses. In regard to writing assignments in English, students should be able to receive support from English teachers. This could be achieved through the coordination of the faculties with the ELC. To support students during exams, it would be useful to present the questions in English and Arabic. Since the aim of the test is to assess students’ comprehension of the subject matter, then the language of the question should not be part of the test (Shohamy, 2006). This would not only facilitate comprehension of the exam but would also lead students to have more confidence. Overall, students should feel that the institution is a place for learning in a supportive environment and not a place for struggle where they find themselves being left alone.
6.4 Theoretical and pedagogical contribution

My study investigated issues related to EMI from a consumer perspective whose insights are excluded from language policy decisions. The value of my study is that it is the first study in Oman that critically explored students’ perceptions on EMI and investigated how students studying in different faculties manage to study disciplinary content in English especially in regard to reading and writing. Through a focus on students’ views on EMI and their accounts of their experiences with EMI in content courses, the study gave a voice to otherwise voiceless students. However, this study did not suffice to explore students’ views on EMI and their practices in order to understand what they believe regarding EMI and what they do to manage to study content in English. Adopting a post-modern problematizing stance as advocated by critical applied linguistics, these voices were not merely presented as reflecting multiple realities but were interpreted in light of the social and historical context that affected their views. Through relating the micro with the macro environment of EMI I could focus on critical issues in regard to EMI such as power, access, injustice, marginalisation and exclusion thereby adding an emancipatory dimension to the research (Johnson, 2013; Pennycook, 2001; Tollefson, 2013). Therefore, this study contributes to critical research on EMI which is rather scarce in Oman.

The value of this research also lies in its research design which consisted of adopting a sequential mixed methods approach. The use of three research methods to investigate issues related to EMI has so far rarely been employed. In particular, the use of classroom observations is considered to be a valuable tool
for investigating language education policies, but is the least used research method in an EMI context. While students could express their opinions through the questionnaire and the semi-structure interview, the classroom observations were opportunities to gain first-hand insight into students’ learning environments. It also gave some insight into teachers’ enactment of the policy which has so far not been investigated in Oman. This study could be used by researchers as a sample to further conduct qualitative studies adopting these three data collection methods within an interpretive/critical paradigm.

Pedagogically, this study provided comprehensive insight into the strategies that students use to manage their study and highlighted the psychological effects of the EMI policy on students, which is an area that has not received much attention in research on EMI. It also gave some insight into teachers’ linguistic and pedagogic abilities that are crucial aspects to consider in the EMI policy planning. In order to consider the implications of the study, I made several recommendations in an attempt to advocate a more egalitarian and comfortable learning environment. I hope that these recommendations will be incorporated in future language policy planning. While further studies are needed at the grass-route level from students’ and teachers’ perspectives, this study is an attempt to raise awareness among the stakeholders who are affected by the policy and policy makers to the critical issues related to EMI. I also believe that the recommendations of this study are not only of value for policy makers in Oman but could be worth considering in other countries with similar conditions.
Overall, I believe that the findings of this study contribute to existing knowledge and research on EMI by providing further evidence on critical issues that have arisen as a result of the adoption of the EMI policy in Oman based on students' perspective. I believe that the findings are significant in that they reinforced outcomes of recent previous research in Oman, while some findings have been identified for the first time whether in the Gulf in general or in Omani in particular.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

There has recently been a rise in exploratory studies on EMI in the Gulf (Belhiah & Elhami, 2014 in the UAE; Ellili-Sherif & Alkhateeb, 2015 in Qatar) including few critical studies (Al-Kahtany et al. 2016; Habbash & Troudi, 2015 in Saudi Arabia; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017 in the UAE). However, research on EMI is still rare in Oman in particular from a critical perspective. Since students are mainly affected by the policy decision, more in depth critical studies are needed to challenge the status quo. Only through raising awareness to the detrimental effects the EMI policy can have on students' learning experiences, academic performance and even Arabic it is possible to advocate change for the better. For example, further research is needed to investigate the psychological effects of the EMI policy on students' learning experiences since this is an area that has been largely ignored in research on EMI especially in the Gulf region. Reading and writing in content courses are also two research areas that need further investigation. Unlike the current study, reading in content courses could be explored through the adoption of a think-aloud method. Such a method would give first-hand information and could be compared with the information gained from the current study. In regard
to writing, research could further investigate how students manage to write in content classes through more in-depth analysis of a variety of written texts, something that I was not able to achieve in this study. In particular issues regarding plagiarism need to be further investigated, since research on plagiarism is still in its infancy in the Gulf. It would also be interesting to conduct comparative studies on EMI in different departments which would complement findings in this study. In Oman, most studies that have been conducted are rather small-scale studies where either surveys are used as the sole research method or occasionally combined with interviews. More illuminating findings regarding EMI could be achieved through the employment of classroom observation as this study showed. In addition, quantitative research in public and private institutions could be used to further investigate the themes identified in my study. The findings from small-scale exploratory studies and large-scale quantitative studies could aid policy makers to make necessary changes. Teachers also play an important role in EMI implementation. This study indirectly showed some aspects of how teachers in Oman enact the EMI policy. Further research in this line is needed so that a more solid body of research is provided that would include the voices of students and teachers from which conclusions for possible change could be drawn.

6.6 Personal reflection on thesis journey

Reflecting on my thesis journey, I can conclude that it was an empowering and certainly a challenging experience. Conducting a qualitative study of such a magnitude cannot be accomplished without the will power to stay focused on the
research topic for a couple of years and the ability to overcome the challenges that one is confronted with, especially at the data analysis stage. However, overcoming these challenges not only gave me a push forward to continue my thesis, but also equipped me with invaluable research skills, in particular in regard to the use of computer software programmes such as SPSS and Nvivo that facilitated data management and analysis, which will definitely be of support in my further research projects.

My interest in the thesis topic arouse out of my concern about the unequal learning opportunities that students are provided with under the EMI policy and my hope that addressing issues related to EMI from a critical perspective would advocate change for the better. As part of my doctoral study, I was introduced to critical issues in language teaching which I see as an awakening call to controversial and critical issues in the field of ELT. After I conducted a small-scale critical study on EMI for one of my assignments, I became even more interested in EMI and I was determined to further investigate the EMI policy in Oman in my doctoral thesis. Reviewing the literature on EMI from different parts of the world, the Gulf and Oman was very insightful and supported in finding gaps in the literature. My interest in research on EMI was an ongoing process and even at this stage where I am approaching the end of my thesis I engage myself with reading literature on EMI. I believe that I am now better aware of issues related to EMI that still need to be explored and that I would like to consider in my future research projects.
Conducting this thesis has been an opportunity to question my own beliefs and assumptions regarding EMI. While some findings are in line with my expectations due to my previous experience with research on EMI in Oman, others were unexpected. For example, I believed that students are victims of the EMI policy adopted in Oman and I thought that the majority of students would share my belief. I was rather surprised to realize that most participants believed that they were favoured by the adoption of EMI due to their strong belief that EMI provides them with the opportunity to improve their English skills although they contradicted themselves by acknowledging that studying through EMI has in fact not lead to the language improvement they expected. Only then I became aware that students’ views were not only shaped by local circumstances but also by the power of English and globalisation. I also realized that my own views regarding EMI have been affected by critical applied linguistics. Looking back, I also uncritically embraced critical applied linguistics mainly because I believed that adopting a critical stance would provide me with the opportunity to advocate change. While at the beginning of my thesis journey I thought that implementing AMI would be best for students in this particular context, I changed my view after the data analysis and I recommended the adoption of a bilingual approach as best serving students’ needs.

As I am concluding this thesis I feel empowered since I became much more informed about students’ views and experiences of EMI in content courses, something I was unaware of at the beginning. Observing how students learn in content courses and interviewing them was very interesting and enlightening but
was also on few occasions emotionally challenging. I appreciate students’ willingness and keenness to share their views and experiences with me and I was impressed with their determination to succeed in their study despite the great challenges they face.

While my own thesis journey has come to an end, my research journey regarding EMI has just started. I hope that this thesis will encourage other researchers, in particular in Oman, to further investigate EMI from a critical perspective so that a more egalitarian language policy will be adopted in the future.
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### APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Background information of questionnaire sample**

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Appendix 2: Breakdown of questionnaire sample according to faculties and level of study

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Appendix 3: Breakdown of classroom observation sample

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<td><strong>All faculties</strong></td>
<td><strong>All levels</strong></td>
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## Appendix 4: Background information of interview sample

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<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<th>Level of study</th>
<th>Year registered at college</th>
<th>GFP</th>
<th>Self-evaluation of English language proficiency</th>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>Eng.</td>
<td>Aref</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amer</td>
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<td>male</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>Nadia</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>average</td>
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<td>Manal</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>female</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Higher d.</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>Safa</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Higher d.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion design</td>
<td>Azhaar</td>
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<td>female</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>Photog.</td>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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</table>
Appendix 5: Student questionnaire (English version)

Student questionnaire

Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

Part 1

Dear Student

Please complete the information about yourself.

1. Age __________
2. Gender: male ☐ female ☐
3. Nationality: Omani ☐ Other: __________
4. Which type of school did you attend?
   Government ☐ Private ☐ Government and Private ☐
5. How long did you attend the government and/or private school(s)?
   Government _____ years Private _____ years
6. When did you register at this college? 20____
7. Did you study English in the Foundation programme? Yes ☐ No ☐
8. If yes to 7, which level did you first study?
   Level 1 ☐ Level 2 ☐ Level 3 ☐ Level 4 ☐
9. In which department are you studying now?
   Applied sciences ☐ Engineering ☐ IT ☐ Business ☐
   Fashion design ☐ Pharmacy ☐ Photography ☐
10. At which stage are you in your study now?
    Certificate ☐ Diploma ☐ Higher diploma ☐ Bachelor ☐
11. How would you rate your English language proficiency?
    Very weak ☐ weak ☐ average ☐ above average ☐ good ☐
12. What is your current GPA? ________

Part 2

Please read the statements on the following pages and circle the number which best reflects your learning experience in this college. There are no right/wrong answers. The numbers 1 2 3 4 5 refer to the following responses:

(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements 1-18</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>un-decided</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learning through English can improve my English language proficiency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Scientific subjects should be taught in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I believe that all subjects should be taught in Arabic at this college.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. English is more important than Arabic in education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I need to study in English to get a good job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Learning through English will affect my ability to use standard Arabic (fus’ha).</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Some subjects should be taught in Arabic at this college.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I feel comfortable speaking English in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I rarely participate in class out of fear to make mistakes in speaking English in front of my classmates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Sometimes I do not understand what the teachers say in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. I usually ask questions in class when I do not understand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I can easily take notes in English during the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I feel comfortable asking my content teachers (non-Arabic speakers) questions outside class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. My English listening skills have improved because all classes are in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I feel that my English language is not good enough to study in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. I ask my friends to explain if I do not understand what the teacher says.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. My content teachers re-explain if students do not understand.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements 19-37</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I need to translate many words into Arabic to understand the course material.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20. I have to do a lot of reading in English for my study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. My reading skills have improved because I study in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. I find it difficult to understand technical vocabulary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. My friends help me to understand the course material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Our content teachers spend a lot of time explaining vocabulary.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25. I try to expand my knowledge through reading resources related to my study in English.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. I stop reading when I do not understand the text.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I find it difficult to understand long English texts.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Reading in English is difficult because my grammar is weak.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. I try to guess the meaning of words from the context without translating them into the Arabic language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30. I make sure I understand every word in the text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Writing is an important skill in my specialisation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Because my technical vocabulary is weak I find it difficult to do a writing assignment in my specialisation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33. When I write in English I make grammar mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34. My content teacher is more concerned about the content of my assignment than the correctness of my English language.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35. When I have to write an assignment in my specialisation, I often copy sentences/paragraphs from the internet because my English language is weak.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>36. My writing skills have improved because I have to write a lot of assignments in my specialisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. My content teachers help me improve my writing skills through correcting my mistakes.</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>38. I always make spelling mistakes when I write in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>39. I can express myself clearly in writing in English.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I find it difficult to write in English because I do not know a lot of vocabulary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. I always ask my friends to check my written assignments for mistakes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. I ask someone from outside the college to support me in my writing projects.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43. Because my writing is weak, I first write in Arabic and then translate it into English.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Because my English is weak, I get low grades.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>45. My GPA would be higher if the courses were taught in Arabic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Sometimes I do not answer correctly in the exam because I do not understand the question in English.</td>
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<td>47. It is important to study in English even if I get low grades.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. I would spend less time studying the content if it were in Arabic.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. I memorise the content in order to pass quizzes and exams.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire**

**Dear student**

If you would like to participate in a further stage of the research, an interview, please provide your contact details below.

Name: ...........................................................................

Mobile number: ..........................................................

Email: .............................................................................
Appendix 6: Student questionnaire (Arabic version)

الأول
عزيزي الطالب
الرجاء اكمال البيانات عن نفسك.

1. العمر: ________
2. الجنس: ذكرٌ أنثى
3. الجنسية: ________
4. في أي نوع من المدارس درست؟ حكومية خاصة
5. كم سنة درست في المدرسة الحكومية وأو الخاصَة ________
6. في أي عام سجلت في هذه الكلية؟ ________
7. هل درست في قسم البرنامج التاسسي للغة الإنجليزية؟ (English Foundation Programme) نعم لا
8. إذا كان جوابك نعم لسؤال رقم 7، في أي مستوى بدأت؟ المستوى الأول المستوى الثاني المستوى الثالث المستوى الرابع
9. في أي قسم تدرس حالياً؟
10. في أي مرحلة دراسية أنت الآن؟ (diploma) (certificate) (bachelor) (higher diploma)
11. كيف تقدر كفاءتك اللغوية في اللغة الإنجليزية؟ ضعيف جداً متوسط ضعيف أعلى من المتوسط جيد
12. ما هو معدل التراكمي العام؟ (GPA)

القسم الثاني
الرجاء قراءة الجمل الموجودة في الصفحات التالية و الإجابة عنها على حسب تجربة تعلمك في الكلية التقنية. لا توجد أعبئة خاطئة صحيحة. يجب عليك أن تقرر التالي:
1. لا أوافق بشدة (2) لا أوافق (3) لمست متأكد (4) أوافق (5) أوافق بشدة

252
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<th>بشدة</th>
<th>ناقص</th>
<th>لا أوافق</th>
<th>بشدة</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. التعلم باللغة الإنجليزية من الممكن أن يقوي كفانتي في اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. المواد العلمية يجب أن تتعلم باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. الطلاب الذين يتعلمون باللغة الإنجليزية هم أكثر نجاحا في الحياة من الذين يتعلمون باللغة العربية.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. أنا اعتقد أن اللغة العربية يجب أن تكون لغة التعلم في هذه الكلية.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>اللغة الإنجليزية أهم من اللغة العربية في التعليم.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. تحتاج لتعلم باللغة الإنجليزية لإيجاد عمل جيد.</td>
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<tr>
<td>تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من الممكن أن يؤثر بشكل سلبي على قدرتي على استعمال اللغة العربية الفصحى.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. إلى جانب اللغة الإنجليزية، أنا أحتاج إلى اللغة العربية في مهنتي المستقبلية.</td>
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<tr>
<td>بعض المواد يجب أن تدرس باللغة العربية في هذه الكلية.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. أشعر بالراحة عند التكلم باللغة الإنجليزية في الصف.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. أنا نادرا ما أشارك في الصف نتيجة خوفي في ارتكاب الأخطاء أمام زملائي في الصف.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. أحيانا لا أفهم ما يقوله المدرس في الصف.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. أنا عادة أسأل المدرس في الصف في حال لم أفهم.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. من السهل علي أن أسجل ملاحظات باللغة الإنجليزية في الصف.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. أشعر بالراحة عند سؤالي لمدرس اختصاص (غير ناطق باللغة العربية) خارج نطاق الصف.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. تحسن لدى المهارات السمعية باللغة الإنجليزية لأن جميع محاضرتي باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. أشعر بأن لغتي الإنجليزية ليست جيدة بما فيه الكفاية للدراسة بها.</td>
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253
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<th>لا أتافق</th>
<th>لا أتافق بشدة</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. أطلب من أصدقائي أن يشرحوا لي إذا لم أفهم ما يقوله المدرس.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. المدرس الاختصاصي يساعد الطلاب ويعد الشرح في حال عدم فهمهم.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. إن بحاجة إلى ترجمة العديد من الكلمات لفهم المادة المقررة.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. يجب على أن أقرأ كثيرا باللغة الإنجليزية في مجال دراسي.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. قدراتي في القراءة تحسن بسبب دراستي باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. أجد صعوبة فيفهم المفردات المتعلقة بالاختصاص.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24. أصدقائي يساعدوني فيفهم مقرر المادة.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. مدرس المادة الاختصاصية يقضون وقتي طويل. بدرسنا المفردات.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. أحاول أن أпуск معرفتي عبر قراءة المصادر المتعلقة باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. أتوقف عن القراءة عندما لا أفهم النص.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية صعب لأن النحو عندي ضعيف.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. أجد صعوبة فيفهم النصوص الإنجليزية الطويلة.</td>
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<td>30. أحاول أن أفهم كل كلمة بالنص.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. أتأكد بأن أفهم كل كلمة بالنص.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32. الكتابة مهمة في اختصاصي.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33. عندما أكتب باللغة الإنجليزية أركب أخطاء بال نحو.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34. مدرس الاختصاص يكون قلق على محتوى الواجب أكثر من صحة اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35. عندما يطلب مني كتابة واجب في اختصاصي، غالبًا ما أنقل جمل/مقاطع من الإنترنت لأن لغتي الإنجليزية ضعيفة.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>36. مهاراتي في الكتابة تطورت وتحسن دائما وجب على كتابة الكثير من الواجبات المتعلقة بالاختصاصي.</td>
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### الجمل 37-50

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>أوافق بشدة</th>
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<th>لا أوافق</th>
<th>متأكد</th>
<th>أوافق</th>
<th>لا أوافق</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>مدرسي الامتحانيين يساعدونني على تطوير وتحسين مهاراتي الكتابية عن طريق تصحيح أخطأتي.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>دائما أركتب الأخطاء عند كتابتي باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>يمكنني أن أعر عما أريد كتابته بوضوح تام باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>يوجد عدد كبير من المفردات.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>دائما أطلب من أصدقائي أن يتحققوا من عدم وجود أخطاء في كتابتي.</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>أطلب من أحد من خارج الكلية مساعدتي بمشاريعي المتعلقة بالكتابة.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>لأن كتابتي باللغة الإنجليزية ضعيفة، أكتب بال العربي.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>44.</td>
<td>لأن لغتي الإنجليزية ضعيفة، أحصل على علامات بسيطة.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>لأن لغتي الإنجليزية ضعيفة، أنصح بإحالة إلى مهلوس.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>درجتي في المعدل التراكمي العام (GPA) كانت من الممكن أن تكون أعلى لو أن الصفوف كانت تدرس باللغة العربية.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>أحيانا لا أجاب بشكل صحيح في الامتحان لأنني لا أفهم السؤال باللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>في المهم أن أدرس باللغة الإنجليزية حتى و لو حصلت على علامات ضعيفة.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>49.</td>
<td>أساسي و ف تاح بالدراسة، لو أن المواد كانت تدرس باللغة العربية.</td>
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<td>50.</td>
<td>أنا أحفظ المضمون كي أنجح في الاختبارات.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### شكرًا لك لإتمام الاستبيان

عزبي الطالب

إذا كنت ترغب بالمشاركة في مقابلة برجي تزويد بيانات الاتصال بك:

الاسم: ........................................

رقم الجوال: ........................................

البريد الإلكتروني: ........................................
Appendix 7: Questionnaire participant information sheet (Arabic)

Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om
Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

ورقة معلومات المشارك – استبيان الطلاب

تأثير التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية على تجربة الطلاب التعليمية وجودة التعليم في الاختصاصات المختلفة في كلية تقنية عليا بسلطنة عمان

الرجال المشاركة في الاستبيان الذي يستخدم في رسالة الدكتوراه، و مدة الاستبيان هي بين 10-15 دقيقة و باللغة العربية.

الهدف من هذا الاستبيان هو اطلاع على تجربتك التعليمية باللغة الإنجليزية في اختصاصك في هذه الكلية. إن ذكر اسمك ليس مطلوبا، بالإضافة إلى أن المحاضرين المسؤولين عن دراستك لن يطلعوا على إجاباتك، وكل المعلومات المقدمة ستبقى سرية.

المشاركة في هذا البحث طوعية، وبإمكانك ألا تشارك، لكن مشاركتك لن تكون مفيدة لبحث الدكتوراة الخاص بي فحسب، بل قد تساعد في تطوير تجربتك التعليمية في هذه الكلية أيضا.

كل المعلومات المقدمة تستعمل في رسالة الدكتوراة وقد تنشر في المحاضرات و المؤتمرات، بإمكانك الحصول على نسخة من نتائج البحث في حال رغبت في ذلك من الباحث.

كما أني أود دعوتكم إلى إجراء مقابلة باللغة العربية أو الإنجليزية مدتها بين 45-60 دقيقة. في حال كنت مهتما بال موضوع الرجاء إرسال رسالة عبر البريد الإلكتروني للباحث على العنوان الموجود في اعلى هذه الصفحة أو بإمكانك كتابة بيانات الاتصال بك في نهاية الاستبيان.

ولك جزيل الشكر
Appendix 8: Questionnaire participant information sheet (English)

Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om
Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet – Student questionnaire
Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

You are kindly requested to complete a questionnaire which will be used for a doctoral thesis. The questionnaire is in Arabic and will only take 10-15 minutes to complete.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your learning experiences in your specialised courses through the English medium instruction in this college. Please note that you are not required to mention your name and your lecturers will not view your responses. All information you provide will be kept confidential.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can choose not to participate. However, your participation can not only help me in my thesis, but could also help in improving your learning experiences in this college.

The data collected will be used for my doctoral thesis and may also be used for publication, conference presentation or seminars. Upon your request, a copy of the results could be sent to you.

I would also like to invite you for an interview (in Arabic or English) for about 45-60 minutes. You can collect the information sheet about the interview from the researcher. If you are interested, please send me (researcher) an email provided at the top of this information sheet. You can also provide your contact details at the end of the questionnaire.

Thank you
Appendix 9: Observation guide

Classroom observation No ______

Date: ___________________  Duration: ___________________
Faculty: ________________  No of students: __________
Place: ___________________  Male: ___________  Female: _____________
Teacher: male/female  native Arabic/native English/non-native Arabic and English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher action</th>
<th>Student behaviour</th>
<th>Student responses/questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- lecturing</td>
<td>- listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- asking questions</td>
<td>- asking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- responding to questions</td>
<td>- asking information questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- eliciting information</td>
<td>- asking clarification questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- explaining vocabulary</td>
<td>- responding individually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- correcting language</td>
<td>- responding collectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- assigning tasks</td>
<td>- taking notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- code-switching</td>
<td>- reading textbook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- others</td>
<td>- asking peers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- peer/group work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atmosphere:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Personal reflection:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Classroom actions (10 min span)

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90

100
Appendix 10: Classroom observation participant information sheet (content teacher)

Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om

Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet – Content teachers
Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

You are kindly requested to take part in this research project which will be conducted for a doctoral thesis. Please read this sheet and ask questions before you decide to give your consent to participate.

The purpose of this study is to explore students’ learning experiences in content courses through the English medium instruction in a public college in Oman. If you choose to participate in this study, a class of your choice will be observed for a whole period. The purpose of the classroom observation is to observe how students learn in an English-medium environment. The students will be informed about the aim of the observation by the researcher and they will be assured that their participation will not have any negative impact on them or their grades. Field notes will be taken by the researcher during the observation.

Your participation in this research is your decision and voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity of all participants (teacher and students) will be assured. The identity of all participants and the college will also be protected in any publication resulting from the research. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason by contacting the researcher under the email provided at the top of the information sheet.

The data collected will be used for the doctoral thesis and may also be used for publication, conference presentation or seminars. Upon your request, a copy of the results could be sent to you.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. If you have any further questions, please contact the researcher under the email provided at the top of the sheet.
Appendix 11: Classroom observation participant information sheet (student – Arabic)

Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om
Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

ورقة معلومات/security participant Information Sheet

تأثير التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية على تجربة الطلاب التعليمية ووجود التعليم في الاختصاصات المختلفة في كلية تكنولوجيا عمان

الرجال المشاركات في حدث مراقبة الفصل الدراسي الذي هو جزء من بحث رسالة الدكتوراه الخاص بي.

الهدف من هذه المراقبة هو الاطلاع على تجربتك التعليمية باللغة الإنجليزية في اختصاصك. لن يتم قياسك حسب مشاركتك في النماذج الأساسية. لن تؤثر على علاماتك الدراسية وهوبيك سيئي سري.

المشاركة في هذا البحث طوعية، و بإمكاني ألا تشارك، لكن سيبيب عليك حضور الفصل الدراسي، و سيتم تجاهل مشاركتك. لكن مشاركتك لن تكون مفيدة لبحث الدكتوراه الخاص بي فحسب، بل قد تساعد في تطوير تجربتك التعليمية في هذه الكلية أيضا.

كل المعلومات المقدمة ستستعمل في رسالة الدكتوراه وقد تنشر في المحاضرات والمؤتمرات، بإمكاني الحصول على نسخة من نتائج البحث في حال رغبت بذلك.

كما أنا أود دعوتكم إلى إجراء مقابلة باللغة العربية أو الإنجليزية مدتها بين 45-60 دقيقة. في حال كنت مهتما بالموضوع الرجاء إرسال رسالة عبر البريد الإلكتروني للباحث على العنوان الموجود في أعلى هذه الصفحة.

ولك جزيل الشكر
Classroom observation participant information sheet (student – English)

University of Exeter   Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri   Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om   Email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet – Students (Classroom observation)
Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

You are kindly requested to take part in this classroom observation which is part of my doctoral thesis.

The purpose of this classroom observation is to explore how you learn in your specialised courses through the English language. During the classroom observation you will not be evaluated by your contributions in classroom discussions or your English language proficiency. Your participation will not affect your grades in class and your identity will be kept confidential.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can choose not to participate. Please note that if you do not want to participate, you still have to attend the class, but your contributions in class will be ignored. However, your participation can not only help me in my thesis, but could also help in improving your learning experiences in this college.

The data collected will be used for my doctoral thesis and may also be used for publication, conference presentation or seminars. Upon your request, a copy of the results could be sent to you.

I would also like to invite you for an interview (in Arabic or English) for about 45-60 minutes. If you are interested, please send me (researcher) an email provided at the top of this information sheet.

Thank you
Appendix 12: Two samples of field notes

Sample 1: Business class

Classroom observation No 12

Date: 2.3.2016
Faculty: Business
Place: N 335
Teacher: Male/Female

Duration: 2-3 hours
No of students: (16)
Male: 3
Female: 13
Native Arabic/native English/non-native Arabic and English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher action</th>
<th>Student behaviour</th>
<th>Student responses/questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lecturing</td>
<td>listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asking questions</td>
<td>asking information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responding to questions</td>
<td>asking clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eliciting information</td>
<td>questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explaining vocabulary</td>
<td>questions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>correcting language</td>
<td>responding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assigning tasks</td>
<td>individually</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>code-switching</td>
<td>responding</td>
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<td>others</td>
<td>collectively</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reading notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>reading textbook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>asking peers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>peer/group work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>others</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Atmosphere:
A class with the majority of females. Some males came. There is the teacher, lecturer, and the board. Reading from the textbook. Front on the same page.

Personal reflection:
Today I am a bit tired. This class was different from other classes. No powerpoint at all, and the teacher was writing all the time reading from the text and explaining. As if this was a kind of revision. No interaction whatsoever. I feel he feels that the students were not class to be over. For me, it felt very board, boring really.
Classroom actions (10 min span)

10 He is telling about something that seems familiar to the students.

Similar to other classes I've had, with this,

there are many words that are even unfamiliar to me. If I seem to

students, are familiar with them, “if you remember...”,

15 the students raise their hands about the issue.

All of them have the pens and the pencils.

20 In this class, should be able to read, audio-visual?

And I'm familiar with what they are on the “write down” what exactly are

they doing today? They seem not to hear. One student looks even today,

25 is unable to tell me the date of birth. One more student, I try

him, when it comes, I need to change my place inside.

to see more students but I should have the teachers on

50 stop for a second, closely follow the text book, as done.

Taking another report of what he says, or simultaneously,

complains about what he says. Is everything clear to the students?

Perhaps because though they read, one more student only 100%

with the teacher.

After 50 minutes, still the same. The class was suddenly over.

No question, no clarification, no thinking (I think), strange.

Even the handwriting on the board was not clear. The only repetition

that makes me say was “the one or the same” or “and so forth”.

30 responded a feeling “yes” as if they wanted to tell them just

so on and let it be over. Perhaps this is only my own

interpretation but this is how it looked like. Only a mild

student, way back only the one who came late was repeats after

the leader. I think this was some kind of learning.
Sample 2: Applied sciences class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher action</th>
<th>Student behaviour</th>
<th>Student responses/questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- lecturing</td>
<td>- listening</td>
<td>After 5 min a clarification question was asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- asking questions</td>
<td>- asking information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- responding questions</td>
<td>- asking clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- eliciting information</td>
<td>questions</td>
<td>After no reply made, asked an information question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- explaining vocabulary</td>
<td>responding individually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- correcting language</td>
<td>- responding collectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- assigning tasks</td>
<td>- taking notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- code-switching</td>
<td>- reading textbook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- others</td>
<td>- asking peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- peer/group work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classroom actions (10 min span)

After 5 minutes, students entered. Students were seated with their coursebooks and pens as usual, taking notes. There is a PowerPoint (photo copy) mobile device at the board. The teacher is lecturing information. Students respond collectively, students are following closely the slides and text. The teacher speaks in a very slow and clear manner. The students seem to follow easily and understand the material.

No pair work, no discussion, just listening. The teacher asks a question, students respond collectively, remember, say it for confirmation, students underline key words, say, etc. A student asks a question. The students seem confused and seek a clarification.

Still some time, the teacher speaks, students take notes, copy one sentence from the board, underlining, in my note, mainly studying. How do students study? I guess they should memorize, students should write the course book of I think some of them. One student is texting a message.

Four students are still trying to concentrate. Few gave up, nodding yes, anymore, students stop and collectively ask the advice of a teacher. I need help, take the test.

Students are telling the teacher, P. 85 is missing. They noticed.
The teacher explains that they are just part of the dream.
The teacher is clearly explaining. The rest is still busy doing multiple tasks, receiving a call. After end of class.
Appendix 13: Interview schedule

1. Attitudes towards studying in English/Arabic
   1. How do you feel about studying your courses in English at this college? Elaborate.
   2. Do you think your English language proficiency has improved after you joined the foundation programme/after you joined your specialisation? If yes, in which area has it improved most: speaking, listening, reading, writing? Explain how/why.
   3. Do you think you are well prepared for studying in English?

2. Quality of academic experience
   4. Since you are studying via English, do you need to do extra academic efforts? If yes, what kind of effort and how much?
   5. When you attend a class, what do you usually do? How do you feel?
      Prompts: listen / take notes/ copy from the board/ participate in class discussions/ solve problems/ ask the teacher/friend
   6. Are there any challenges/difficulties that you face? Prompts: understanding lectures/asking the teacher/taking notes
   7. How do you study at home?
   8. When you need support in your study (college or home) what do you do?
   9. What support does the college provide the students with to study in English?

3. Reading
   10. What are you required to read in your major?
   11. In order to expand your knowledge, do you read resources related to your study other than the textbook assigned to you?
   12. When you read a text related to your study, do you face any difficulty in comprehending the text?
      Prompts: terminology/ technical vocabulary/general English vocabulary/sentence structure (grammar)/ length of text/difficulty of the content (regardless of the English language)
13- Can you read a text from your course book/handout? What do you do to understand the text?
   Prompts: translate unknown words/ whole text/try to guess meaning from context try to get the main idea/use background information/ask a friend

4. Writing
14- Do you need to do a lot of writing in your specialisation? If yes, what kind of writing do you have to do? How many?
   Prompts: summary/reports/research paper/power point presentation
15- When you face a problem in writing your assignment, does your subject teacher support you? If yes, how?
16- When you write an assignment, does your content teacher provide you with feedback on your English language/content? If yes, do you understand the feedback you receive from your teacher?

17. How are your assignments assessed? Content and/or language?
18- Can you show me one/some of your assignments? Did you face any difficulties in writing this/these assignment(s)? If yes, specify:
   Prompts: weakness in vocabulary/spelling/grammar (sentence structure)/genre of writing/ organisation/paraphrasing/summarizing/referencing

5. Academic performance
19- Are you content with your performance in your major? If no why?
20- Do you sometimes face difficulties during the exam? If yes, what kind of difficulties?
21- Do you think it is possible that your subjects are taught in Arabic?
22- What kind of grades do you think you would have if courses were taught in Arabic?
23- If the courses were taught in Arabic, how would your university experience be? This is in relation to your understanding of the content of your study area and your overall experience.
24- In your opinion, how could the college improve the learning experience of the students?
25. Would you like to add any comments regarding this issue?
   Thank you for your valuable feedback
Appendix 14: Interview participant information sheet (Arabic)

Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om
Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

ورقة معلومات المشاركات - الطالب (مقابلة)

تأثر التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية على تجربة الطلاب التعليمية وجودة التعليم في الاحصائيات المختلفة في كلية تكنولوجيا عليا بسلطنة عمان

الرجاء المشاركة في مشروع البحث الذي يستخدم في رسالة الدكتوراه، الرجاء قراءة هذه الورقة والاستفسار قبل اتخاذ القرار بالمشاركة في هذا البحث.

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو الاطلاع على تجربة الطلاب التعليمية في الاحصائيات المختلفة في كلية تكنولوجيا عليا بسلطنة عمان. لو اخترت المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، سيتم إجراء مقابلة تتراوح مدتها بين 45-60 دقيقة عن تجربتك التعليمية في الكلية، لن يتم الحكم على تجربتك لاي سبب من الاسباب, يمكن ان يتم اجراء هذه المقابلة بحده اللغتين العربية أو الانجليزية حسب اختيارك. سيتم تسجيل المقابلة صوتياً و سيطلب منك احضار بعض الكتب الدراسية و الواجبات الكتابية التي انجزتها و المتعلقة باختصاصك.

في حال الموافقة على المشاركة بالدراسة سيطلب منك التوقيع على استمارة الموافقة. ان المشاركة في هذه الدراسة هو قرار طوعي. كل المعلومات المقدمة ستكون سرية و ستتم اخفاء هوية المشاركات. إن هوية الكلية ستكون محجوبة في حال تم نشر البحث. في حال الموافقة على المشاركة بالمكاحم الانسحاب في اي وقت بدون اعطاء اي اسباب و ذلك عن طريق الاتصال بالباحث على اليمين المذكور سابقا في اعلى الصفحة.

إن البيانات التي سيتم جمعها قد تتطرق و تستخدم في المحاضرات و المؤتمرات و حلقات البحث و من الممكن ارسال نسخة من نتيجة البحث في حال الرغبة بذلك.

شكرًا لقراءتك ورقة المعلومات هذه، و في حال وجود أي استفسارات الرجاء التواصل مع الباحث من خلال اليمين المذكور في اعلى الصفحة.

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Interview participant information sheet (English)

University of Exeter     Graduate School of Education

Researcher: Sawsan Al-Bakri                                       Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi
Email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om                           Email: s. troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet - Students

Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

You are kindly requested to take part in this research project which will be conducted for a doctoral thesis. Please read this sheet and ask questions before you decide to give your consent to participate.

The purpose of this study is to explore students’ learning experiences in content courses through the English medium instruction in a public college in Oman. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for 45-60 minutes about your learning experiences in this college. You will not be judged on any response. The interview can be conducted in the language of your choice (Arabic or English) and will be audio recorded. You will be asked to bring some of your course books and some written assignment.

Your participation in this research is your decision and voluntary. If you decide to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. All information you provide will be kept confidential and your identity will not be revealed. The identity of the college will also be protected in any publication resulting from the research. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason by contacting the researcher under the email provided at the top of the information sheet or consent form.

The data collected will be used for the doctoral thesis and may also be used for publication, conference presentation or seminars. Upon your request, a copy of the results could be sent to you.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. If you have any further questions, please contact the researcher under the email provided at the top of the sheet.
Appendix 15: CONSENT FORM (Arabic version)

Graduate School of Education

استمارة الموافقة

تأثر التعليم باللغة الإنجليزية على تجربة الطلاب التعليمية وعودة التعليم في الاختصاصات المختلفة في كلية

تقنية عليا بعمان

عند قراءة وقراءة المعلومات، يكون قد تم إبلاغي بشكل واضح عن أهداف هذا البحث:

لقد أعلنت أن:

لا يوجد أي أفراد للمشاركة في هذا البحث، ولا اختارت المشاركة، بإمكانكم باي مرحلة سحب مشاركتي و أن أطلب

حذف كافة البيانات المقدمة من طرفك.

لتي الحق بالآم أوافق على نشر أي معلومات عن

المعلومات التي ألمها تستعمل فقط في هذا البحث، والتي قد تنشر أو تستعمل في محاضرات و مؤتمرات و

ندوات البحث.

المعلومات التي ألمها، قد تم مشاركتها مع المشرفين على البحث مع الحفاظ على إخفاء هوية المشاركون.

كل المعلومات المقدمة ستتم معاملتها على أنها معلومات سرية.

سيقوم الباحث بكل الإجراءات الملائمة للحفاظ على إخفاء هوية المشارك.

توقيع المشارك: ........................................

الاسم المشارك: ........................................

أتمت تحرير نسختين من هذه الاستمارة، نسخة للمشارك، و نسخة للباحث.

رقم هاتف الباحث: 24473622

لمواكبة أي استفسار عن مشروع البحث الرجاء التواصل مع:

الباحث: سوسن البكري

sawsanbakri12@gmail.com أو saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om

البريد الإلكتروني: د. صلاح ترويدي

المشرف على مشروع البحث من جامعة Exeter: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University’s registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.
CONSENT FORM (English version)

Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students’ learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

Having read the information sheet, I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the research project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may request that my data be destroyed
- 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, conference presentations and seminars
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared with the thesis supervisor of this research project in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential
- the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

....................................................... (Signature of participant ) ....................................................... (Date)

........................................ (Printed name of participant)

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

Contact phone number of researcher’s office: 24473600 (Extension 5909)

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

**Researcher:** Sawsan Al-Bakri; email: saousan.albakri@hct.edu.om or sawsanbakri12@gmail.com

OR

**Supervisor of the research project** at University of Exeter: Dr. Salah Troudi; email: s.troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University’s registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.
## Appendix 16: Student questionnaire results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements 1-18</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learning through English can improve my English language proficiency.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>98.2</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scientific subjects should be taught in English.</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I believe that all subjects should be taught in Arabic at this college.</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. English is more important than Arabic in education.</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I need to study in English to get a good job.</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Learning through English will affect my ability to use standard Arabic (fus’ha).</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Beside English, I need Arabic in my future job.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Some subjects should be taught in Arabic at this college.</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel comfortable speaking English in class.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I rarely participate in class out of fear to make mistakes in speaking English in front of my classmates.</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Sometimes I do not understand what the teachers say in class.</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I usually ask questions in class when I do not understand.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I can easily take notes in English during the class.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel comfortable asking my content teachers (non-Arabic speakers) questions outside class.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My English listening skills have improved because all classes are in English.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel that my English language is not good enough to study in English.</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I ask my friends to explain if I do not understand what the teacher says.</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My content teachers re-explain if students do not understand.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
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</table>

273
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements 19-37</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>un-</th>
<th>agreed</th>
<th>not</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. I need to translate many words into Arabic to understand the course material.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have to do a lot of reading in English for my study.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. My reading skills have improved because I study in English.</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I find it difficult to understand technical vocabulary.</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. My friends help me to understand the course material.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Our content teachers spend a lot of time explaining vocabulary.</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I try to expand my knowledge through reading resources related to my study in English.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I stop reading when I do not understand the text.</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I find it difficult to understand long English texts.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Reading in English is difficult because my grammar is weak.</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I try to guess the meaning of words from the context without translating them into the Arabic language.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I make sure I understand every word in the text.</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Writing is an important skill in my specialisation.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Because my technical vocabulary is weak I find it difficult to do a writing assignment in my specialisation.</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. When I write in English I make grammar mistakes.</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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Appendix 17: Example of an interview transcription – Hussam

*S: How do you feel about studying in English at this college?*

H: I feel a bit anxious because English is the first obstacle in our study. If our English language is good then our study becomes easy and we pass easily. But if English is weak, it becomes an obstacle and we face a lot of difficulties: How to communicate with teachers, how to understand the material – so there are a lot of problems. Because of this we need to improve our language [English]. How can we solve this problem? Through learning English in different ways.

*S: So do you think it is important to learn in English?*

H: Nowadays English has become important in our lives. If you don’t know English you’ll face many problems in your life. How are you going to communicate with people? Our life has become all English. If we don’t know English we’ll find it difficult to communicate with people while travelling or work. Even for employment in the public sector, the most important factor is English. Therefore, English is dominant over the Arabic language and therefore we have to learn English in order to be prepared for our future.

*S: Do you think that while studying in English your English language will improve?*

H: For sure because if we practice every day, after a while English will become easy. Before, our study was all in Arabic [in school]. Then, after we joined the college there was a big difference between Arabic and English but after a while your English will improve because we have to communicate with the teachers and we have to search for information and read books – so the language will improve. But of course this also depends on the person. If the person wants to learn then nothing is difficult. If one is determined there will be no obstacles. For me, I started foundation in a different college. I just joined this college because my specialisation “Applied sciences” wasn’t available there. I faced a lot of difficulties when I started the certificate here. In my previous college everything was easy but when I joined this college everything was different: rules and regulations, exams and teachers. The first and second semester I faced a lot of difficulties. I was about to leave my study but studying and getting a degree is very important so I decided to continue and to defeat these obstacles. I’m in my second year of study but I’m still in certificate – but in the last semester. I’m behind because I failed some subjects and I dropped others and I interrupted my study for a term and so on.
S: I see. Do you think that your language has improved since you started studying in college?

H: For sure it has improved. I couldn’t confront any person, couldn’t speak in English but now I can; not with great confidence but I can even if it’s with one word English and one word Arabic. But I have the intention to improve my English language so that it becomes very good in the coming years, Inshallah [With God’s will].

S: In which skill has your language improved most?

H: Speaking skills, mostly speaking. I still have a problem in writing and listening. But speaking has become the easiest skill for me.

S: What about reading?

H: Reading is good.

S: When you finished foundation did you think you were ready for studying in English?

H: I was very afraid, I was worried and anxious. How can I study in English? English is difficult. I used to be scared. Now I’m still worried but less than before.

S: Since you are studying in English – which is not your first language – do you have to make any extra effort while studying?

H: In order to improve my English?

S: No, I mean in studying your specialisation because you are not studying in Arabic. Perhaps you need to make an effort that would not be needed if your study were in Arabic. For example, when you attend a lecture, do you understand everything?

H: No, I don’t understand everything. When the lecturer speaks I understand some parts, the easy ones, but not all and it happens that most of it I don’t understand. But it’s my duty to go to the dorm and to revise what we studied today and if I don’t understand I need to ask the teacher before the next class. My problem was that I didn’t revise my lessons and when I attended a new class. I felt lost. But I solved this problem by preparing the lesson which we’re going to take so when the teacher explains I already have an idea.

S: Isn’t this an extra effort?
H: Yes, in Arabic I wouldn’t need to make this effort. I would understand immediately.

S: What do you do when you do not understand something?

H: I ask my friends. For example, today I told my friend that the final exam is close and that there are still some parts that I didn’t understand and I asked him if he could find some time outside the college and he agreed and said he’ll call me. In this case I waste time and it could be that by the time he calls I have family commitments but I have to sacrifice in order to understand.

S: Do you have to make an extra effort while reading?

H: When I read I come across new words so I need to translate. This needs effort and time. I also need the internet but sometimes the net is down so I need to check with a dictionary and this takes a lot of time – it takes time to find the meaning of the word in a dictionary.

S: Can you explain how you translate – every word or some words?

H: This depends. For example, I have a text where I don’t understand some words so I translate these words. But if I don’t understand a whole lesson, then I translate it completely. This can be easily done with the mobile. I take a picture of the text and translate the whole text with google translate into Arabic. Like this I get a clearer picture and I can go to the next lesson.

S: When you attend a class, what do you usually do?

H: This differs from lecture to lecture. When I find it interesting and I understand at least part of it I listen. But when I don’t understand and if it’s boring, then I lose concentration and sometimes I use my mobile especially if the lecturer allows the use of mobile. In this case I leave the class without having understood anything.

S: This actually happened to you?

H: Yes, this happened more than once. If the lesson is interesting and easy for sure I’m with the teacher with all my senses.

S: Do you take notes during class?

H: Yes, at the end of my notebook I leave some pages and I write down notes. I check them every day. Also, I note down if there is something that I didn’t understand.
S: You told me that sometimes you don’t understand a lecture. Can you tell me why?

H: The first reason is the English language. This is the main reason. Also the teacher plays a role - when the teacher speaks fast. As you know we’re beginners in English so it’s difficult to understand. Also, teachers with certain nationalities pronounce the words differently. You think they’re new words but they just pronounce them differently and this makes it more difficult to understand the lecture.

S: Do teachers usually explain the meaning of some words?

H: I had a teacher who explained many words even if I didn’t ask about them. This teacher translated everything. But others just explain in a superficial way. Their main concern is to finish the syllabus. One of the subjects I had to repeat 3 times. Twice I failed because the teacher was not supportive even in the English language. But the third time I passed because I felt very confident in the teacher and the explanation and the language she used. I passed with a very good grade - I got an A. This teacher was an Omani teacher.

S: Do you feel more comfortable with an Omani or an Arabic speaking teacher than a non-native Arabic speaker?

H: In my situation I feel more comfortable when the teacher is of my nationality or explains in Arabic because if I don’t understand something and I want to ask the teacher then the non-Arab teacher will explain in English but the Arab teacher can explain in Arabic so I can understand.

S: In case you have a question during a lecture, do you ask the teacher?

H: No, I don’t ask. I get afraid; only if the teacher is an Arab. I had a Syrian teacher. I used to ask her in Arabic and she used to respond in Arabic. But if the teacher doesn’t speak Arabic I find it difficult to ask. I imagine how he’ll respond in English and I don’t understand. If the student knows English then no problem but in my case – I don’t understand English well, it’s difficult.

S: So how do you feel during a lecture?

H: I feel 100% comfortable when the teacher speaks Arabic but if the teacher speaks only English I feel confused. I feel afraid.

S: If you do not ask the teacher a question, who supports you when you need help?
H: My friends or classmates. If my friend also doesn’t know then I ask a friend, whose English is good, to go and ask the teacher and then he explains to me in Arabic.

*S: Is the difficulty of your subjects just related to the English language or also to the content?*

H: The content plays a role. There are subjects we have to memorise. Such subjects cause fear and confusion. This needs daily effort. For example we have a subject called biology. This subject depends on memorisation - it doesn’t depend on understanding – in contrast to other subjects like mathematic which is easy. But when you have to memorise word for word and in English this is difficult. During the exam we sometimes have to write a whole paragraph- 3-4 lines copy/paste from the book.

*S: With such kind of questions you face difficulties then.*

H: Not only that. I might not even respond. I understand the question but how to write the answer in English. In Arabic I would know how to answer but how to formulate it in English?

*S: Is there anything that you don’t like about a lecture or wish that it would be different?*

H: How?

*S: During a lecture, would you like the teacher to teach in a different way?*

H: There is no special method I think. It depends on the teacher. But with the power-point, things can be explained in a clearer way.

*S: So you like the use of the power-point.*

H: Yes, and there is the summary. Today we finished a chapter. I like it when the teacher revises the chapter before going on with the next chapter. This teacher orally revises the chapter. I feel comfortable when the teacher does that. This is nice.

*S: That’s it? Is there anything else?*

H: No, only power-point and summary. But also it’s good if the teacher gives us home work from time to time and then checks it in the next class. You have to solve the problem on your own, so you have to depend on yourself – you have to make an effort. If the teacher doesn’t give us homework you leave the book and just bring it to the next class. I mean you might not even open the book.
S: I see. At home, is there anybody who could help you if you need any support?

H: At home there is my uncle. He’s an English teacher. But I don’t go to him immediately. First I try to understand on my own. I might ask a friend or check other resources. If I still don’t understand then I ask him and he explains.

S: In regard to reading, do you have to read something other than your handout?

H: Yes, 2 weeks ago the teacher asked us to go to the library and borrow a book and to read part of it because this book is related to our handout. So my friend and I – we had to work in pairs – went to the library and summarised the information. The aim of this activity was just to encourage us to get information from other resources.

S: Could you read the text without translation?

H: Without translation? No, we couldn’t. I can understand the handout now because the lessons are related but when it’s a new book I need to translate.

S: How did you translate the text?

H: With a translater [a digital device] and then we summarised it on our own. Actually my friend wrote the summary. He took it home and organised everything.

S: Do you find such an activity useful?

H: Yes, because it forces you to read resources other than the handout.

S: Now we come to writing. What do you think is more difficult – reading or writing?

H: Writing.

S: Do you have to do writing assignments in your specialisation?

H: So far no. But I heard that in the second year we have to write some kind of research.

S: If you are required to write a paragraph, would you be able to write it on your own?

H: If it’s homework I could because I could consult other resources but in an exam I might leave it blank. I hand in a blank paper.

S: During exams, do you face some kind of difficulties?
H: Of course – and of several kinds. Either I know the answer but I don’t know how to write or that I understand the question but don’t know the answer.

S: Did it happen that you did not understand the question?

H: Yes, several times. If this happens during the mid – or final exam then the teacher says it’s not allowed to respond to questions but if it’s a quiz I can ask the teacher,

S: What do you do in this case? I mean when you don’t understand?

H: What should I do? I leave it blank and hand in my paper. There are a lot of difficulties during exams more than during revision because in the exam, I cannot consult other resources such as a dictionary or a friend; just your brain and the paper.

S: Are you content with your performance so far?

H: Yes, I’m content. Because I was at a stage where I didn’t know anything in English, zero, but if I want to evaluate myself I would say 4 out of 10. A little bit and I will reach a good level. Today I got 7 out of 10 in a quiz. This isn’t a top grade but I made an effort and studied and I’m content. But during the mid-semester exam I got a bad grade although I studied hard. For 2 days I studied. I almost fainted when I saw my grade, it was very low. I dropped the subject.

S: Did your teacher provide you with feedback on your performance during the exam?

H: I didn’t ask the teacher but the teacher shows us our papers and I understood. All parts related to writing were wrong such as "explain" or "clarify". True/false questions and multiple choice questions were no problem.

S: Do you think that your subjects in your specialisations could be taught in Arabic?

H: You mean in Arabic? Yes, possible but in our society they don’t accept it. They don’t want the Arabic language now, they want English. But it could be taught in Arabic, of course.

S: If your study were in Arabic, how would this affect your experience at this college?

H: I think my grades would be much higher because it would be easy – there is no great effort – you just need to study. It might be enough to study just before the exam but now you have to revise every day. If you don’t revise then studying
will become problematic. In Arabic it would be easy. You also don’t have to revise before the lesson because I can understand what the teacher says. Not only that. We Omanis, we would accept studying in Arabic more than studying in English. There are many students who dropped their study – they dropped out of college. They dropped out of their study because they don’t have enough English knowledge; they had a lot of problems. Many of my friends dropped out.

S: So you actually know students who dropped out?

H: I know many of them – more than 10 people. I know them very well. They are very good friends and we go out together but they dropped out. Not because the subjects were difficult – because the study in English is too difficult. They wanted to have a certificate but they just couldn’t cope with the English language.

S: What are they doing now?

H: They are working – some joined the Army others the police and some didn’t find a job until now. I was one of the people who couldn’t accept to study in English, but I wanted a certificate. I need it for my future so I became determined to overcome the difficulties of studying in English.

S: Again, if your study were in Arabic, how would your learning experience be different? Could you elaborate a bit more?

H: First, I wouldn’t need to make a great effort. I would feel much more relaxed. If I have a question, I would feel comfortable to ask. Whenever I go to college I would feel comfortable. If I meet a person I would feel comfortable because if we talk it would be in Arabic, my own language. Another thing, it would save me a lot of time and effort. I would understand much better without making a great effort. Also revising for the exam wouldn’t be a problem. I would be very happy.

S: What could the college do to improve the learning experience of students?

H: I believe the college should create a center for students to get support in Arabic. Students who face difficulties in their study could go there to ask questions in Arabic and teachers could explain in Arabic. Also the college should follow the weak students. Perhaps the students have family problems or health problems. When they follow up this would provide the students with comfort because this shows that the college supports the students. If not, then the students feel frustrated.

S: Would you like to add anything about this issue?

H: No, thanks. I think I said everything I wanted to say.

S: Thank you so much for the interesting interview.
Appendix 18: Classroom observation analysis
a) Initial classroom observation coding

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b) Linking of revised nodes to potential themes

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c) Hierarchies of classroom observation nodes

Hierarchies of classroom observation nodes (continued)
Appendix 19: Full interview data analysis

a) Nvivo word frequency (50 words) to inform possible nodes (Word cloud view)

(Tree map view)
b) Text search for the word “translate” (summary view)

Text search for the word “translate” (reference view)
c) Coding interview transcripts (page view - Aref)

Aref: Engineering, BA started in Dec 1982; average grades.

1. How do you feel about studying in English?
2. When your family is outside in English and also depends on you if you are interested in studying a foreign language. At the end of this year, I will study in Arabic because it is closer for the students. In some specialties, students face difficulties due to vocabulary, but the students have language barriers can be more efficient than studying in English.
3. Your parents are ..
Aref: From my point of view, I think that studying Arabic is better for students. The student does not have to spend a lot of time translating the sentences in understanding. Who reads in Arabic can understand much better in Arabic is better.
4. Some people argue that English is the language of education and learning. What do you think about this?
Aref: I do not think that English is better than Arabic. Arabic is the language of the Koran and it existed before the English language which is derived from other languages. Arabic people in the past, in Mexico and other specializations in studies in Arabic and then translated into English, the original is Arabic.

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d) Overview coding frequency (Aref)
e) Code summary sheet for the node “Teacher language”

Reference 1 - 1.80% Coverage

Because the teachers don’t know English well so we learn it in a wrong way. This is the only disadvantage about learning in English. Some teachers have poor English pronunciation and we notice that and this could affect us in a negative way.

Reference 2 - 1.28% Coverage

When they want to teach us in English at least the teacher should be competent to teach in correct English. The problem is that the teacher doesn’t know that he is wrong.

Reference 1 - 3.15% Coverage

Also, the accent of the teacher plays a role. For example the accent of Indian teachers is different from the accent of Omani teachers. We have a big problem here at college with the accent of Indian teachers. Their accent is “weak”. They mispronounce many words. This is a common problem in our department. There are a lot of Indian teachers. Also, they speak very fast. Only some make an effort to slow down.

Reference 2 - 2.99% Coverage

One of the teachers was talking very fast

Of course, when teachers speak clearly and slowly it’s much easier for students to understand.

Some make an effort and speak slowly and clearly but others don’t. I think they assume that we should know after all these years studying English at school.

Reference 1 - 0.67% Coverage

but with other teachers who come from India for example I didn’t understand anything.
Also the teacher plays a role - when the teacher speaks fast. As you know we are beginners in English so it’s difficult to understand.

Also, teachers with certain nationalities pronounce the words differently. You think they are new words but they just pronounce them differently and this makes it more difficult to understand the lecture.

Sometimes the teacher speaks fast.

Also the problem is that sometimes teachers teach us something wrong. For example, they pronounce words differently and then when we use it the other teacher asks us who taught you this? In foundation especially teachers taught us wrong pronunciation but also here in our specialisation. This shouldn’t happen because we need to learn the correct pronunciation not the wrong one. Also, teachers need to know that we are still learning so they should have more patience. It’s not our fault if they have some problems and they are upset. They should have more patience.

They should bring teachers who can pronounce correctly so that we can learn what is correct and not that we learn something wrong.

Sometimes the teachers speak too fast.

Yes, this happens a lot especially when the teacher doesn’t have the ability to speak well in English. As you know, how the lecturers speak differs from one country to another. It takes a while before we get used to it. Also, sometimes we know a word in English but
the teacher pronounces it wrong so we misunderstand and it takes time till we get used to it.

Reference 1 - 1.71% Coverage
There is. When the teacher comes from a different nationality like Indian, I do not understand a single word. This is not English but this is Hindish. The teacher explains from a slide so I have to enter e-learning to download the slide and I study it all over again. As if it is self-study. I teach myself.

Reference 2 - 0.42% Coverage
He usually speaks fast, very fast, but when they repeat, he speaks slower.

Reference 3 - 1.07% Coverage
Speaking fast and pronunciation of some letters – they pronounce them differently. When the teacher speaks I try to catch a word but I can’t. From a whole sentence I cannot understand a word.

Reference 1 - 0.51% Coverage
Not any kind of interaction – even his voice is very low.

Reference 1 - 0.27% Coverage
he used to explain very fast and gave us many examples.

Reference 2 - 0.94% Coverage
Also, some teachers do not pronounce the words in a proper way. Some teachers pronounce words differently depending on their accent. This makes it more difficult for students to understand.

Reference 3 - 1.29% Coverage
Yes, it happens very often. Although these teachers have a doctor title but I do not know how it happens that they pronounce words very different from the original pronunciation. This makes it more difficult to understand because you do not know what he means.
f) Initial interview coding

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g) Tagging frequencies of interview nodes

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i) Linking themes to areas of research questions

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j) Hierarchies of interview nodes

Hierarchies of interview nodes (continued)
Appendix 20: Synthesizing data analysis and linkage to research question areas

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Appendix 21: Certificate of ethical approval from University of Exeter

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students' learning experiences and quality of education in content courses in a public college in Oman

Researcher(s) name: Sawsan Al-Bakri

Supervisor(s): Dr. Salah Troudi
  C. R. Hadfield

This project has been approved for the period

From: 08/10/2015
To: 30/09/2018

Ethics Committee approval reference:
D/15/16/06

Signature: Date...14/09/2015......
(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)
Appendix 22: Sample of note-taking strategy

Fluid is a substance that will deform continuously when acted by a shear stress of any magnitude.

OR

Fluid is a substance that cannot resist deformation.

Examples: Liquids and Gases

2.4 Liquid and gases

What are the differences between Liquids and Gases?

Liquids:
- Have small force of attraction between molecules in comparison to solids
- Can be poured and pumped through the tube
- Occupy a definite volume and have a free surface

Gases:
- Have very small force of attraction between molecules
- Can be easily compressed
- Completely fill the volume of any container and do not have a free surface

2.5 Behavior of Fluids

Why water can be poured out easily but not Honey?

Behavior of Fluids
- Nature of the fluid
- Pressure & Temperature
- Static or Dynamic

Nature of the fluid
Appendix 23: Writing sample Ali (Photography, certificate level)

All the images I saw in the gallery are taking about Omani ladies in different parts in Oman. The story of the project is clear. I think the photographer chose this subject because it is something new that no one did it before and I also think that this project might be more interesting for Europe countries mainly because they don’t see women dress and live like this. I think the gallery chose to show this work because it’s new and no one did it before.

When we come to the technical side we can see a good exposure in all the images and very simple composition which is ok, I think she used really simple technique because in most of the images we see that she always shoot in a high F number such as F 8 and above because we can always see the background which is not bad I think it help us to know the story and the place that these women are living in. I don’t really think she used post production at all or maybe a little bet just to boost the colors.

In my opinion I think the concept of the project is really good but the image are not the best for me maybe because I live here or maybe because the images are really normal and there is nothing to interest me however I think these images might interest people who don’t have an idea of Omani women. Overall I think it’s a good project.
Appendix 24: Writing sample Salim (Business studies, bachelor level)

❖ Introduction

Manpower planning, which is also called as the human resources planning consists of setting the right number of people, the right kind of people at the right place at the right time, doing the right things that they fit in order to achieve the organization's goals. HR planning has got an important place in the field of manufacturing. Human Resources planning there should be a systems approach and implemented in a set procedure.

Manpower planning is defined through a strainer strategy "to the request, and use of, improve and maintain the human resources of the institution. Relates to create a job description or quantity requirements and functions to determine the number of personnel required and the development of manpower resources."

The objectives of the manpower are planning to ensure optimum use of human resources currently in use. To assess future skills requirements, to provide control measures to ensure the provision of necessary resources where appropriate, to determine the level of requirement, to anticipate and avoid redundancy dismissal unnecessary and evaluate training and development needs.

You need all the manpower planning organization. The start of an organizational unit to achieve certain goals. Which requires human resources with the required qualification? This is provided through effective manpower planning.

Comprehensive planning of the manpower helps to improve the effectiveness of human resources. The staffs who has grown older or who resign, retire Foundation, die or become incapacitated due to physical or mental illness have to be replaced and new employees who will be appointed. It can be done through manpower planning. There is also a need to determine the surplus or shortage of manpower, and there are areas of manpower budget. In short of manpower planning provides the correct size and structure of the human resources that provide basic infrastructure for the proper functioning of the institution. It reduces the
cost of labor and negate the effects of turmoil in the development of human resources.

❖ **Company profile**

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) is the foremost hydrocarbon exploration and production company in the Sultanate of Oman. It accounts for more than 90% of the country's crude-oil production and nearly all of its natural-gas supply. The Company is owned by the Government of Oman which has a 60% interest, Royal Dutch Shell which has a 34% interest, Total which has a 4% interest and Partex which has a 2% interest. The first economic find of oil was made in 1962, and the first consignment of oil was exported in 1967.

Oman's growth into a successful oil- and gas-producing nation had humble beginnings so humble, in fact, that it began with a dud. A geological survey of the country in 1925 found no conclusive evidence of oil. Twelve years later, however, when geologists began intensively searching for oil in neighboring Saudi Arabia, Oman's Sultan Said bin Taimur granted a 75-year concession to the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). Pausing only for the Second World War, exploration for oil was underway in Oman.

❖ **Problems of manpower planning in PDO Company**

Manpower planning in any organization has some of the obstacles facing the organization. Also, there are some the obstacles faced to PDO in manpower planning process:

- **The absenteeism rate:-**

  The employee’s absences are almost high in PDO because of a lot of work and working place in a desert. Absent of one employee per month approximately 2 to 5 days a month and this causes an obstacle for the company in the planning of the manpower.
Turnover rate:

In the PDO, in the desert areas some of the employees leave their position because of working hours, working environment and work are too much. This becomes one most obstacle which company face in their manpower planning.

The lack of understanding in the planning processes of the company:

Managers and employees do not know understand the manpower planning process and they did not get enough knowledge on this subject, and this makes a big problem because if managers and employees did not understand the concept of manpower planning then they will not contribute to this process.

Lack of support from top management of the company:

The managers in the top level don't care too much about lower level in the company and they do not support manpower planning in low-end jobs

Control of Manpower and Review:

Is any increase in the manpower at the top level of management powers On the basis of manpower plans and budgets prepared individuals. These serve as control mechanisms to keep working within the framework of specific limits on certain large-scale forces.

How PDO Company avoid these problems

Fit manpower planning with company plan:

Fitting the company plan with the methods and techniques used in manpower planning.

Consistent support from top management should be there:

When top management show interest to support and contribute with manpower planning the low managers well does so.
- **Reduce working hours:**

  This contributes help to reduce the absenteeism of employees at work. Working hours in the company now in the desert areas is 12 hours per day, the company must try to reduce working hours to 9 hours in a day, which leading to reduce the pressure on the employees and feel comfortable in the work environment.

- **Increase understanding of manpower process for employees:**

  by knowing the needs and requirements of the employees at lower levels and make implementation of plans to make the employees in work efficiency be effectively thus contributing to the increase in production for the company.

- **Company should maintain computerized human resources information system:**

  Using an information system which is capable of dealing with PDO company information.

**Conclusion**

Manpower planning in most of the companies faces problems and some struggles where that stop them from achieving the planning process objectives, therefore the company should take some correctives and correct the mistakes and analyze them and then make better methods to avoid these problems.

Also, we can conclude with the objectives of manpower planning which they are to ensure optimum use of human resources currently employed. To assess future skills requirement, to provide control measures to ensure that necessary resources are available as and when required, to determine requirement level, to anticipate redundancies and avoid unnecessary dismissals and assess training and development needs. PDO must make the plan for manpower to be more effectively and over become to solve these obstacles in the future.
References:

✓ Company profile. Retrieved November 20, 2015 at 8:00 PM from http://wwwpdo.com/Pages/Home.aspx


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Appendix 25: Sample on the use of plagiarism (Salim)

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) is the foremost hydrocarbon exploration and production company in the Sultanate of Oman. It accounts for more than 90% of the country’s crude-oil production and nearly all of its natural-gas supply. The Company is owned by the Government of Oman which has a 60% interest, Royal Dutch Shell which has a 34% interest, Total which has a 4% interest and Partex which has a 2% interest. The first economic find of oil was made in 1962, and the first consignment of oil was exported in 1967. (Salim)

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Oman’s growth into a successful oil- and gas-producing nation had humble beginnings so humble, in fact, that it began with a dud. A geological survey of the country in 1925 found no conclusive evidence of oil. Twelve years later, however, when geologists began intensively searching for oil in neighboring Saudi Arabia, Oman’s Sultan Said bin Taimur granted a 75-year concession to the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). Pausing only for the Second World War, exploration for oil was underway in Oman. (Salim)

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Original source: Petroleum Development Oman (2011)