

English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Uzbekistan: Views on Effectiveness, Career Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

Several higher educational institutions (HEI) have launched English-Medium programs in order to recruit foreign students and increase graduate qualification for better employability. The present study reports on the results of an online survey and semi-structured interviews of administrators, instructors and students towards the use of English as a medium of instruction in tertiary level in Uzbekistan, where Uzbek is the native language of the students and the pedagogical staff. The sample of the study consisted of 34 participants: 13 instructors, 15 students and 6 administrators at the universities of Uzbekistan. The results of the questionnaire and interviews show that implementing an EMI approach would attribute responsibility on the teaching staff and require very carefully designed curricula. The findings also suggest that EMI courses improve English proficiency, contribute to instructors' professional development, career, and income and enhance students' interaction with their international fellows. Such recommendations as motivating students, making classes more interesting and comfortable are made by both instructors and students pointing to the fact that English proficiency is crucial to the learning success of professional knowledge. EMI courses offer great opportunities to both students and instructors.

Keywords: EMI, English-Medium Instruction, Tertiary level, Uzbekistan

1. Introduction

Governments are required to make decisions concerning education so as to compete in the global area. EMI has been rapidly adopted in higher education across a variety of countries and encouraged by a number of government initiatives to achieve the desired outcomes, such as reinforcing mobility of international students and faculty members and enabling domestic students to advance their English language proficiency (Aizawa & McKinley, 2020). EMI policy is important in higher educational system of a country where English is spoken as a foreign, second or even third language. Dearden (2015, p.4) defines EMI as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English" (Rahman M. *et al.*, 2018). According to Dearden (2015), "the use of EMI is a rapidly growing global phenomenon in grade school and higher education (HE) outside the Anglophone world" (Rahman M. *et al.*, 2018). One of the main reasons of EMI implementation is that 'students are trained for professional workplaces where English is used as a medium of communication' (Inyoung Kym & Moon Hyun Kym, 2014). Trade, tourism, banking, government organizations and the exchange of culture, technology and knowledge are only a few examples where English is used for communication (Coleman, 2006; Crystal, 2004; Graddol, 1997, 2006; Inyoung Kym & Moon Hyun Kym, 2014).

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EMI is mostly used for educational programs at a tertiary level where professional knowledge is taught through English with the purpose of enhancing students' knowledge-specific ability as well as their English (Coleman, 2006; Inyoung Kym & Moon Hyun Kym, 2014). "English is explicitly stipulated as the working language for classroom instruction, teaching materials, assignments, and exams. In this manner, EMI is intended to enhance students' academic English literacy and communication skills on the basis of a good mastery of subject content knowledge" (Li J. *et al.*, 2016, p.4). Successful implementation of EMI is often thought to have dual benefit, namely a good English proficiency and mastery of content knowledge.

One concern about the successful implementation of EMI programs is the language competence of students and instructors. There is no doubt, that the difficulty in EMI practice could also be attributed to students' English deficiencies as well (Li J. *et al.*, 2016). Non-native English-speaking teachers' linguistic inadequacy is a big challenge for delivering subjects in English only. Another concern besides language competence is EMI teachers' opinions on their teaching roles. It is important to analyze not only instructors' but also their students' views on the challenges and benefits of EMI in classroom. It is pertinent to note here that according to the findings of Sahan's research study, the EMI implementation varies across classrooms, even within the same university department (2021, p.129). To put it

differently, sometimes the same solutions to the same problems might not work, or similar ways of teaching, approaches and techniques cannot be employed in effective EMI implementation in different higher educational institutions.

EMI is a rapidly growing phenomenon in public and private universities in a majority of countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language and Uzbekistan is not an exception. The expanding role of English in Uzbekistan, compared to Russian, which was and, in some aspects, still is a Lingua Franca, is worth of more research. This study aims to shed light on the views of students, instructors and administrators about the role of English as medium of instruction, its challenges and prospects.

The role of English in Uzbekistan

A multicultural nation, Uzbekistan solely recognizes the Uzbek language as its official state language. For all of the country's ethnic minorities, the Russian language serves as a lingua franca and is frequently used as a second mother tongue. However, since the country's proclamation of independence, the use of English has become more prevalent in all facets of Uzbek society. Russian and English, while both considered as foreign languages, have quite different spread and growth patterns. Nevertheless, each of them has played and still plays a significant role in society.

Uzbekistan's education system can be separated into two periods: the post-Soviet era education system and the education system after the country obtained independence. Particularly from the language learning perspective, the former specified as learning Russian as a second language and the latter as learning English and an attempt at becoming global.

The country's language policy can presently be classified as avidly focusing on learning English although Russian continues to be the most commonly used second language in society. Although there hasn't been a lot of research on Uzbekistan's language policies, it is evident from Hasanova's study (2007) that both English and Russian have their own places and functions in the country's social and educational systems. It is difficult to foresee when English will overtake Russian as the dominant language.

The Uzbek government has issued a number of decrees and papers at the global level on language planning as a result of shifting goals. The government is eager to open doors to the outside world and is training specialists at a level appropriate for the global marketplace. The Bologna process is the starting point for the modifications, which include the extension of the education system from three to four levels, including secondary school, college, and higher education, with the latter level being split into BA and MA degrees. Numerous international universities have established branch campuses throughout the country (The World Bank report, 2014).

All of the aforementioned changes have shown that it is high time to improve education quality, leading to the creation of curriculum and the specification of the entire teaching and grading system in terms of goals and techniques to meet international standards.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a part of the area Kachru referred to as the "Expanding Circle." (Crystal, 2012). In Uzbekistan, English is considered to be a foreign language (West & Sheykhmetova, 2016). The government, on the other hand, is interested to see the language adopted by society as a second language, particularly by the younger generation. The president's decree, which places a strong emphasis on the importance of English and calls for reforming and modernizing both education and the media to support the dominance of English in the country, makes clear what the government's intentions are. According to a number of linguists (Dearden, 2015; West, 2013), the presidential decree is significant in the increased focus on the English language in educational institutions, which is happening at all levels of education.

On December 10, 2012, a presidential decree was signed in Uzbekistan "*On measures to further improve foreign language learning system*". Starting from 2013/2014 school year, foreign languages, primarily English, were required to be taught from the first year of all schools across the country. Additionally, it was planned for higher education institutions to offer university modules in English and other foreign languages, specifically in technical and international areas.

Dearden (2015, p.16) claims that "In Uzbekistan the presidential decree of 10 December 2012 encourages English to be taught, spoken, and used for business communication at all levels and at any institution, be it journalism, economics or ministry staff".

Education is a powerful tool for establishing the importance of language in society. As a result, possibly the government, through implementing modifications to modern Uzbekistan's language policy, envisions the time when English will "penetrate into society" (Hasanova, 2007) and become as widespread as Russian has been.

EMI may cause difficulties for instructors to teach, students to learn and perform in English due to certain challenges. Consequently, it is important to study the perceptions and experiences of students, instructors and administration staff in Uzbek HEIs since they are "the final key stakeholders responsible for what happens inside classrooms" (Pelaez & Usma, 2017). Investigating stakeholders' views and experiences can assist in understanding the challenges that arise in EMI programs and thus, to understand better their impact on subject content and language learning. Only a few research studies have been conducted to investigate stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of EMI implementation in the universities of Uzbekistan so far. The present study explores students, instructors and other stakeholders' perceptions of EMI at the tertiary level of Uzbekistan, which is insufficiently explored in the studies conducted in Uzbek context.

In this context, the present research is conducted in several higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan, which have been pioneering in EMI practices in tertiary level in the country. For the last four years, these universities have been making persistent efforts in implementing EMI in bachelor and masters' degree programs of higher education.

The main objective of research is to investigate the challenges and benefits of English-medium Instruction (EMI) in tertiary level in

Uzbekistan.

It is envisaged to analyze the perceptions of EMI instructors, students and administration members of universities of Uzbekistan to improve EMI implementation in the country.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are university administrators' opinions about the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities of EMI in Uzbek Universities?
2. What are instructors' opinions about the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities of EMI in Uzbek Universities?
3. What are students' opinions about the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities of EMI in Uzbek Universities?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

A qualitative case study was employed to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The sample of this study consisted of the instructors, students and administration staff at the universities in Uzbekistan. There were 34 participants in total: 13 instructors, 15 students and 6 administrators who completed questionnaires and expressed their perceptions on the use of English as a language of instruction in their universities. Participants were all born and raised in Uzbekistan and spoke Uzbek language as their first language.

Demographics of the participants are as follows: of six administrators, only one is female and their age ranges between 35-45, with an average of 41.5. Their work experience ranges between 5 to 20 years with an average of 12 years. All six administrators speak Uzbek, Russian, English.

Of thirteen instructors, five are male and eight are female. Their age range is 22-50, with an average of 37. As to their total teaching experience at higher education, 38% has a teaching experience of 1-5 years, 31% with 11-15 years of experience, 23% with 16-20 years of experience and 8% with 21-25 years of teaching experience. When asked to define their English proficiency, 33% of the instructors declared that their proficiency is at elementary level whereas 21% defined their level as intermediate and 46% as upper-intermediate. It is interesting that nearly one third of the instructors teaching EMI courses have low level proficiency, which makes the efficiency of the EMI practice questionable.

Of fifteen students attending to EMI programs, nine are male and six are female. The age range is 18-23 with an average of 20.4. As to their declared English level proficiency, 13% of the students described themselves as elementary, 27% as pre-intermediate, 33% as intermediate, 20% as upper-intermediate and 7% as advanced.

2.2 Instruments

Three questionnaires were developed for use with higher educational EMI instructors, their students and administration staff. The related literature was reviewed and three online survey questionnaires consisting of 15 demographic and open-ended questions in each were developed for use with higher education EMI instructors, their students and administration. The content validity of the questionnaires was checked by an EMI expert. Another research instrument employed in the study was a semi structured audio-recorded interview.

The questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part inquired into the respondents' demographic information, such as age, gender, years of teaching experience in higher education (in the survey for EMI instructors), their English proficiency level and professional training about EMI before starting teaching in English. The second part, comprising of open-ended questions, investigated the respondents' opinions about benefits and challenges of teaching (for instructors), studying (for students) and implementing (for administrators) EMI in higher education in Uzbekistan.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured audio-recorded interviews and online questionnaire surveys were employed to collect data. First, the questionnaires and survey links were sent to participants' online. Next, semi-structured interviews were conducted by researcher face-to-face. They were guided by an interview protocol. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher. The data from the questionnaires and the interviews were qualitatively analyzed. The surveys and transcripts were carefully examined to identify and note important comments regarding participants' replies to each question. The data extraction was made using numerical indexes to ensure anonymity.

3. Results and Discussion

The results are discussed in the light of the research questions:

RQ1: What are university administrators' opinions about the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities of EMI in Uzbek Universities?

Concerning the administrators' opinions about EMI, the researcher addressed to the authority of the universities where English-medium instruction is being implemented. The findings show that EMI is a new mode of teaching in higher education in Uzbekistan. Consequently, it is a challenging approach. To the survey question 7: “What are your opinions about EMI in your institution? Do you think it is useful for students' future career? Why do you think so?” the respondents answered in the following way:

A3: *EMI is very new for our academy. Some instructors teach their subjects in English. Yes, I think students can improve their English. They can participate in international conferences in the future.*

A4: *I think it is a challenging but rewarding approach. Many things should be done as qualifying instructors, designing curriculum, supplying with facilities in order to implement EMI in our institution.*

A5: *In our university EMI is new. In my opinion, English medium is useful for our students. They will improve their English and communicate with their foreign friends without any difficulties.*

Administrators appear to believe that EMI can be beneficial for students to improve their English and participate in international conferences. EMI is a challenging but rewarding approach, but that there are many things that need to be done in order to implement it effectively, such as training instructors and designing the curriculum. They also believe that EMI is useful for students in improving their English and communication skills with foreign friends.

In terms of challenges of implementing an EMI program, sample answers of the administrators to the question “*What is the degree of preparedness and motivation for teaching in English – medium classroom according to authority’s opinions?*” are as follows:

A2: *... instructors are highly motivated because there is a financial motivation according to Presidential Decree. They can participate in different exchange programs.*

A6: *We have some instructors who deliver their lessons in English. But we don’t stop and try to attract foreign teachers and specialists and even open faculties for international students. We have foreign university partners.*

In response to challenges that authority face to in implementing EMI in university, the administrators mentioned hiring native speaker instructors to train their teachers. As administrators 1 and 4 responded:

A1: *We have difficulties in attracting EMI instructors from English speaking countries to conduct master classes for our instructors.*

A4: *We are trying to invite foreign specialists to train our instructors, sign memorandums with other foreign universities and open joint faculties.*

A2: *We also have difficulty in providing IT rooms for students, reliable internet connection and required teaching materials.*

The degree of preparedness and motivation for teaching in English-medium classrooms among instructors at the university is mixed. Some instructors are highly motivated, possibly due to financial incentives and the opportunity to participate in exchange programs, while others may not have as much experience or confidence in teaching in English. The university administrators have identified challenges in implementing English-medium instruction, including difficulty in attracting native English-speaking instructors to train their teachers and the need to hire foreign specialists or sign agreements with foreign universities in order to improve the ability of their instructors to teach in English. The administrators also mentioned the possibility of opening faculties for international students. Another problem mentioned by administration is providing students with IT rooms, computers and internet connection, and teaching materials, is one of the requirements demanded by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education to higher educational institutions of Uzbekistan.

RQ2: What are instructors’ opinions about the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities of EMI in Uzbek Universities?

According to the questionnaires, the instructors stated that they liked teaching content in English-medium (62% strongly agree and 38% agree). The majority of instructors believed that EMI is useful for students’ future studies (54% strongly agree, 38% agree, 8% disagree) and the instructors also believed that they can teach the subject better in English (15% strongly agree, 77% agree, 8% disagree). All of the instructors believed that working in an EMI program will develop their own English proficiency and their teaching skill (62% strongly agree, 38% agree and 54% strongly agree, 46% agree respectively). It appears that instructors, who completed the online survey, were satisfied with taking EMI classes and willing to continue to take them.

As for the degree of preparedness and motivation for teaching in EMI programs, the findings show that instructors are highly motivated in teaching EMI:

I1: *I like my subject and think that teaching in EMI is very useful and interesting. However, it has some challenges on the other hand. It is the third year of my teaching in English-medium and it’s getting easier year by year, because students (surely, not all of them) are very motivated and active during the lessons.*

I3: *To tell the truth, I do love teaching. Without any hesitation I can say, that my degree of preparedness and motivation for teaching English is high enough, so I can better teach my subject in English-medium. I also can develop my teaching skills by the help of teaching EMI.*

I4: *EMI is a new approach in our country. We are very motivated, because there is a Presidential Decree on teaching EMI in HE in Uzbekistan.*

I10: *I think I am ready to teach in EMI, although there are some difficulties and challenges in explaining a new theme only in English.*

I12: *My motivation is seeing progress of my students.*

The findings suggest that instructors are highly motivated to teach in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs. Some instructors cited their love of teaching and the desire to improve their own teaching skills as motivations for teaching in EMI. Others mentioned the motivation provided by a Presidential Decree on teaching EMI in higher education in Uzbekistan, or the desire to see progress in their students. Some instructors also mentioned some challenges and difficulties in teaching in EMI, such as the need to explain new themes in English only.

When instructors were asked to comment on students' motivation and preparedness for EMI, they responded that there is a growing awareness in students about the importance and future benefits of EMI:

I6: *2 years ago it was very difficult for the majority of students as they were not ready to study their major or content subjects in English. It was a big challenge for them. But now they find it interesting and useful at the same time. To cope with all the tasks and projects students go to different language centers or private tutors to learn English. It is a big plus for their language improvement and future career as well.*

I7: *My students do love learning English. Day by day their degree and motivation is increasing. Of course, preparedness as well. Why, because of high quality of technology and experienced teachers. Now they have a lot of opportunities to learn English and they learn it in innovative way.*

I9: *My students are interested and motivated in learning content subjects in EMI. Even if they have some challenges in studying, they are keen on learning in English very much.*

Instructors reported that there is a growing awareness among students about the importance and future benefits of English-medium instruction (EMI). Some students initially found it challenging to study their major or content subjects in English, but now they find it interesting and useful. To improve their language skills and prepare for their future careers, some students are taking advantage of opportunities to learn English through language centers or private tutors. The instructors also noted that students are interested and motivated in learning content subjects in EMI, even if they face challenges in doing so. The availability of high-quality technology and experienced teachers has also contributed to students' growing preparedness and motivation for EMI.

Regarding their professional life, the instructors in EMI programs acknowledged several benefits of working in an EMI program:

I3: *According to the Presidential Decree, EMI instructors get salaries twice as much than other L1 teachers. Besides, there are many other benefits, such as participating in international conferences, teacher training courses in foreign countries, career promotion, etc.*

I5: *According to Presidential Decree, 2012, salaries are doubled for those teachers, who deliver their lessons in English. Teaching EMI helps improve our language proficiency as well.*

I7: *There are many opportunities for EMI instructors of higher education in Uzbekistan these days. They earn much more money than teachers, who conduct their lessons in Uzbek (L1) or Russian (L2). So English is L3 in our country. In addition, EMI teachers can participate in international conferences and teacher training programs. They can participate in various projects in partnership with foreign language teachers and have their articles published in international scientific journals.*

Instructors working in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs have identified several benefits to their professional lives. Some instructors mentioned the financial incentive of receiving higher salaries, as stipulated by a Presidential Decree. Other benefits mentioned by the instructors include the opportunity to participate in international conferences and teacher training courses, career advancement, and the chance to improve their language proficiency. Some instructors also mentioned the possibility of participating in projects with foreign language teachers and having their articles published in international scientific journals.

With respect to the challenges they experience in teaching EMI, one of the most urgent challenges is working in mixed ability and overloaded classes. Educators reported that some students required extra attention as they were not keeping up. It takes instructors much more time to mark and get preparation for lessons due to large numbers of students in groups. In addition, teachers complained about the dearth of teaching resources and occasional internet failure.

I3: *Personally, I teach IT to Uzbek students at private university. Surely, I do face some challenges while teaching my subject in English. Actually we, I mean, other teachers like me as well, try to do our best to explain everything in English to our students. However, the point is that not all students can understand the content properly due to their insufficient level of English. In such cases to solve the problem we are obliged to use their native language, so that the students could comprehend a new topic and were able to perform all operations on computer successfully.*

I8: *As I teach biology to international students at medical university, the problem I face to is not related to my students' level of English, on the contrary, I have some difficulties in explaining everything totally in English. I spend long hours for getting preparation before my lectures. To tell the truth, to solve this problem, I show them videos from YouTube, related to theme, prepared beforehand, whenever I feel that my students didn't understand the topic properly.*

I11: *Well, the problem I usually encounter is working in a mixed ability and overloaded classes. I do not have enough time for*

working with my students individually during the lessons. Of course, I try to spend my own spare time for them, which is usually unpaid though. One more challenge is concerning a shortage of resources, to put it more precisely, relevant literature.

Instructors working in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs face a variety of challenges in their teaching. Some instructors mentioned difficulties in ensuring that all students understand the content properly due to their insufficient level of English, and have to resort to using the students' native language in order to help them understand. Other instructors mentioned difficulties in explaining everything in English, and have to spend long hours preparing for their lectures or use videos from YouTube to supplement their teaching. Still other instructors mentioned challenges in working with mixed-ability and overloaded classes, and not having enough time to work with students individually during lessons. There is also a challenge mentioned of a shortage of resources, specifically relevant literature, for teaching in EMI.

The interviews with instructors supported the results of questionnaires above. According to the instructor opinions revealed in interviews, EMI, though new in Uzbekistan, should be developed. One interviewee referred to a shortage of experienced teachers who have a good command of English. The also stated language barrier as one of the underlying problems of implementing EMI in higher education in Uzbekistan.

I 2: Teaching my subject in English is really new in Uzbekistan. So, it is very innovative, very challenging and not all the teachers are ready for this approach nowadays, but still it is interesting for both of teachers and students, because in this way we are learning English, first of all. Secondly, we have much opportunity to learn our own subject area in English... so, new things, new methods, inventions happening in our own field. You know, English is a global language, a language of science technology and education, that's why while we are teaching, we feel more opportunity.

From the instructors' perspective, there are a lot of opportunities for students. They can broaden their horizons by studying through the target language, promoting in their future career, studying overseas and so on. For the perceptions about benefits for EMI instructors, the interviewees expressed following ideas:

I 1: As we know, English is a 'lingua franca', as Crystal stated, it's widely spoken everywhere, but if we consider that our country is in the range of developing countries, not all of the teachers, especially teachers of elderly generation seem to have a good command of English and they will be forced to improve their English too. Implementing EMI would be good not only for students, but also for teachers as well.

I 2: There are so many benefits of teaching EMI, in my opinion, because it makes teachers to investigate, to explore their subject more profoundly using internet, using different source of media..., because, you know very fresh ideas and innovations are given in English. That's why if you don't know English you may lag behind, you may not be able to give the students fresh ideas, fresh information about your subject. So I think it gives more benefit to teach EMI. Another benefit is salary bonus for instructors. If you teach your subject in English, university teachers will be rewarded 30% to their salaries. So you can get more income, ... as Presidential Decree signed by our first President, and it was welcomed by all teachers.

Regarding to the interview question about the challenges of EMI during the interview, the response of one of the instructors was as follows:

I 1: Hmm... Anyway, it needs time. As we know, it's new experience in university settings in our country, that's why it does have some problems to be faced. First, I would say is the level of students. In our university where different subjects, specialties are taught in English, language barrier and teachers' level of English, as I mentioned before, are the real challenge....Second, hmm, teaching in a mixed ability classes always has been a problematic issue for teachers, that's why they may have to teach individually some students, which is really time consuming.

I 2: The first challenge is you should be able to teach your subject in English, it means, you have to know your area very well and at the same time you have to know English very well in order to deliver lectures, seminars and it requires from you to know English proficiently. Another challenge is to raise students' interest to your subject area in English, because usually it is not so easy to motivate students in their mother tongue. Here you face to two challenges: you give your lectures in English and some of the students may not understand well, they have to work on their language hard. These are challenges I experience in teaching EMI.

Instructors working in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs mentioned several challenges in their teaching. One challenge is the level of English proficiency of both the students and the teachers, which can create a language barrier and make it difficult to deliver lectures and seminars effectively. Another challenge is teaching mixed-ability classes, which can be time-consuming if instructors have to work with students individually. The instructors also mentioned the challenge of motivating students to learn in a language that is not their mother tongue, and the difficulty in ensuring that all students understand the content when it is taught in English.

In view of the question concerning to the measures that could be taken to avoid the difficulties and solution them, the responses were following:

I 1: To my mind, the first thing that should be done is ... teachers should be taught to improve their English level, for entrance exams there should be some changes, the students should take tests on English too in order to check up to what extent they are

ready to study or not.

I 2: *Teachers should work in collaboration; they should help each other, dean of the faculty, chairman of the department should support them. Teachers should work on special terminology, create dictionaries themselves and they should be focused on their professional development.*

Instructors working in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs suggested several ways to address the challenges of teaching in EMI. One instructor suggested that teachers should be trained to improve their English proficiency, and that entrance exams should include tests of English to ensure that students are prepared to study in EMI. Another instructor suggested that teachers should work in collaboration, with support from the dean and chairman of the department, and focus on professional development by working on special terminology and creating dictionaries.

Following suggestions were given for improving implementation EMI in HE in Uzbekistan:

For improving implementation EMI in Uzbekistan, I think this step should be taken earlier, from very early age of learners, from preschool years and when they study at school the concept of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) should be implemented from early age. Science, technology and mass media should be introduced in English at school. In this way we can make easier somehow to make English as a medium of instruction at universities.

Results of the interviews with three instructors can be summarized as follows.

The opened-ended questions of surveys and interview aimed to extract additional ideas and suggestions regarding EMI courses in HEI in Uzbekistan from the participants. The participants' responses were compiled, analyzed, and summarized as following:

- EMI is new experience in university settings in Uzbekistan;
- Policy makers should take into account teachers' language abilities and arrange development facilities beforehand to facilitate teachers to implement the policy as intended;
- EMI courses are useful and helpful, but at the same time challenging;
- Students can improve their English proficiency while learning content subjects through EMI;
- EMI courses help students develop presentation skills.
- The content teachers need English language support of English teachers for academic purposes;
- Both teachers and students face some challenges related to a lack of specific terminology in English.

RQ3: What are students' opinions about the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities of EMI in Uzbek Universities?

In response to the question concerning the degree of preparedness and motivation for studying in EMI classrooms, the students' responded in the following way:

S1: *I am very pleased that some of our subjects are being taught in English medium. Of course, we have difficulties during the lesson but we try to cope with these problems. The reason is that EMI is a new mode of teaching.*

S4: *I like English very much, because it is an international language. English is the language of science, technology, education. I am very glad that some of our subjects are being taught in English. Almost all of the students learn English and can speak at least A2 or B1 level. I have got many friends whose IELTS band score is 7, 8 and even 8.5. So, we are motivated in learning subjects in English.*

S5: *As for me, studying in English medium is a big plus for us. We are trying to manage with all the tasks given by our instructors even though it is a big challenge for some students.*

S7: *Not all the students are ready for learning subjects in English. But they are interested in it because it helps us to learn English language and culture.*

S8: *I can say it is important to me, because I am not going to study only at Medical University. I am going to study abroad and internship abroad.*

S10: *I can say that I have some problems with my English knowledge but I am learning it. And having lessons in this language is very motivating.*

Students studying in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs have mixed views on the experience. Some students mentioned difficulties and challenges in managing the tasks given by instructors, but also expressed motivation to learn subjects in English because it helps them improve their language skills and learn about English culture. Other students mentioned the importance of learning in English for their future studies and internships abroad. Some students also mentioned that they have problems with their English knowledge, but are motivated to improve by having lessons in English. Overall, the students seem to recognize the value of learning in English, even if it presents challenges.

The students also mentioned several benefits of in EMI programs in Uzbekistan:

S2: *There are many benefits of studying in EMI classroom. I can name some of them. We can participate in different*

international projects, conferences; continue our study abroad; the most important benefit is that we can improve our English language.

S3: *As you know, speaking English fluently and having a good command in English opens all the doors to the world and gives many opportunities to youth. Especially if you have a higher education it is not a problem to find a high paid salary job in foreign countries. If we study in English media, we will be able to get our MA in English speaking countries and communicate with foreign partners without any difficulties.*

S5: *They can work and study abroad after graduation. Also, students can take part in different exchange programs.*

S6: *For students who study in EMI there are many advantages. The best one is improving English. We can study abroad if we speak English well. Thus, we will be able to work in prestigious foreign companies.*

Students studying in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs in Uzbekistan mentioned several benefits of this mode of education. These benefits include the ability to participate in international projects and conferences, the opportunity to continue studies abroad, and the chance to improve English language skills. Students also mentioned the potential for finding high-paying jobs in foreign countries and the ability to work and study abroad after graduation as advantages of EMI. Overall, the students see EMI as a way to improve their language skills and open up new opportunities for their careers.

As for the challenges they experience in studying EMI, the students pointed as following:

S1: *It is difficult for me to understand new materials and complete tasks given by teacher.*

S2: *I have problems in my speaking, that's why sometimes I can't express my ideas in foreign language.*

S4: *EMI is completely new mode of teaching. However, year by year it becomes more common in our country. Surely, challenges are obvious and the most popular one is deficiency of language proficiency. It is difficult for some students to understand fully the new theme in English. We sometimes ask our teachers to explain partially in our LI- Uzbek.*

S9: *Challenges are unavoidable in every just began approach of teaching. We experience some difficulties in expressing our thoughts in English and completing midterm, final tasks, doing project work, understanding unknown text and technical vocabulary.*

S13: *Students' level of English is a big problem for them during their study in English. We have to ask some explanations in our mother tongue from our instructors.*

S14: *There could be a lack of academic vocabulary, difficulties in understanding medical terminology and texts. We also have difficulties with time management and task completing in English.*

S15: *I face many challenges in understanding specific terminology due to a lack of vocabulary. Besides, it is difficult for me to express my opinion in English language.*

Students studying in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs mentioned several challenges they experience in this mode of education. These challenges include difficulties in understanding new materials and completing tasks, problems with speaking and expressing ideas in English, a lack of language proficiency, difficulties in understanding unknown texts and technical vocabulary, and problems with time management and task completion. Some students also mentioned specific challenges related to a lack of academic vocabulary and difficulties in understanding medical terminology. Overall, the students mentioned a range of challenges related to learning in a language that is not their mother tongue.

The results of the present study identified some of the effects of English as a global language on practices in EMI course. Jenkins (2018), stated, that "as far as language is concerned, the key point in terms of implementation is that for all who are studying not English, but through, the language is simply a tool of communication" (p.13). The EMI approach will help students communicate with their foreign fellows and future partners, improve their English language proficiency and be promoted in their future jobs.

According to Da-Fu Huang (2015), based on the opinions of participants, 'for a better overall quality of student learning' and teacher instructing in EMI courses, it is suggested, that 'universities should increase resources to support their students' English language learning and instructors' teaching in English-medium. EMI subject courses could be considered as additional opportunities to enhance undergraduates' English language skills, according to Hsieh and Kang (2007) and Wu (2006). Through receiving and producing English in authentic communicative contexts, these courses offer students greater opportunities to learn the language. (Da-Fu Huang, 2015).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study discussed the views of English-medium instruction in higher education in Uzbekistan. The study aimed to comprehend the responses from the students, teachers and administrators to the questionnaires in order to identify the benefits and challenges of EMI. Three questionnaires as the primary research instrument along with qualitative interviews and open-ended questions included in the questionnaires were employed for triangulation purposes.

The investigation of the various opinions of participants showed that implementing an EMI approach would attribute responsibility on the teaching staff and require very carefully designed curricula. Such recommendations like motivating students, making classes more interesting and comfortable were given by both teachers and students. In addition, there were some views assuming that EMI courses

improve English proficiency; contribute to teachers' professional development, career, and income; enhances students' interaction with their international fellows. Briefly, English comprehension ability is crucial to the learning success of professional knowledge. EMI courses offer great opportunities to both of students and teachers.

The most important factor is motivating students. In addition, in order to improve the quality of teaching in EMI code-switching to a first language (L1) should be taken into consideration by policy makers. Instructors should use some Uzbek while explaining a new material. Besides, only proficient instructors should be hired to teach for the EMI program and to attract international students native-speaker professionals should be invited to deliver lectures to students and master classes for EMI teachers. The government should think about alteration of entrance exams taking into account their English language abilities of studying EMI.

The present study found that English-medium instruction (EMI) is a new mode of teaching in higher education in Uzbekistan and is seen as a challenging but rewarding approach by university administrators. They believe that EMI can be beneficial for students in improving their English and communication skills, and in participating in international conferences. However, there are challenges in implementing EMI programs, including attracting native English-speaking instructors to train teachers and hiring foreign specialists or signing agreements with foreign universities to improve the ability of instructors to teach in English. Other challenges include providing students with IT resources, computers and internet connection, and teaching materials. The degree of preparedness and motivation for teaching in English-medium classrooms among instructors is mixed, with some being highly motivated and others having less experience or confidence in teaching in English. Students also reported challenges in understanding new materials and completing tasks, difficulties in speaking and expressing ideas in English, and a lack of academic vocabulary. However, they also mentioned benefits of EMI such as improving English, participating in international projects and conferences, and studying or working abroad after graduation.

The findings of the research suggest that instructors in Uzbek universities are generally positive about the effectiveness of English-medium instruction (EMI) and believe that it can be beneficial for students' future studies and career prospects. They also believe that teaching in EMI can help to improve their own English proficiency and teaching skills. While there are some challenges in teaching in EMI, such as the need to explain new themes in English only, instructors are highly motivated to teach in EMI programs. The students also reported benefits of studying in EMI, such as the ability to improve their English, participate in international projects and conferences, and study or work abroad after graduation. However, they also mentioned challenges in studying EMI, including language barriers, difficulty in understanding specific terminology, and time management. Overall, the research suggests that both instructors and students see the value in EMI programs and are motivated to participate in them, despite some challenges.

Students in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs in Uzbekistan have mixed views on the effectiveness of EMI. Some students find it challenging to understand new materials and complete tasks given by teachers, but also recognize the benefits of EMI in improving their language skills and opening up new opportunities for their careers. Other challenges mentioned by students include difficulties in speaking and expressing ideas in English, a lack of academic vocabulary, and problems with understanding medical terminology and texts. Some students also mentioned the need for more support from teachers and the need for more resources and facilities to support EMI programs. Overall, students seem to recognize the value of EMI despite the challenges they face in this mode of education.

Some recommendations for future research are made in light of the findings and limitations of the present study. Future studies should be replicated to examine perspectives on EMI courses from a wider range of academic disciplines and from different universities all throughout Uzbekistan. It is recommended that the number of participants and universities are suggested to be increased as findings might give more additional insights about the benefits and challenges of EMI. The results of such kind of investigations is likely to contribute to improving of implementation of English-medium instruction in higher education in Uzbekistan.

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