Factors Affecting Students' English Proficiency in a Turkish EMI University: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This paper reports on an investigation of Turkish English-medium university students' perceptions of the change in their language ability and the factors affecting this change. Results revealed that 1) when students are highly exposed to English and are expected to use it productively for their studies, they perceive that there is greater development in their language skills and abilities 2) students think that corrective feedback plays a crucial role in helping them focus their attention on the form 3) speaking is perceived to be the weakest and the least improved skill over the years. These findings suggest insightful implications for English-medium universities in Turkey and all around the world.

1. Introduction

With English being an indispensable requirement in various fields such as business, diplomacy, and academics, there is an accelerating movement from English taught as a foreign language (EFL) to English being the medium of instruction (EMI) in countries where English has been learned and taught as a second or foreign language (Byun, Chu, Kim, Park, Kim, & Jung, 2011; Coleman, 2006; Huang, 2006; Kachru, 1990). This movement has had a noticeable impact on higher education since using English in higher education settings is believed to enable students to acquire higher English proficiency, and eventually have job prospects (Cho, 2012).

Given the fact that there has been a worldwide "Englishization" trend, it is important to explore whether students think that EMI programs affect their level of English proficiency.

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There have been some studies on the reasons for the popularity of EMI and the challenges associated with this phenomenon but there are not many studies on students' perceptions regarding the language development in an EMI context. Therefore, this paper aims at exploring students' perceptions of the factors that affect students' level of English proficiency in the context of a foundation university in Turkey and shedding light on an area that has been popularly investigated in and around Turkey in the last few years.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition and language acquisition

Similar to Dearden's (2014) definition of EMI as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English", in the context of the current study EMI means delivering course content by using English language although the primary concern is not to improve students' language ability. Although the major aim of EMI is not to improve the language skills of students directly, there is a relationship between language use in the classroom and language development. It is possible to explain this relationship referring to various theoretical perspectives. The first one is Krashen's (1987) comprehensible input, according to which, it is necessary to be exposed to "comprehensible input" to acquire a language. In order to acquire a language, learners interact in the target language in a meaningful way and communicate naturally, and they do not pay much attention to structures, or in other words, forms since they focus on conveying and understanding messages. As the aim of EMI classroom is not to teach a particular grammar structure or improve their language skills, but to convey the content knowledge in a foreign language, students are more likely to find themselves in the conditions that Krashen (1987) puts forwards as a requirement for language acquisition.

Similarly, Vygotsky (1997) proposes an interactionist view to learning. The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky puts emphasis on an essential and motivating factor which is meaningful interaction among learners and crucial to learning and development. For Vygotsky "mediation" is an essential device for learning and mediation can be in the form of language, visual, material tools or the behavior of individuals in social interaction (Appel & Lantolf, 1994; Donato & McCormick, 1994). It is possible to create a sociocultural environment in an EMI classroom. Lecturers and the tools used for delivering the content of the lessons can be great tools to help student mediate the language development process.

In addition to the theories mentioned above, interaction hypothesis which was initially proposed by Long (1981), states that participating in conversations with native speakers, which is possible with the modification of discourse and linguistic features, is essential for language development. For Long (1981: 259) "input refers to the linguistic forms used" and "interaction is meant to be the functions served by those forms, such as expansion,

repetition, and clarification". Modification is essential as the input becomes intake for the learner. According to Mackey (1999), Long (1996) has added another important aspect to interaction hypothesis, that is the role of negative feedback in interaction. Negative feedback may cause noticing of some forms: "it is proposed that environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner's developing L2 processing capacity.... negative feedback obtained in negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of SL development" (Long 1996: 414). This provides opportunities for students to notice the gaps in their language. Noticing hypothesis also agrees with this claim by suggesting that when learners are made aware of their deficiencies and gaps in their interlanguage, they can improve their language use (Schmidt, 1990). Therefore, as the literature and the learning theories suggest, in an EMI classroom, although creating a learning environment where there is exposure to the target language and opportunities for students to interact in a meaningful way, there also needs to be a room for negative feedback to help students notice the areas that need to work on to improve their language skills and proficiency.

2.2. Challenges of studying in EMI context

Studies have identified various challenges in EMI context and some factors which may inhibit students' development of language over time. In a study conducted by Hellejaer and Westergaard (2003) it was pointed out that a large number of students experience language problems during their undergraduate studies. Due to students' inadequate language proficiency, students reported that comprehension of lectures, conducting oral presentations and writing papers were the most challenging tasks. In order to reduce the amount of difficulty that students experience, the authors suggest that language support needs to continue throughout students' undergraduate studies along with the content instruction. In Kırkgoz's (2009) study most students reported that their participation was inhibited due to insufficient practice in speaking and lack of confidence. This may result in resorting to L1 during seminars and lectures. Similarly, Kim, Tatar and Choi (2014) explored Korean students' experiences of EMI courses and found out that students feel the need to use L1 in EMI classes since they feel more comfortable.

Another study by Hennebery et al. (2012) notes that non-native speaker students face the challenge of combining thinking skills with listening and speaking skills in lectures and interactive seminars in a foreign language and students express high anxiety in such skills. In the same study students were asked about academic writing and expectations of linguistic feedback. Students reported that although they had valuable ideas, they did not know how to put them forward in an academically acceptable style and expressed their concerns in failing to convey their messages. Most of the students expressed that they would like to be provided with comments on grammatical aspects of their work and would appreciate feedback on their use of vocabulary. This can also be supported by the study

conducted by Storch (2009) in order to investigate the changes in the learners' academic writing after one semester of study in an L2-medium university. In her study Storch found out that after a semester of study at the university, the learners' writing improved mainly in terms of structure and development of ideas and some improvement was observed in the formality of learners' language. However, there was no evidence of improvement in linguistic accuracy or complexity. She attributed this to the absence of feedback.

Coleman (2006) categorizes challenges regarding EMI as student related and staff related concerns. Student related concerns include students' difficulty in understanding disciplinary knowledge, lack of interest from local students whose first language is not English, inability to participate in and speak fluently in lectures, incoming international students' inadequate proficiency in the host language, inadequate cultural integration of international students, and lack of confidence and inability to adapt among local students. Teaching staff related concerns involve reluctance of local staff to teach through English, the need for the training of the staff, native speaker tutors' difficulty in adapting to non-native speaking students, and difficulties in finding teaching materials. These factors may lead to inefficient content delivery, ineffective interactions between teachers and students, and students' difficulty in theory conceptualization (Kim 2002; Klaassen & Graaff 2001; Olsen and Huckin 1990). These findings are compatible with what Kırkgoz (2009) found in Turkish context. The major issues reported by the students were the inability to participate in and speak fluently in lectures, the frustration of reading a chapter in a disciplinary book and finding that not much in it makes sense, and enculturation difficulties that the students experienced in the process of adjusting to being a student in a new environment. Although these findings suggest challenges due to language problems, when language problems are not addressed throughout their studies, these issues may inhibit language development indirectly. To illustrate, when students never receive feedback on their language use, the mistakes can be fossilized over time or students may miss the opportunity to develop their language skills.

2.3. Perceived impacts of EMI

In his doctoral study with undergraduate students, Rogier (2012) investigated the perceptions of students on the effects of EMI on their language proficiency. The data he gathered from students revealed that students believed that their English language skills improved over the course of four years of EMI, generally citing exposure to the language as the reason. In a similar study with Korean undergraduate students, Kim, Kweon and Kim (2016) found out that %24.6 of the participants felt that their English didn't improve, 22.7% thought that their English improved and 51.3% were not sure of the impact of EMI on their English proficiency. The authors concluded that from the students' perspectives, the schools under study did not reach their main goal which was to advance students' language proficiency. In the same study, students were asked to evaluate the change in

their language skills separately. Students reported that the skill that improved most during EMI was listening comprehension and they believed that their speaking ability improved the least. The authors attributed this to the characteristics of the Korean learning environment where students are encouraged to produce the language orally and remain passive rather than productive. Another study by Lee (2014) shows that although EMI classes aim to improve students' communication skills in English, only 55 % of the students in Korea were happy with their spoken English in their classes. EMI classes did not meet the expected learning outcomes.

As seen from this review, much present research has focused on the reasons and challenges that students experience in EMI context. However, research is needed on exploring more the impact of EMI on perceived language skills development. Therefore, the following research questions are addressed in this paper:

1. What is the nature and essence of students' lived experiences of English language use in their departmental studies?
2. How do students perceive the change in their language ability in EMI context?
3. What are the factors enhancing students' level of English in EMI context?
4. What are the factors inhibiting or reducing students' language development in EMI context?
5. What are the students' suggestions for universities which provide EMI to contribute to their language development?

3. Method

This study undertakes a phenomenological approach to qualitative research. Since "a phenomenological study investigates various reactions to, or perceptions of, a particular phenomenon" (Fraenken, Wallen & Hyun, 2015: 430), the approach matches with the aims of the present study that is the in-depth investigation of experiences and perceptions of undergraduate students' on their language development in EMI context. Multiple interviews with different participants sharing similar experiences were conducted and interviews consisted of open-ended questions aiming to enable participant to relieve the experiences they have had in their minds and describe them in detail which lead to discovery of common essence.

3.1. Participants

A representative sample of 12 students (table 1) from a foundation university in Turkey was involved in the study since as Merriam (2009) suggests, "unless you plan to interview, observe, or analyze all the people, activities, or documents within the case, you will need to do some sampling within the case." The criteria for purposive sampling was that only the participants who were in their 6th to 10th semesters would be asked for an interview.

The rationale behind choosing these specific students for sampling is that only after some exposure students can develop a repertoire of experiences and can start expressing the impact of these experiences on their language development. All participants were all Turkish citizens and had been learning English as a foreign language for 12 or 13 years. The ages of students ranged from 21 to 23. Two of the participants were male and the rest were female. In order to start their departmental studies, students have to pass an in-house English proficiency test with a minimum score that is equivalent to IELTS-6.5 or CEFR high B2. Those who cannot pass the proficiency attend a one-year intensive English program at the English Preparatory School.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Gender	F	%	Nationality	F	%	Faculty	F	%	Semester	F	%	Years of Lang. Learning Exp	F	%	Age F %
Female	8	66.6	Turkish	12	100	Engineering	10	83.3	6	6	50	12	4	33.3	21 433.3
Male	4	33.3.	Others	0	0	Psychology	2	13	8	4	33.3	13	8	66.6	22 433.3
									Over 8	2	17				23 433.3

3.2. Data collection

The instruments used for data collection were semi-structured interviews. The objectives of the semi-structured interviews were to understand students' perceptions of the impacts of EMI, and to determine the factors that enhance and reduce language development in EMI context. The general strategy for the interviews was to start off with demographic questions and then broad questions which were followed up on the interviewee's responses, to capture her or his meanings (Appendix A). The interviews were conducted individually, using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews took at school on an appointment basis. The interviewers were the researchers of the study. All the interviews were face-to-face meetings with each participant and were voice-recorded. They approximately took 15-20 minutes. Before beginning to record participants' voices, they were given the interview protocol and asked to sign the consent form. During the interviews, the researchers also filled in the contact summary sheet that Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested. Three students started and completed the interview in English. One student wanted the interview to be in Turkish and one started in English and later switched to Turkish.

3.3. Data analysis

The researchers read the transcripts and contact summary sheets. Then, both researchers coded the same data set individually and discussed initial difficulties which helped definitional clarity and also served as a good reliability check. Since the research

questions were under different categories, patterns and codes for these categories were identified to interpret and organize the data. A constant comparative method involving the simultaneous comparison of all units of meaning obtained and negative case analysis and discrepant data analysis involving the identification of data that are negative or discrepant from the main body of data collected were adopted. In addition to qualitative-theme based analysis, the number of each participant's answer were counted to calculate the percentages of answers in each category.

3.4. Reliability and validity of the study

In the present study where there is so much interpretation and inferencing, in order to ensure high validity and reliability the suggestions and strategies provided by Merriam (2004), Seidman (2006), Saldana (2011) and Creswell (2009) are taken into consideration. Therefore, before conducting the interviews, a demo interview was conducted to test whether what was intended to be collected could be obtained with the interview tools. The volunteering participant for this study provided feedback on the clarity of the questions. Another way to ensure high validity was to provide rich and detailed descriptions of the findings. Besides, the biases of the researchers were clarified which involved comments by the researchers about their interpretations of the interpretations which were shaped by their background. Both negative and discrepant evidence are as much as possible were included in the analysis and discussion sections of the study for objectivity. More importantly, to increase inter-rater reliability, researchers used one transcription of an interview for standardization of the codes and compared the codings of all transcriptions with at least 80% similarity rate. The raters made sure that there is not a drift in the definition of codes, a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding. This was ensured by constantly comparing data with the codes and by writing memos about the codes and their definitions. For higher level of reliability, an external auditor from a similar context provided comments to add to the objectivity to the findings and interpretations of the findings. Finally, "member checks" in other words respondent validation was used. This means that the researchers solicited feedback on the emerging findings from some of the participants that they interviewed by taking the preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and asking whether the interpretation sounds true. This was successful in eliminating the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they had on what is going on, and helped the researcher identify his/her own biases and misunderstanding of what was observed.

4. Findings

The findings from the qualitative analysis of student interviews are summarized and presented according to the order of the research questions addressed in the study.

4.1. Research Question 1: What is the nature and essence of students' lived experiences of English language use in their departmental studies?

Seven main themes emerged in terms of participant's perceptions of the nature and essence of students' lived experiences of English language use in their departmental studies.

Lessons mostly conducted in English

All participants, which accounts for 100%, express that all the lessons were mostly conducted in English and the materials were in English, which creates a high exposure in oral and written form. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "Well, first of all, the biggest fact that I believe is that all lessons are in English. So…what do you do, I mean, the worst case scenario is …... you are exposed to English like 3 hours a day."

Participant 4: "All the time professors use English in class and we need English to do our tasks.so…. As you said we are exposed to English all the time."

Participant 5: "All my instructors are Turkish. They always conduct lessons in English but they understand Turkish."

Participants 12: "Well, all our courses are in English. So all of our assignments are also in English. We always study from English resources."

Tendency to use L1 in lessons

8 participants, which accounts for 66%, stated that in most of the lessons students tend to ask their questions in L1 and they request to make their comments during discussions. They added that lecturers respond the students in English and translate students' comments to English. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 2: "Eeee…..not all our lessons are just strictly in English because sometimes people say "Teacher, can you repeat that in Turkish" or professors get tired and tells about you in Turkish for 15 minutes but we have some foreigner students in our classes so it is not…. it cannot take that long. I mean it's just really a problem"

Participant 9: "I think speaking in my high school it was better. We had foreign teachers, and we had to talk in English. It was a benefit for us. They did not understand us if we spoke in Turkish. All of my courses were all in English. But here… I speak in Turkish all the time. All my instructors are Turkish. They always conduct lessons in English but they understand Turkish."

Participant 11: "All our teachers speak in English. We have international friends in the classes. But sometimes they say one or few Turkish words. Important words in Turkish."

Differences in departmental studies

8 participants, which accounts for 66%, compared the nature of the verbal and mathematical courses based on their experiences and their impact on their language abilities. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 2 (A computer engineering student): "It depends on the course we are taking. But generally we do mathematical calculations or design computer programs. Immmmm, while doing these tasks, we generally do not need a lot of English…. In most of the questions we give mathematical answers… but…sometimes we have to write long paragraphs to answer the questions. As I said, we need English to understand the prompts and answer the questions even if we do not need it to write the answer."

Participant 1 (An industrial engineering student): "I'm studying as a third year student. And…Well, most of our studies were non-English. I mean they were in English but I didn't have to –like- use my English level because it is a lot of Math and stuff…. But generally, eeee, it is not like the psychology or……. something more dependent like the other departments but still we are using a lot of English. I mean, even, even if the exams sometimes you have some like verbal questions in English and you have to answer them like half of the paper in English. So, I cannot say I'm not using it but we are not, like, writing a lot of essays."

Participant 4 (A psychology department student): "I studied at Industrial Engineering for one year and then I moved to Psychology department. And the two are very different from one another. It is so different to study a department about human beings in English compared to engineering in English…. In social sciences you need to read pages and pages of things and it makes it easy to understand but in engineering you need to understand each single technical term and it is very condensed information."

Participant 8 (A mechanical engineering student): "In mechanical engineering, we don't read the text book line by line. We try to understand the formulas.. it is more mathematical. So I think my reading didn't improve much……. My departmental courses had no positive impct on my English. Social electives are kind of good actually. I've taken history, marketing and psychology in English as an elective course. They developed my vocabulary knowledge. "

Written Production

Written production tasks which were namely mentioned by the participants as essays (4 times), reports (3 times), proposals (2 times), summary (2 times) and reflective paragraph (once) were mentioned by 12 participants, which accounts for 100%. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "…. sometimes you have some like verbal questions in English and you have to answer them like half of the paper in English. So, I cannot say I'm not using it but we are not, like, writing a lot of essays."

Participant 2: "Since we write essays, my writing skills improved a lot."

Participant 6: "In the 4th year we have more assignments, we started writing reports for our experiments and projects."

Doing presentations

8 participants, which accounts for 66%, made an emphasis on doing presentations and their contribution to their language abilities. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 10: "We have progress presentations in the final year. Each semester we have 2 progress reports and each has one presentation. In these we explain how much we have proceeded. Presentations are 10 minutes and final presentation is 20 minutes. You really need to speak fast and you need to summarize because you can't explain long. That's why you really need to practice. I mean you really need to prepare que cards. That's why you improve your English."

Participant 12: "We also make presentations."

The nature of feedback and error correction

According to what 8 participants (66%) report, the feedback received was on the content of the task. They also stated that they were corrected only when there was a breakdown in communication of the intended message.

Participant 1: "My teachers are generally more into more than your grammar or your English but more to what you are trying to explain. I mean they get it, so… because I guess they are all Turkish and they may understand what you mean… So, I did not receive any bad concepts like "that was awful" that kind of thing but I heard some in some exams there are some troubles about the use of English because the teacher could not understand and I hear sometimes people want to write in Turkish in the exams because they cannot express themselves in English as they want but as far as I know it is not allowed. May be a few words but not more than that."

Participant 2: "Actually, our lecturers do not focus a lot on the correction of the errors. They sometimes correct because they cannot understand. They ask what students mean and show the correct version."

Participant 4: "I get feedback on my research proposals regarding organization, the content and the APA style. Only one of my teacher is stuck with the correct use of words. He checks every word…..Perhaps it helps me to learn more. I enjoy learning new words…But I am not sure if other teachers also do this."

Participant 6: "No, no. but if teacher doesn't understand me, then she asks me. She gives the correct way."

Reading textbooks/articles

8 participants, which accounts for 66%, stated that they were exposed to English resources during their studies. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 3: "Well, we read texts from books or we read articles in English. Sometimes we do research to complete our tasks."

Participant 7: "I need to do pages of reading and it feeds into many things."

4.2. Research Question 2: How do students perceive the change in their language ability in EMI context?

Three main themes emerged in terms of participant's perceptions of the change in their language ability in EMI context.

Positive Feelings

All participants, which accounts for 100%, reported that they were happy to study in an EMI programme. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "I feel happy because English is becoming more than a must for an individual to progress on his or her career. Not everybody has a chance to learn English before college years as the foreign language education is not as strong as it should be. So…. The best way to assure that is to get education in an English medium university."

Participant 2: "I think it is beneficial to study in an EMI university."

Participant 3: "I think studying in an EMI university is becoming necessary for every generation. English is a global language. So…. Crucial for survival in the new world."

Participant 5: "I feel like, I'm very lucky. My cousing graduated from X university and it is in Turkish, not in English. That's why he has an Intermediate level English. I think it must be compulsory to study in English. Because workfield, everybody knows English and it is not common that you do not know English. Even if you know English, you have to know other languages."

Improvement

All participants (100%) stated that EMI has a positive impact on their English in general. However, all participants also reported that some skills developed less than others. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "Eeee…… my grammar wasn't so good. Never, never been so good but it's kinda improved I guess because we just write in English sometimes and ….eeeee…. I kinda realized that when I was doing my task I started thinking in English, which improved my English level a lot. So, I guess it is all fine for me."

"That's definitely because I mean when I go to the lessons I sometimes couldn't follow in English even though I was …eeeee…. I knew my level was fine but I was getting tired. Because… I was always translating English to Turkish in my head. But right now, it's not like that. It's just.. I mean…it doesn't matter if the lessons are in English or in Turkish and I just watch movies without subtitle problem. So, that kind of progress."

Participant 2: "Well, I can say that it improves my English skills a lot. Especially my writing skills. Since we write essays, my writing skills improved a lot."

Participant 5: "That's why I think my written English has improved….. I think speaking, in my high school it was better…..My listening has improved. Reading… it's not like, in mechanical engineering, we don't read the text book line by line. We try to understand the formulas. it is more mathematical. So I think my reading didn't improve much."

Language progress over the years

4 participants (33%) reported that their level of English has improved more in the last 2 years of their departmental studies.

Participant 3: "When I was in my first year, it was difficult to take notes. I could not understand what my teachers said and could write fast. But now I am better. I can also write better essays. I used to write short essays now they are longer. Sometimes I have difficulty because of word limits."

Participant 6: "Well, all our courses are in English. So all of our assignments are also in English. We always study from English resources. In the 4th year we have more assignments, we started writing reports for our experiments and projects. We also make presentations. We didn't have a lot of writing assignments before. It was more about solving problems etc. You know maths… but this year, there is more English in my assignments."

4.3. Research Question 3: What are the factors enhancing students' level of English in EMI context?

Two main themes emerged in terms of the factors enhancing students' level of English in EMI context.

Exposure to English

All participants (100%) stated that exposure to English through both receptive and productive tasks contributed to their language development. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "So, the biggest factor is that as I said, you are exposed to English like 3 hours for a day. And , of course tasks, the reports you make, exams when you study… eeeee… you just watch the video presentations that teachers post on LMS. And I also like to scan the Internet so…… I mean when you are studying to exams you view like thousands of webpages which are all in English of course. And….eeeee… I develop some research skills… So, basically the lessons, study program and of course reports I mentioned before they were helpful of course. Eeee… so… basically everything is just pushing you to get your English better."

Participant 2: "All the time professors use English in class and we need English to do our tasks.so…. As you said we are exposed to English all the time… Exposure to English all the time and doing tasks in English I guess. These are the factors that cause the change."

Intrinsic motivation to study in EMI context

All participants (100%) expressed intrinsic motivation towards studying through English since they thought English was a real need when they moved to work life. Therefore, they believed in the need of learning English. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 2: "We cannot escape from English if we want to get a good job in the future. We need to do research and we need English to do that. And…. English is a global language. We need it to travel and work in other countries…..…..Since when students graduate they are going to face with a difficult global world, they need to learn English. And…EMI universities provide this opportunity for them. Even if we know the language we need to practice it not to forget. In EMI courses students have this opportunity. They speak English with their professors and their friends. EMI universities help students improve their English skills."

Participant 3: "Well, the 1st advantage for me is it is important for people's careers. Corporations are becoming multinational and if there is not a common language, we can communicate though, then there could be vital gaps in information and data. And….. another advantage is….. to understand and adapt to the technological world of ours we have to be fluent in English. A lot of webpages are in English. If you do research online, you need to be capable of understanding the information. EMI teaches these to students. For example, X (English medium university) graduate is most likely to thrive in the new world than Y University (Not EMI context) students. They are more capable of obtaining information about their interests, exploring other cultures easily, expressing themselves is a much better manner and developing new perspectives due to studying in English. I think that is all."

Participant 4: "I enjoy and I learn more from the tasks that relate to my personal development. For example, in prep school we wrote about how to solve traffic problems. These are very childish to me and it creates resistance in learning. But here in departments things are more interesting. I want to repeat all the time. I feel more motivated."

4.4. Research Question 4: What are the factors inhibiting or reducing students' language development in EMI context?

Three major themes emerged in terms of factors inhibiting or reducing students' language development in EMI context.

Lack of interaction among students

Two of the participants (17%) stated that the interaction pattern is always between the lecturer and the students. There is usually one-way communication from teacher to student, which was perceived as a factor that inhibits the improvement speaking skills. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 4: "My classroom environment doesn't contribute to my language development. There is minimum talk among the students and it shouldn't be this way. Students usually only repeat what the teacher says with minimum English and they start in English and then they want to continue in Turkish. The teacher asks "Do you mean this?" in English and the teacher translates this into English."

Lack of confidence

Two of the participants (17%) mentioned that personal characteristics may became an inhibiting factor for language development in EMI programs. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 4: "I am already an anxious person. In crowded classes I feel intimated when everybody stares at my face. So I prefer to sit in the front desk where I turn my back to 50/60 students behind me. When I feel close to my teacher I feel better."

Familiarity with tasks types

Two of the participants (17%) stated that being unfamiliar with the task type might be an inhibiting factor. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "So, that was the challenging part because I'm not very familiar with the report style, we made some research on the Internet and we tried our best and our teachers loved it."

Research Question 5: What are the students' suggestions for universities which provide EMI to contribute to their language development?

Two major themes emerged in terms of students' suggestions for universities which provide EMI to contribute to their language development.

Speaking

All participants (100%) suggested that there should be opportunities for them to improve their speaking skills, which is perceived to be the weakest and the least improved skill over the years by the participants. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 1: "So, basically I mean the suggestion I would make is that lecturers might grade the speaking level of the students in lessons. May be it would improve the English level. It would also be nice having lessons strictly in English."

Participant 2: "They can do something about speaking. Many students have difficulty in speaking. I do not know what to do but teachers can do something about this."

Participant 3: "They can help us improve our speaking ability. This is the worst skill I have."

Participant 4: "There need to be discussion clubs in which a small numberof students can speak freely… Students should have the opportunity to discuss what they have written in their reflective papers rather than receiving grades on the completion of the tasks."

Participant 5: "There needs to be more speaking about general daily topics and more interactive sessions….. Students must talk in English"

Error correction:

6 participants, which accounts for 50%, suggested that their lecturers provide them with feedback on their language use in addition the feedback on task achievement. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 2: "I haven't received feedback but I think it is useful for students. They can improve their English as well while learning the content of the lesson."

Participant 3: "Well, getting feedback on errors might be beneficial. Why not? I would prefer it. I can improve my English more."

Participant 5: "Lecturers also need to give feedback on our English language during the exams. Like they should write a note or something like you need to improve this kind of thing… Because no one gives me feedback on my English. I don't if it is better or worse? I don't know if I'm doing the right thing or not."

Findings which do not directly answer the research questions

There was one area that emerged significantly during the analysis of the transcripts. The participants expressed the challenges of studying in an EMI program. Two main themes were identified regarding the challenges.

Language Problems

All participants (100%) reported that studying in an EMI context is challenging for them due to insufficient level of English proficiency. Below are some quotes from the participants:

Participant 5: "We had foreign teachers, and we had to talk in English. It was a benefit for us. They did not understand us if we spoke in Turkish. All of my courses were all in English. But here… I speak in Turkish all the time. All my instructors are Turkish. They always conduct lessons in English but they understand Turkish."

Participant 3: "I think it is something challenging for students. You need to read difficult books in another language. Sometimes you know the answer but you cannot explain it in English in exams."

Participant 8: "In the lessons I'm usually like this: The lesson finishes and then I approach the teacher and I tell him that I have a question and I continue in Turkish

because I can express myself more effectively in Turkish…. I think this slows down my learning process. I need to think 1.5 times more or 1.5 times to more research in order t comprehend that information. At that moment I consume all of my energy."

Participant 12: "I think it is difficult to study in English. I spend more time to understand. There are many words I do not know. I mean I studied in prep school, but it was never enough. My first year was very difficult. But then it was OK. Sometimes we cannot ask questions or understand problems. So I sometimes ask in Turkish."

Use of Technical Terms

10 participants (83%) stated that technical terms that they have to learn during their studies create a challenge for the either in their studies or during internships.

Participant 1: "I think one problem is it is difficult to learn technical terms. There are a lot of vocabulary items that we have to learn. They are necessary but of course it is difficult….. Well, I do not know whether it reduces the development but there are a lot of technical terms that we need to learn. It is really difficult to cope with them."

Participant 2: "When we do our internship we have difficulty because we do not know the Turkish meanings of the technical terms. It is really difficult for us to do the internship."

Participant 7: "When you work in the field, the most technicians and workers do not speak English and they only know Turkish term and we don't know them in Turkish, so we don't understand technicians and it is difficult. İt is difficult to tell them what to do." Recruitment

Provide dates defining the periods of recruitment and follow-up and the primary sources of the potential subjects, where appropriate. If these dates differ by group, provide the values for each group.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the twelve interviews revealed findings which address 6 major areas: the nature and essence of English language use in departmental studies; perceived changes in language ability; factors enhancing students' level of English; factors inhibiting or reducing students' language development in EMI context; students' suggestions for universities which provide EMI; other findings: the challenges of studying in an EMI program.

The findings reveal that when students are highly exposed to English and are expected to use it productively for their studies, they perceive that there is greater development in their language skills and abilities. It is important to highlight that not all the departmental courses provide the same amount of exposure. The findings also suggest language development accelerates towards the final years of undergraduate studies due to tasks that require more student production. Language development and acceleration in the last year

of studies can be explained by connectionist theory of language learning, which learner gradually develop their language abilities by making connections with linguistic features after high exposure (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006).

The findings suggest that focused feedback on language accuracy is not very common in departments. However, according to Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, corrective feedback plays a crucial role in developing the foreign language skills (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Since there is no explicit error correction unless the meaning is hindered, students do not get the opportunity to find out their weaknesses and further develop their language proficiency. The findings of the previous research in similar contexts (Hennebery et al. 2012; Storch 2009) also claim that feedback on the use of language is necessary for improvement in linguistic accuracy.

Another important finding is that students show high instrumental motivation for learning and using English. They perceive that English language a necessity for academic and professional career, which is in line with the findings of Huang (2015) and Coleman (2006).

One of the most important findings of the study is that speaking skills is the least developed skill, which was also found in the study of Kim, Kweon and Kim (2016). This can be attributable to three different factors, which were suggested by the participants as inhibiting factors to language development. The first one is insufficient practice in speaking due to the lack of oral interaction between students and one-way communication (from teacher to students) during the lessons. This factor was also reported in Kırkgoz's (2009) study. The other factor is the tendency to use L1. As found by Kim, Tatar and Choi (2014), students feel safer and more comfortable to pose their questions and make their comments especially when they are highly concerned with comprehending the content of the lessons. They prefer to clarify their issues in their native language. Another factor that might be linked to aforementioned factor is non-native lecturers. Since students know that they can be understood in their L1 and since lecturer allow for some L1 use, students resort to L1.

There were other factors that students perceive as an inhibiting factor or a challenge of EMI. Students feel that personal characteristics, technical terms and unfamiliarity with tasks posed problems in their studies. However, these challenges are not peculiar to EMI context and they could actually be experienced by any student undertaking an academic study.

It is important to note that this study is limited by the data collection tool since one data collection tool, semi-structured interview, was used during the study. Adopting other data collection tools such as observation and questionnaires may have helped the researchers to triangulate the data and have a more in-depth perspective regarding the impact of EMI students' language development. Another limitation of the study is the number of participants since it limits the ability to examine the complex relationships between the constructs. Future research would benefit from the use of a larger sample of participants and various data collection tools.

6. Conclusions

Three pedagogical suggestions have emerged to account for the perceived needs of students in an EMI context.

Incorporating more speaking opportunities into programmes (either as a course component or as a separate discussion club)

An effective way of increasing speaking opportunities is to ensure that learning environment is non-threatening. Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis emphasizes that when students are under pressure and feel anxious their affective filter is high, which inhibits the intake of knowledge and language production. Due to excessive levels of anxiety, learners may not be willing to speak in front of a group. Therefore, in order lower learners' affective filter and encourage them to speak more, lecturers need to make sure that students are not forced to perform when they are not ready or willing to do so. First, students can be encouraged to share their ideas in a small group or with a pair and report to whole class if the class size is very big. This might be beneficial for confidence building. Another way of contributing to students' speaking skill development, as suggested by participants, is designing and conducting sessions which require students to purely the discuss the subject content in small groups without grading them.

Giving focused feedback on the accuracy of language

Faculty members could provide feedback on language use as well as content so that students would have an idea about their language performance and have the opportunity to work on their weaknesses. Schmidt (1990) also supports this claiming that noticing is a requirement for learning in his Noticing Hypothesis. He suggests that conscious attention should be given to input in order for L2 learning to occur. Corrective feedback plays a crucial role in helping learners focus their attention on the form.

Offering elective courses to students to balance the exposure to English (i.e. Engineering students taking elective psychology course)

In order to compensate for the needs of students who are not equally exposed to language due to the nature of their departmental studies, universities can encourage students to take elective courses which provide higher exposure to English such as literature, history and psychology. To illustrate, students who are studying computer engineering may support their language development by taking these elective courses.

Helping with technical terms

Since all the participants mentioned the difficulties related to technical terms, students studying in the first year of their departmental studies can be offered courses specifically

focusing on the technical terms. Another suggestion could be providing students with bilingual glossary of technical terms and their explanations.

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Appendix A: Questions for Semi-Guided Interviews with Students

A.   Demographic Questions

1.   How old are you?

2.   What year did you graduate from high school?

3.   Did you study in the prep school before you started you departmental studies?

4.   What is your major?

5.   How long have you been studying at OZU?

6.   How long have you been learning English?

7.   Have you ever lived abroad?

B.   Student's perceptions of EMI

1.   How do you feel about studying in an EMI university?

2.   According to your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of studying in an EMI university? Please give reasons or examples from your own experiences.

3.   What do you think about the impacts of EMI on your level of English proficiency?

4.   Can you identify any changes in your level of English proficiency between the first year and the third year?

5.   If yes, could you please tell us the factors affecting this change?

C.   The nature of the lessons/tasks/projects/assignments/activities (in and outside class)

1.   What kinds of tasks/assignments/projects/activities do you need to do in your departmental courses? (inside and outside) How do these tasks contribute to your language skills (if they do)?

2.   Do you receive any feedback on the use/accuracy of your English or on your language performance? Is it important for you? Why/ Why not?

3.   Are you exposed to English all the time? Can you give examples?

D.   Factors inhibiting/reducing language development

What are the factors inhibiting/reducing your language development in your departmental courses/in EMI context?

E.   Suggestions

What can your faculty teachers/lecturers do more regarding language development during your studies?

Authors including an appendix section should do so after References section. Multiple appendices should all have headings in the style used above. They will automatically be ordered A, B, C etc.

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