



Investigating ELFA: University Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions, Challenges, and Strategies in English Medium Programs

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2024-01-03	The present study investigates the perceptions and practices of a group of university students and instructors at an English Medium university in Northern Cyprus. The study examines the relationship between attitudes and perceptions towards English Medium Instruction (EMI) and English as an Academic lingua franca (ELFA). The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating a survey distributed among 200 students and interviews conducted with 4 students and 6 instructors. The survey results are analyzed with SPSS 23 to provide descriptive statistical analysis, correlation, and regression analysis. The interview data undergoes thematic analysis to uncover patterns and provide qualitative insights. The study indicates differing perceptions and attitudes between students and instructors. Instructors tend to perceive students' attitudes towards EMI/ELFA as negative, while students themselves exhibit positive attitudes toward these instructional methods. Additionally, the study sheds light on the significant challenges faced by both students and instructors, including issues related to low language proficiency, self-confidence, and comprehension problems within the EMI context. The research also highlights the diverse strategies employed by students to overcome these challenges. The findings have potential implications for other similar EMI contexts. Keywords: Perceptions, English-medium instruction (EMI), English as an academic lingua franca (ELFA), challenges, strategies, attitudes.
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Introduction

In the wake of the decisions made during the Bologna conference in 1999, English emerged as a common language for higher education across Europe, and subsequently, in universities worldwide (Airey, 2004). The primary objective of the Bologna conference, as stated by Smit (2010), was to foster compatibility in higher education throughout Europe and globally. In pursuit of this goal and to attain internationalization, accreditation, and recognition, countries worldwide embraced EMI in many higher education programs. Consequently, EMI programs have become “the most significant trend in educational internationalization”



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(Chapple, 2015, p. 1) in non-Anglophone countries, leading to the mobility of students and academics on a global scale.

This trend is rapidly reshaping the landscape of higher education worldwide (Macaro et al., 2018), with an increasing number of students seeking education in countries known for their quality education systems. The global mobility of students has also given rise to a new variety of English known as ELF, which refers to English used in cross-cultural interactions among speakers from diverse regions (Jenkins & Leung, 2017). While ELF has been the focus of attention in cross-cultural interactions, more recent research has highlighted the role of ELFA in academic settings and its integration into higher education institutions (Jenkins, 2017; Mauranen, 2012; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015).

A number of studies have investigated the perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers towards EMI and the role of ELFA (e.g., Bayyurt, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Sifakis, 2018), acknowledging the importance of ELFA (Faber, 2010; Smit, 2010). However, little attention has been given to the role of ELFA for teachers in EMI settings (Lillis et al., 2010; Sifakis, 2018) and students' perception of ELFA and their attitudes towards both EMI and ELFA (De Meerleer, 2012; Reko, 2019). Thus, this study investigates the perceptions and attitudes of a group of EMI students and teachers towards both EMI and ELFA and their practices and strategies adopted to cope with the possible challenges of the academic setting in Northern Cyprus. The research also aims at investigating the co-existing bond between EMI and ELFA in this setting.

Literature review

English Medium Instruction (EMI)

Despite the availability of a plethora of definitions and discussions around the term, EMI is defined 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” (Dearden, 2015, p. 6). Academic institutions, particularly tertiary sectors around the world have adopted the educational policy of integrating English into their educational systems with the aim of gaining international validation and recognition as well as promoting nationalism or multiculturalism (Arkin & Dikilitaş, 2022; Coleman, 2006; Jensen et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2017; Werther et al., 2014).

EMI has been the focus of a variety of recent research from around the world. A number of studies have examined students' or teachers' diverse perceptions, practices, and strategies from various contexts; highlighting the influential role of students' perceptions of EMI in their language learning and, importantly, their motivation (Selvi, 2014). Students' perceptions of EMI have been found to act as a catalyst in promoting the use of the English language for interaction and communication within the school context (Choy & Troudi, 2006). Werther et al. (2014) reported that EMI instructors in Denmark viewed EMI practice as an academic prestige that benefited their oral production, career advancement, and teaching assignments

and that exhibiting a strong command of EMI skills could earn them national and international recognition.

However, EMI contexts have also been reported to pose various challenges for tertiary students and lecturers. Language proficiency has been found to be one of the main challenges for both students and teachers in such contexts (Kim et al., 2017; Werther et al., 2014; Yeh, 2014). In this regard, Werther et al. (2014) found that EMI lecturers in Denmark encountered difficulties in improvisation, creating jokes, and occasionally digressing due to their limited language abilities and low self-esteem when teaching in a foreign language other than their mother tongue. In another study in the context of Vietnam, Nguyen et al. (2017) indicated both negative and positive perceptions of Vietnamese students and teachers in EMI settings, viewing language proficiency in English as a hindrance for students in decoding discipline-specific terminologies. The findings further revealed that the instructors viewed themselves as experts in their fields rather than as experts in English since they perceived English as a separate skill set requiring expertise in the domain of linguistics. The lecturers furthermore argued that language deficiency is over-burdening the content instructors, considered as “surrogate Language teachers” (Toh, 2014). Jiang et al. (2019) also identified a number of challenges in Chinese main universities, namely instructors’ low proficiency in English, the learner’s heterogeneousness, mismatch in the theory and the practices of EMI, communication breakdowns, and learners’ difficulties with their oral and listening skills in EMI classes.

To cope with such challenges, students and lecturers have been reported to adopt various strategies in EMI settings. In this regard, code-switching, “a term used to describe the use of two or more varieties, or codes, in an interaction” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021, p.400), was identified in Ljosland (2011) as a commonly used strategy by both instructors and students in EMI settings in Norway. Further, in a study by Björkman (2011) in the context of Sweden, most EMI instructors studied were found to use a variety of strategies to deliver their lectures in their lessons, but learners mostly were reported to employ pragmatic strategies, group work, presentations, and in-class task completions. Also, investigating the Taiwanese students, Yeh (2014) reported that the students resorted to cognitive strategies such as note-taking and concentration in EMI lessons to overcome the challenges of comprehension and language difficulties. In addition, Yeh (2014) found code-switching as the most prevalent strategy whereby lessons in most EMI programs were taught in both English and the native language of both teachers and students. Moreover, forming study groups, previewing and reviewing texts, seeking assistance from instructors, and accessing supplementary reading materials were identified as the most common strategies employed by Chinese university students (Jiang et al., 2019). Jiang et al. (2019) also highlighted the use of pragmatic strategies, such as adapting language use to accommodate listeners’ abilities and cooperation, code-switching to preserve one’s cultural identity, and the utilization of written prompts to enhance comprehension of subject content, which have also been highlighted by other studies (e.g., Thøgersen & Airey, 2011).

EMI studies in Turkey and North Cyprus

Since the foundation of the Robert College (now Boğaziçi University) in 1863 (British Council & TEPAV, 2015), the Republic of Turkey has intensified its EMI programs in an effort to upgrade and internationalize its tertiary education sector in a competitive global market (Ekoç, 2020; Selvi, 2014, 2022). A number of studies have examined various aspects and issues surrounding the EMI phenomenon in Turkey, namely students' beliefs (e.g., Karakaş, 2016; Kırkgöz, 2014) and instructors' beliefs (e.g., Başibek et al., 2014; Kılıçkaya, 2006), language(s) in the classroom (e.g., Karakaş, 2016), country-specific or areal policy reviews (e.g., Selvi, 2014; 2022), impact on the home language and culture (Selvi, 2022), quality assurance, accreditation, and certification (e.g., Kırkgöz, 2019), sociolinguistic ramifications on identity (Selvi, 2022), and critiques of EMI practices (e.g., Kırkgöz, 2009, 2014; Ozer & Bayram, 2019).

Some studies have also criticized the delivery of course contents in EMI programs, highlighting the ineffective implementation of EMI (Kırkgöz, 2009), insufficient language proficiency among content lecturers (Kılıçkaya, 2006; Tange, 2010), and students' struggles to internalize the content knowledge despite acknowledging the future career benefits of EMI programs (Kırkgöz, 2014; Ozer & Bayram, 2019).

The northern part of the island of Cyprus, referred to as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and recognized solely by Turkey, has made significant efforts to establish international recognition through its higher education sector. Consequently, higher education has emerged as a prominent industry, alongside tourism, contributing to the growth and development of the island's economy by attracting a substantial number of international students.

Despite the increasing popularity of EMI and ELF in Northern Cyprus, a handful of studies have investigated the issue. A study by Arkin and Osam (2015) found that despite positive views of undergraduate students towards English as a means of career advancement, they encountered numerous challenges in comprehending and learning their disciplinary knowledge due to their low language proficiency in English. The study also found that although instructors reported to various strategies in their teaching, students still struggled with comprehension and hence learning of content knowledge. A master's thesis by Mansoori (2016) on the perceptions of Iranian students' students studying in Northern Cyprus, revealed that most Iranian international students had positive feelings and attitudes towards EMI in the context. Similarly, Tasbulatova (2017) reported positive views of students but conflicting views from lecturers towards EMI and the improvement of student's cognition and learning. The researcher identified that students with positive perceptions viewed English as a status symbol and thus a determinant of success or superiority; while those with negative attitudes perceived it as a threat to their identity and culture. Recently, a study by Arkin and Dikilitaş (2022) on Turkish undergraduates' perspectives on EMI in Northern Cyprus reported that students perceived EMI to be useful in their language proficiency development, however, they indicated that they encountered various constraints in learning through the EMI mode.

Overall, English plays an undeniable role in Northern Cyprus due to various sociopolitical, economic, and educational factors (Selvi, 2022), experiencing a shift in its status from a second language to that of a foreign language or a *lingua franca* (Yazgin, 2007).

ELF and ELFA

The increasing use of English for various purposes has given rise to the emergence of new varieties of the language, namely English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF). The term is believed to have been coined by Werner Hüllen and Karlfried Knapp in the 1980s (as cited in Seidlhofer, 2001) and refers to a language system acquired additionally to serve as a means of communication between speakers with different native languages or as a language enabling communication between members of different speech communities, neither of whom have it as their first language (Seidlhofer, 2001). However, when ELF is integrated into an educational setting, its status changes into ELFA. ELFA is defined as the use of ELF for translating academic texts and engaging in academic discourse within academic environments by individuals with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Pisanski, 2014). Swan (2012) viewed ELFA as the English students are exposed to: the digested (meaning the forms they learn) and produced forms (the structures they construct in communication); thus, learners in such contexts tend to use features of English taught to them incorrectly and at times may forget some of the forms, hence producing language features that do not conform to the rules of the native standards. These mixed forms are termed ELF in academic settings, or “English Learnt” (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Moreover, the power of interaction between global communities of non-native speakers gradually comes to override the norms of nativelike standards of the English language (Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 2006) making ELF a valuable tool for communication in the academic context which needs to be recognized, adopted and integrated in EMI pedagogy. Faber (2010) argued that EMI and ELFA are two trending varieties of English essential to most universities in Europe and across the globe intending to meet up the globalization demands. The author further claimed that the degree of importance of these two varieties depends on individual departments in every university (how the departments value EMI/ ELFA in teaching disciplinary content), but she emphasized that it is very necessary for fields such as technology, engineering and sciences to adopt and fully implement these two trending forms of English in their university programs.

Additionally, EMI and ELFA are two sides of a coin that are inseparable. In most contexts where EMI is implemented, English language takes the form of a *lingua franca*. This is because most instructors and students in such institutions come from different native language backgrounds which often are not English. Therefore, in order to facilitate the achievement of their set goals and objectives, universities offer the majority of their programs in English. However, despite its rapid expansion, ELFA has received little attention due to its perceived non-standard status by some scholars (De Meerleer, 2012), particularly in the context of Northern Cyprus. For this reason, students' and teachers' awareness need to be raised over the norms and standards of this variety of English in an EMI setting. By doing so, both

teachers and learners could become aware of the inevitable co-existence of these two concepts. Moreover, as Cogo et al. (2021) acknowledges, English as a lingua franca cannot be taught, but it is inevitable in communication amongst non-native speakers of English. If this language is included in the curriculum, it may enhance the EMI classes, thereby reducing the burden of content teachers who are currently both language and content teachers. Creating this awareness according to Cogo et al. may enhance the professional development of academic instructors; as well as their pragmatic competence in communication. Thus, identifying the perceptions, practices and strategies of university students and lecturers can offer a valuable insight into the lives of both students and lecturers in EMI settings, especially on the co-existence of the two terms, ELFA and EMI.

Method

For this study, we adopted a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. For this purpose, several strategies were employed to ensure the validity of the findings. Firstly, the use of a mixed-methods approach allowed us to triangulate data from several sources namely, surveys, student interviews, and instructor interviews. This in turn enhanced the credibility and dependability of our results. Moreover, we carefully designed our survey instruments and interview protocols based on established literature and expert opinions in the field. The inclusion of open-ended questions in students' and lecturers' interviews also provided rich qualitative data, contributing to the overall validity of the study. For the reliability of our research, we ran a pilot-test with a group of around 20 students to identify and address any potential issues or ambiguities. Moreover, we employed inter-rater reliability checks for the coding and analysis of qualitative data, ensuring consistency in interpretation. These measures contributed to the overall reliability of our research findings. The population of this research encompassed a group of around 600 students who were registered in the Modern Language Division of School of Foreign Languages at the time, as well as a group of 10 lecturers who were available on the campus. From this population, we collected 220 surveys (of which 20 were discarded due to incomplete information), conducted 4 student interviews, and held 6 interviews with lecturers (see Table 1 below). For the sampling of surveys and interviews, we followed the purposive or convenient random sampling technique.

Study context, data collection and participants

The current study was conducted at one of the international universities in North Cyprus, collecting data from students enrolled in the following faculties: Business administration, engineering, tourism and hotel management, and psychology. The study context hosted a capacity of 3740 students from Cyprus, Turkey, and other countries from Africa (Congo, Nigeria, Mali, Morocco, Libya and Cameroon, Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Palestine), and Asia (Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Russia). The context, like most of the other universities on the island, is home to both international and local students who speak either English or their local languages. Most of the programs in the

study context are offered in EMI format and students and lecturers in the EMI programs are required to possess adequate proficiency in English. English is not just the medium of instruction but also the lingua franca in the university.

Table 1. Demographic Description of the Students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	114	57%
Female	86	43%
Total	200	100

The second category of participants, the lecturers, were from different first language backgrounds (Pashto, Turkish, French, Azari, Russian, Persian and Greek) and were all non-native English speakers. The target number of instructors to be interviewed was 10 from all the departments listed above; however, only 6 lecturers expressed willingness to participate in the study.

Data analysis

The survey employed in this study was adapted and modified from the previous studies (Arkin, 2013; Tarhan 2003). It contained three main sections, a biography section, a section on EMI, and a section on ELF or ELFA. The instrument originally utilized a 5-point Likert scale, which were later consolidated into three main scales: Strongly agree or agree, Neutral, and Strongly disagree or disagree for improved data description. The questionnaires were administered via google form; the links were emailed to the student's university email addresses by their lecturers and the -researchers and through the university Learning Moodle System (LMS). The surveys were analyzed with SPSS 23 to conduct the descriptive statistical analysis, correlation, and regression analysis.

The interview guide was adapted from the study of Reko (2019) and consisted of seven open-ended questions. It was administered to the volunteering instructors and students in an attempt to gain in-depth insight into EMI/ ELFA and to avoid falsification of results from the survey. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and later on, transcribed, which were then coded into a number of categories and later grouped into three main themes: perceptions, challenges, and strategies.

Findings

Students' survey results

The results of the survey have been presented in four different sections: perceptions and attitudes towards EMI, perceptions and attitudes towards ELFA, perceptions on English as a

valuable tool for students' academic and future workplace success, and strategies to overcome challenges in an EMI setting.

1. Perceptions and attitudes towards EMI

In this section, we identified 4 subcategories: awareness, views, and attitudes towards EMI, difficulties of studying in an EMI Context, and perceptions towards EMI usefulness in academic and career development. The first category is about students' awareness of the concept of EMI, the results of which are analyzed in Table 2.

Table 2. EMI awareness: Item 11: I know what EMI is.

Item 11		SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
11	200	44.0	30.5	25.5	2.7200	1.02805

Note: SA and A: Strongly Agree and Agree; D and SD: Disagree and Strongly Disagree; N: neutral; SD: standard deviation

As Table 2 shows, 44.0 % of the participants know what EMI is, while more than half of the students are either unaware or not so sure what the concept is at all.

Table 3 on the other hand, illustrates that the majority of students hold positive attitudes and perceptions towards EMI practices.

Table 3. Students' views and attitudes towards EMI

Item	N	SA and A %	N%	D and SD %	Mean	SD
13	200	87	9.5	3.5	1.6700	.79008
14	200	68	25.5	6.5	2.0750	.92393
17	200	80.5	15.0	4.5	1.8150	.88583
20	200	87	11	2	1.6650	.79114

Item 13: I find it appropriate that all my courses are taught in English.

Item 14: EMI does not prevent me from speaking my mother tongue.

Item 17: If my lecturers have perfect language competence in English, my learning of the course will be facilitated.

Item 20: Using English to Study all my courses enables me to improve my skills in this language as it gives me the opportunity to use the language more often.

In response to Item 13, 87% of the students stated that it is appropriate that all their university courses are taught in English and that most of the students (68%) agreed that EMI does not prevent them from speaking their native language (Item 14). Further, the majority expressed that they believe the instructors' language competency in an EMI institution affects

their achievements (80.5%, Item 17) and that EMI enables them to achieve English language skills (87%, Item 20).

The third category under students' perception and attitudes towards EMI is difficulties of studying in an EMI Context. As displayed in Table 4, around half of the students (48%) indicated that EMI does not limit their comprehension of subject matter in their courses due to low language proficiency while only 34% agreed with the statement.

Table 4. Difficulties of Studying in an EMI Context

Item	N	SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
15	200	34	18.0	48	3.2350	1.25204

Item 15: I find it difficult to understand most topics and concepts in classes due to my language limitations.

The fourth set is related to students' perceptions towards the usefulness of EMI in their academic and career development.

Table 5. Perception and Attitudes towards EMI as a Useful Tool for their academic and future job success

Item	N	SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
12	200	75.5	22.5	2.0	2.0100	.76998
16	200	88.5	10.0	1.5	1.5900	.79059
18	200	54.5	28.5	17.0	2.4650	.79059
19	200	60.5	37.0	2.5	2.2050	.84054

Item 12: EMI is useful for tertiary education (university); I have positive attitude towards English as a common language for education.

Item 16: Studying in English is important because it will help me learn the language of business and technology which is helpful in my career.

Item 18: That most of the main courses are taught in English does not determine my academic performance.

Item 19: EMI contributes to my cognitive (mental) development.

Table 5 displays varying views of students about the usefulness of EMI in their academic and career development. Item 12 on the table states that most students were of the opinion that EMI is useful for tertiary education and they have positive attitudes towards English as a common language for education (75.5%). Concerning the usefulness of EMI in enhancing the students' language profile in business and technology (Item 16), a great majority (88.5%) regarded EMI as useful to their future career. Further, more than half of the participants

agreed that EMI courses do not affect their academic performance (54.5%, Item 18) and that EMI contributes to their cognitive development (60.5%, Item 19).

2. Perceptions and attitudes towards ELFA

This section is divided into two parts: awareness of ELFA and perceptions and attitudes towards ELFA. The first part focuses on students' awareness and knowledge of the concept of ELFA, which is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Awareness of ELFA

Item	N	SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
1	200	98.0	1.0	1.0	1.350	.58831
8	200	46	38	16	2.5900	.98323

Item 1: Because English is an international language, English has become a common language for academic affairs.

Item 8: I know what English as an Academic lingua franca (ELFA) is.

Table 6 illustrates that 98% of students agree that English language is a common language for international and academic affairs, while only 46% are familiar with the word ELFA and its meaning.

The second part deals with the perceptions and attitudes of students towards ELF in an academic setting.

Table 7. Attitudes and perceptions towards ELFA

Item	N	SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
4	200	71.5	23.5	5.0	1.9900	.91876
5	200	85.5	9.5	5.0	1.7600	.85795
6	200	64.5	26.0	9.5	2.1650	1.02618
10	200	88.0	8.5	3.5	1.7400	.77809

Item 4: I feel very much at ease when I have to speak English.

Item5: Schools should teach English not as the native speakers speak it, but for efficient international communication.

Item6: I do not mind that people can hear English is not my first language. It is a part of who I am.

Item 10: I am not bothered about mistakes that other learners of English make as long as I understand what they want to say.

As table 7 illustrates, the majority of the students (71.5%) indicated that they feel at ease when speaking English (Item 4) and that English should be taught in schools for efficient international communication and not as native speakers use it (85.5%, Item 5). Further, 64.5% of the students stated that they do not mind being identified as non-native speakers of English since it is part of their identity. Furthermore, a substantial percentage (88%) agree with the statement that they do not mind the mistakes other students make when conversing in English.

3. English as a valuable tool for students' academic and future workplace success

This part examined the views regarding the utility of English in academic and workplace successes. The items of questionnaire in this section aimed to elevate EMI/ ELFA over nativelike standards of English Language. Table 8 demonstrates the participants' perceptions.

Table 8. Perception towards English as a Valuable Tool for Students' Academic and Future Workplace Success

Item	N	SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
2	200	95.0	3.5	1.5	1.5200	.70860
3	200	75.5	20.0	4.5	1.9450	.90336
7	200	83.0	15.0	2.0	1.7650	.77639
9	200	94.5	4.5	1	1.4700	.65670

Item 2: English is a useful tool for communication.

Item 3: Attending an institution where English is the main medium of interaction is a social prestige for me.

Item 7: Studying English is important because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate the people around me.

Item 9: Being able to speak English is mainly important because I want to be able to interact more easily with speakers who do not speak my language.

As illustrated in Table 8 above, the great majority of the students (95% and 94.5% respectively) agree with the belief that English is a useful tool for international communication (Item 2) and that being able to speak English is important since it fosters interactions amongst speakers of different languages (Item 9). Furthermore, in response to Items 3 and 7, it was observed that 75.5% of the students agreed that attending an EMI institution is a means of social prestige for them, while 83% of them recognized that English proficiency enables the development of interpersonal, intercultural, and intercommunication skills.

4. Strategies to overcome challenges in an EMI setting

Table 9 below presents the results of diverse strategies employed by students to acculturate into the EMI/ELFA practices and traditions (Items 21-30).

Table 9. Using Strategies to Overcome Challenges in an EMI Setting

Item	N	SA and A %	N %	D and SD %	Mean	SD
21	200	19.0	26.0	55.0	3.5100	1.16477
22	200	58.5	18.5	23.0	2.5900	1.20380
23	200	64.5	15.5	20.0	2.4000	1.26013
24	200	28.5	18.5	53.0	3.4200	1.23744
25	200	27.0	17.0	56.0	3.5000	1.26809
26	200	27.5	36.5	36.0	3.1900	1.06280
27	200	41.0	32.5	26.5	2.8950	1.05810
28	200	39.0	24.5	36.5	3.0300	1.21096
29	200	51.0	21.5	27.5	2.7050	1.23108
30	200	74.0	11.5	14.5	2.0900	1.25690

Item 21: Some courses should be translated into my native language.

Item 22: If my proficiency in English is higher, I will find most courses taught in English easy.

Item 23: I learn English to become international.

Item 24: I translate (Google translate) most of my notes into my native language when studying.

Item 25: I watch videos online on the main concepts in my native language to understand what is taught in my university courses.

Item 26: I seek for additional help from my lecturers during office hours.

Item 27: I attend study groups with friends from other countries.

Item 28: I spend some time in the library reading books in English to increase my English Proficiency.

Item 29: I make friends with my mates whose proficiency is higher than mine to improve my English.

Item 30: I watch movies in English to improve my English skills.

Table 9 above illustrates that more than half of the students (55%) disagreed with the strategy of university courses being translated into their L1 (Item 21). Additionally, it was observed that the higher the students' proficiency, the easier their comprehension of lectures taught in English (58.5%, Item 22). A significant majority of students (64.5%, Item 23) also agreed with the notion that they learn in English to become internationally recognized. On the other hand, 53.0% of students disagreed with the practice of translating their notes, such as using Google translation, to their L1 while studying (Item 24). Moreover, more than half of the students (56%) expressed that they do not watch online videos in their L1 to grasp the main concepts

taught in English, while watching movies to improve English skills was rated to be very high (74%).

Furthermore, more than half of the students (51%) agreed that they make friends with peers whose English language proficiency is higher than theirs (Item 29) and 41% mentioned that they attend study groups with peers (Item 27). However, only 27.5% of students agreed that they seek additional help from their instructors during office hours (Item 26) and only 39% use the library to read English books (Item 28).

5. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Perceptions and Attitudes towards EMI and ELFA

This statistical rank test was conducted to determine if the mean scores of the individual variables deviate from the mean scores of the scale. Also, to find out the ties between the two variables of EMI and ELFA. Table 10 demonstrates how significant these concepts are to each other.

Table 10. Mean and one sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Rank			N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
PAEMI	-	Negative Ranks	29 ^a	55.02	1595.50
PAELFA		Positive Ranks	151 ^b	97.31	14694.50
		Ties	20 ^c		
		Total	200		

a. PAEMI < PAELFA

b. PAEMI > PAELFA

c. PAEMI = PAELFA

Test Statistics^a

	PAEMI - PAELFA
Z	-9.378 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Based on negative ranks, there is a significant tendency ($z = -9.378$; $p < 0.05$). This reveals that there is a significant relationship between students' attitudes and perceptions of EMI and student attitudes and perceptions towards ELFA. That is, a change in attitude towards EMI can result in a change in attitude towards ELFA based on the 20% ties of the test and vice versa.

Exploring Perspectives: Qualitative Interview Results

1. Analysis of Students' Data

The participants of the study mainly indicated that English is a global language for international communication and advancement and that studying in a university where English is the language of instruction enables them to obtain a good international experience and facilitate their intercultural skills to effectively communicate with people from different cultures, religions, languages, and countries. That is, the study participants viewed their experiences positively and expressed that the English language and studying in an international context afford them multiple learning opportunities, as indicated below:

When I meet my Congolese friends, I don't know their language, French, I speak English with them. S2

Although, students portray positive attitudes and perceptions towards EMI and English as an academic Lingua franca; they were somewhat ambivalent towards ELF standards and norms, as indicated in the following extracts:

... English". I think it belonged to anyone. ... as I said, it's an international language. Everyone is talking ... so it's not belonging to the native Speakers. S4

...English is an international language, ... it belongs to them. You could say because they are the English real English speakers in short. S3

The study participants also highlighted several challenges they face in an EMI context. In the early stages of EMI, they encounter difficulties with comprehending subject-specific vocabulary, attributed to their limited proficiency in English. Difficulties in comprehension, speaking production, grammar, and academic writing are also cited among the other challenges, as elaborated below:

For my first year, it was not easy to understand the classes. ... there are too many words from the architectural things. So, it was not easy but day by day I got used. So now it's good. ... Sometimes I can speak in the present, but I maybe I will say something in the past. (S4)

To overcome these and various other challenges, students employed a range of strategies in the EMI setting. These included learning new words on a daily basis, utilizing a pocket dictionary, practicing newly learned words in context, researching and seeking feedback from teachers, maintaining a notebook, watching movies and documentaries in English, listening to English, engaging in conversations with international friends and peers for learning, and using online applications. One extract is presented below:

... Sometimes I watch movies, but I think the good thing is.... For speaking with another person who speaks English just English because. ... So these guys speak always with me in English, so I understand I have some Nigerian friends so I speak English with them. normally I don't like reading I don't like to read so. I don't spend my time to read books. I can listen videos but read no. S3

Overall, the interviewed students expressed a positive outlook on their experiences with ELF in the EMI setting under investigation. The setting also presented a variety of language and

content-related challenges, prompting the study participants to employ diverse strategies and practices to surmount them.

2. Analysis of instructors' data

The six teacher participants in this study expressed positive attitudes and perceptions toward English as a medium of Instruction. The majority of the instructors conveyed a strong belief that English is the only language they can use to deliver their university courses and teaching their academic courses in languages other than English poses substantial challenges. This sentiment is attributed to their upbringing with English as the predominant medium of instruction.

I really don't know, but like I studied in English. So, I learned all these things in English. ...so for me I'm not sure even if I can teach the same things in even in my own language, ...because I'm not sure even I know exactly the exact definitions or the terminologies in this field in my own language, even because I never studied these concepts in that language so. T2

Apart from being an instrumental motivation as well as a status symbol, teachers stated that EMI promotes cultural diversity, creates opportunities for advanced learning and professional development. However, when it came to the native speaker or ELFA norms and standards, some mixed opinions were voiced. Instructor 4 (T4) believes in the concept of world Englishes, to him sticking to native standards of English might not depict the identity of speakers. Thus, having a touch of one's original accent or culture in communicating in English depicts oneself, which can only be a feature of ELFA. With regard to native English accent, T2 expressed the following sentiment:

I myself I don't think that I have any of these kinds of accents. I think any as long as you can communicate and you can speak properly, I think that's enough. Even if you don't speak like real native people, this is my belief, but maybe other people have other opinions.

Interestingly, a majority of the instructors hold the opinion that their learners harbor negative attitudes and perceptions towards EMI/ELFA. This belief is often shaped by their observations of students' experiences in class and examination papers, which have led them to conclude that students generally hold displeasing views towards these concepts.

Furthermore, the instructors have indicated that learners' proficiency level plays a significant role in determining their motivation, attitudes, and confidence. However, when it comes to proficiency in English and comprehension of subject matter, they expressed conflicting opinions. Struggles with the pace and rapid delivery of course content during lessons were perceived as a noteworthy challenge in this regard. This reveals the fact that some of the comprehension problems students face might not be due to their proficiency level but the delivery nature of the lectures by the instructors which could encompass lecturers' fluency, speed, accent and language competency. Difficulties in understanding students' use of

symbols, notations in mathematics were also mentioned by some instructors since students come from different first language backgrounds and use different notations in their L1.

The lecturers also observed that students in the early years of study in the universities always encounter a number of challenges due to low proficiency in English and unfamiliarity with the terminologies and concepts in the departments and programs. However, as time passes, they become enculturated and accustomed to the language jargon of their fields of study. The instructors identified some common problems learners face such as difficulty in comprehension, writing academic texts, question interpretation, speech production and lack of motivation to learn the language of instruction, which at times stall the teaching and learning process of these courses.

.... in the exam they are going to struggle to understand the question and most probably they are going to give an answer which contradict the thing I want. For example, if I ask him about what is the for example, what is the CPU, who's going to say the CPU is the run, but in fact he must say it's a central processing unit. I mean in the sense. It in order to start on this, I have many students. They are struggled with the English unfortunately and their performance is horrible. T4

Finally, the lecturers discussed the practices and strategies they employed to motivate students, to overcome the challenges discussed above and to cultivate a positive attitude towards EMI. They mentioned practices such as encouragement techniques, classroom comprehension strategies like repetition, simplification, using synonyms, explanation, paraphrasing, slowing down of speech delivery, using ice breakers, reviewing vocabulary and using demonstrations, and incorporation of various classroom management techniques such as group formation, teamwork, assignment and presentations. An example is provided below:

Well,, so I have to break it down and give a lot of explanations. So oftentimes I have to slow down when speaking. I must repeat words and sentences for them to understand. ...Most timesHow would I say that then I have to explain it so I have to slow down to make sure that they are also understanding what I'm teaching. T1

Overall, the findings of this study revealed that ELF and EMI are intricately related to one another. Specifically, the utilization of ELF significantly influences students' perceptions and practices within the EMI framework. The EMI environment also presents a spectrum of challenges and opportunities for students, fostering the utilization of ELF.

Discussions

This section examines the findings drawn from an analysis of data gathered from both students and instructors. The findings are classified into the three primary concepts introduced at the outset of the paper: perceptions, challenges and strategies within an EMI context.

Findings from the students

The results from the students' data revealed that students have a positive attitude towards EMI and ELFA, and they know what the two concepts mean. An overwhelming majority hold positive attitudes towards English as a common language for education, its usefulness for international and academic communication and affairs. Being able to speak English also is perceived to facilitate the development of interpersonal, intercultural, and intercommunication skills fostering interactions amongst speakers from diverse cultural, religious, linguistic, and national backgrounds. Moreover, EMI is believed to help them develop competent language skills in English and they like the fact that their courses are taught in English. Contrary to these findings of the study, some research studies have reported negative attitudes and perceptions towards EMI and skills development. In this regard, Olcu and Tuğa (2013) reported negative attitudes of academic personnel in Turkish universities towards EMI. Arnbjörnsdóttir et al. (2017) also reported similar findings reporting the relationships between students' negative perceptions in an EMI setting and their writing practices.

Further, the majority of the students agreed that attending an EMI institution is a means of social prestige for them and that EMI contributes to their cognitive development. In line with this finding, Tasbulatova (2017) also reported that students view studying in English as a social prestige in the context of Northern Cyprus. This finding also confirms the finding of Arkin (2013) who revealed that students view EMI as useful for their professional and academic success. Additionally, the student participants in this study believed that EMI plays a significant role in their future careers. This finding corroborates Yeh's study (2014), which suggests that EMI acts as a guarantee for students' future. In essence, attending an EMI institution is believed to facilitate students' future movements and advancement, including seeking employment abroad and pursuing advanced studies.

Overall, the study participants viewed their experiences positively and expressed that the English language and studying in an international context affords them multiple professional and personal opportunities. This indicates the EMI and its perceived significance as a future investment for the student participants in this study. The data also demonstrated that a high proficiency level of English builds up self-confidence and facilitates studies in EMI settings. One significant contrast between prior literature and this research is that, despite the challenges they encountered in the given context, students in this study continue to exhibit positive attitudes toward EMI. This resilience may be attributed to the influence of ELF in this context, potentially bolstering their instrumental motivation (Selvi, 2014).

The students exhibited mixed feelings regarding the standards and norms associated with native English and ELF. Nevertheless, it is of particular significance that they were in strong agreement about the purpose of English education in schools: for effective international communication rather than emulating native speaker usage. A considerable proportion also emphasized their English-medium learning as a means to achieve international recognition. Interestingly, some interviewees acknowledged the dominance of native speakers in setting

language standards, underlining the superiority of native norms over ELF. This implies that while recognizing the prominence of native standards, students still embrace ELF, including its variant ELFA, as integral components of their identities. Importantly, a significant majority explicitly expressed their comfort in being identified as non-native English speakers, as this aspect is interrelated with their identity. Moreover, they exhibited a tolerance for mistakes made by their peers during English conversations.

The result also revealed that almost all of the students are aware of what English as an academic lingua franca is. They concur that English has assumed the role of a common language for academic affairs due to its international prominence. This finding somewhat echoes Sifakis's (2018) argument that ELF cannot be explicitly taught, but it is inevitable in communication amongst non-native speakers of English. Sifakis (2018) further contended that if ELF is incorporated in EMI pedagogy, learners will become more aware of the concept. Interestingly, this alignment is already observable in our study context, given that a significant majority of students enrolled in EMI programs are not local (non-Turkish) students. Moreover, an impressive majority acknowledge that ELF aids them to better appreciate the people around them. This attribution categorizes ELFA as a language of socialization and consequently, a form of sociocultural capital.

The EMI context in question also presented a number of challenges for the students. It is interesting to note that more than half of the students held the view that EMI does not affect their academic performance in their major courses. An intriguing outcome of the study pertained to the students' comfort with speaking in English, potentially stemming from the context's prevalent use of ELF. Furthermore, the research identified additional challenges including difficulties in comprehension, speaking fluency, grammar usage, and academic writing as well as difficulties in comprehending and answering exam questions. These complexities resonate with the observations made by Jiang et al (2019), who also highlighted issues like learners' insufficient English proficiency contributing to breakdowns in communication and struggles with oral and listening skills within EMI classes.

The data from the students' survey unveiled that students employ diverse practices and strategies to overcome the challenges in the EMI setting. Despite their notable repertoire of approaches, translation strategies did not receive much favor among the students. On another note, a markedly prevalent strategy entailed watching movies in English to not only improve their English but also cultivate a more global perspective. Moreover, an intriguing pattern emerged wherein over 50 percent of the students made friends with peers whose English language proficiency was higher than theirs, and more than 40% reported participating study groups with friends. This dynamic could potentially be linked to the context's prevalence of ELF, wherein seeking assistance from peers was favored over receiving feedback solely from the teachers. The insights garnered from interviews shows that learners' practice and learn new vocabularies in English to improve their comprehension skills. A notably effective strategy involves jotting down new vocabulary for subsequent repetition and review. This finding

resonates in part with Yeh's study (2014), which highlighted Taiwanese students' adoption of cognitive strategies like note-taking and concentrated focus during EMI lessons to overcome challenges related to comprehension and language difficulties. Furthermore, students indicated their engagement in dialogues with international friends and peers as well as utilizing online applications as further avenues for learning.

Findings from instructors

The next set of our data pertains to instructors' perceptions towards EMI. The findings from the interviews showed that most instructors believe that EMI serves as a useful tool fostering students' academic achievements and enhancing their readiness for their future careers. The instructors in this study viewed EMI not only as a tool for promoting cultural diversity but also occasionally time-consuming, potentially deterring students from understanding the discipline-specific concepts. This finding somewhat contradicts Kiliçkaya's (2006) study findings which reported teacher's feelings and perceptions of EMI as time consuming, alienating for both students' and teachers' home cultures.

Another aspect revealed by the instructors about EMI is the language they would prefer to use in teaching their university courses. They mentioned that it would be more challenging for them to teach most course concepts in their native languages because they learnt such subjects/matters in English. Contrary to this study finding, studies of Olçu and Tuğa, (2013) and Kiliçkaya (2006) reported that instructors preferred to use their native language to teach at the universities. It is worth noting that in the context of North Cyprus, as we mentioned earlier, English is already a lingua franca, and more precisely an academic lingua franca in most of the universities.

Also, the instructors unanimously expressed that the proficiency level of students played a significant role in learners' comprehension of content taught, and that teachers' proficiency, speed of delivery and interaction with the students influenced their students' understanding and hence learning.

On the other hand, the results of the interview showed that instructors demonstrated positive attitudes towards ELFA recognizing both its relevance within academic environments and its importance for students' prospective career opportunities. However, this finding is in contrast with Jenkins and Leung's (2014) study that highlighted that ESL/EFL instructors often hold pessimistic perspectives towards ELFA standards, as they tend to uphold native-like benchmarks, thereby hindering the proliferation and advancement of ELFA.

Instructors further indicated the use of multiple practices and strategies to maximize learners' comprehension of courses they taught. Some of the salient ones were repetition, explanations, simplification, use of synonyms, use of multiple examples, ice breakers, comprehension checks, slowing down of speech delivery, minimal code switching in their teaching, and utilization of various assessment strategies to gauge their students' English proficiency levels during instruction. This is in contrast with the study of Björkman (2011) which revealed that most EMI instructors do not use strategies to give lectures in their lessons, but learners

mostly employ pragmatic strategies in group work, presentation and in class task completions. This finding also echoes the finding of the previous research which reported the significance of ELF in enhancing pragmatic competence in communication (Björkman, 2011; Firth, 1996; Jenkins et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2019).

Instructors also stated that they incorporated various affective strategies and strategic instruction in their teaching. The instructors in the context seemed to be quite confident in using English as a means of instruction, with some even stating that they sometimes improvised and digressed during their lessons as part of their English teaching practices. This finding is somewhat at variance with the results of Werther et al.'s (2014) study, which reported that EMI lecturers faced difficulties in improvising, creating jokes, and digressing due to limited language abilities and low self-esteem when teaching in a foreign language other than their mother tongue.

The findings from instructors' interviews also showed that students in their first years of university may face challenges, such as comprehension breakdowns, low self-esteem and self-confidence, and low motivation due to their limited English language skills. However, as time passes and they become more enculturated into the EMI/ELFA practices, they gradually improve their proficiency and competence in the language.

Additionally, despite numerous challenges that study participants encountered in the context of this study, both lecturers and students still perceived EMI/ELFA as useful tools for 21st century academic and career skills development. This finding confirmed the results of some of the previous studies (e.g., Arkin, 2015; Tasbulatova, 2017; Yeh, 2014) which reported positive attitudes and perceptions of students towards EMI. The findings also revealed a discrepancy between students' perceptions and attitudes towards EMI and their instructors' perceptions of the students in an EMI context. Although students overwhelmingly portray positive attitudes and behaviors towards these concepts, the instructors reported that students usually display negative attitudes and opinions towards EMI in their classes. This intriguing issue necessitates collaborative efforts between students and teachers to better comprehend each other's perspectives within EMI contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illuminated the intricate relationship between positive attitudes towards EMI and ELFA. The symbiotic nature of these attitudes suggested that in contexts where EMI is implemented, ELFA not only finds relevance but also enhances the teaching and learning processes.

Furthermore, our findings hold significant pedagogical implications for the broader domain of ELF. Our study corroborated the existence of this integration in our research context, where students and instructors regularly employed ELF, both within and outside the classroom. To enhance students' experiences and facilitate their smooth transition into EMI programs, we recommend offering English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses alongside English for

Academic Purposes (EAP) programs. These ESP courses should be tailored to develop field-specific language skills, addressing the unique academic needs of students. Additionally, EMI instructors should prioritize the cultivation of discipline-specific vocabulary by providing glossaries of essential terms for each course. This approach, as indicated by our study's results, can alleviate student anxiety related to unfamiliar terminology and foster the development of subject-specific language skills.

Instructors in EMI settings are encouraged to incorporate language-related exercises into their content courses, thereby bridging the gap between language and subject matter. Furthermore, continuous professional development is essential for EMI instructors. Participation in EMI conferences, seminars, and training sessions, as well as the cultivation of EMI-specific skills, should be actively pursued.

While our study shed light on important aspects of EMI and ELFA in our context, it is not without limitations. The sample size of interviewed lecturers and students, as well as the dual investigation of EMI and ELFA, posed certain constraints. A more comprehensive comparative study encompassing these two vital concepts would offer a more holistic understanding of their interplay.

In conclusion, this research not only deepened our comprehension of EMI and ELFA but also underlined their significance in contemporary educational landscapes. The implications extend beyond our specific context, emphasizing the importance of continued exploration and application of these concepts in similar educational settings.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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