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Students' Attitudes toward English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Omani Private Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has become widely implemented in private higher education institutions in Oman. However, it continues to present linguistic and academic challenges for non-English-speaking students. This study investigates students' attitudes toward EMI in credit-bearing content courses at Omani private HEIs. It examines overall attitudes, differences based on prior schooling medium, English proficiency, and discipline, and explores classroom and assessment practices associated with more positive attitudes. Using a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, data were collected through a questionnaire completed by 350 undergraduate students, followed by semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. Quantitative findings indicate that students generally hold positive attitudes toward EMI, particularly in relation to future career and academic benefits. However, variations were observed based on English proficiency and prior schooling background. Qualitative results highlight the importance of clear explanations, vocabulary support, interactive teaching strategies, and fair assessment practices in shaping students' experiences. The study suggests that supportive instructional practices can enhance students' confidence and engagement in EMI contexts.

1. Introduction

English-Medium Instruction (EMI) is known as teaching content courses in English for non-native speakers (Macaro, 2018). In Oman, particularly in private colleges and universities, these institutions teach students in English as the primary language of instruction to prepare students for the competitive global job market, including a future-oriented perspective and increasing their access to international scholarly resources (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). EMI is implemented in line with the Sultanate's national vision in order to promote knowledge-based society development and to make sure that education is consistent with international standards.

This shift toward EMI also brings with it new linguistic and cultural complexities. In Oman, students who study at Arabic-medium schools face several challenges when they move on to university, such as engaging with others in discussions in English, writing academic essays, completing their assignments, and understanding lectures (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). These difficulties also frequently affect students' motivation and academic achievement. EMI can also allow learners to build language

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capacity and gain international exposure. On the other hand, it might cause inequalities in academic experiences between English-dominant students and non-English speakers.

Despite the increasing presence of EMI, there is limited research on Omani students' attitudes and perceptions toward this form of instruction. While these studies claim a student-centered approach to the use of English as an ELF medium for communication in higher education, very little empirical research on students' perceptions and attitudes is available (Dearden, 2014). Student attitudes are important because they affect engagement with instruction, participation in the classroom, and satisfaction with a course or program. When students view EMI positively, it encourages them to enhance their English proficiency and increase the degree of participation. On the other hand, if they sense that EMI acts as a hindrance, this might create frustration, disengagement, or underachievement.

The current study aims to follow the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (Gardner, 1985) as its theoretical framework. The two theories see attitudes as a multidimensional structure that contains cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. These theories propose that students' beliefs, feelings, and behaviors toward EMI impact their motivation, involvement, and study results in higher education contexts.

Despite its popularity in Omani private higher education institutions, where EMI is commonly used, many students find it difficult to learn higher-level content in English (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012), particularly if they have learned English as a subject mainly at the primary and secondary level through the medium of Arabic. Due to the difference in medium of instruction, students' comprehension, engagement, and academic success in credit-bearing content classes are affected (Al-Bakri, 2017). However, there are few studies which have explored students' perspectives on EMI at the college level. The current study aims to explore this area. This research is carried out to obtain insights into Omani private HEIs students' views of EMI in credit-bearing content programs. It determines whether students' prior medium of instruction (Arabic vs. English), their proficiency in English, and their academic performance are associated with the degree to which their study is perceived as EMI. The study also aims to investigate how classroom teaching and assessment methods affect positive or negative attitudes toward EMI. Moreover, it provides valuable information that can guide teachers, developers, and decision-makers in improving the appropriateness, inclusivity, and effectiveness of EMI practices in Omani private higher education. More specifically, the research answers below questions:

1. What are students' overall attitudes toward EMI in credit-bearing content courses at Omani private HEIs?
2. Do attitudes toward EMI differ by prior schooling medium, English proficiency, and discipline?
3. Which classroom and assessment practices shape students' attitudes toward EMI in EMI content courses?

The study is important because it raises an interesting question related to Omani Higher Education about how students perceive learning and their reactions to academic subjects when taught in English. Even though EMI has spread to enhance global competitiveness and employability, its implementation from the student's point of view is still unexamined in local research. It is important to be aware of the attitudes students have toward learning, as these have a direct influence on their motivation, participation, and success in school.

The findings from this study provide benefits to many important stakeholders. For teachers and lecturers, the findings enable them to have better insight into the linguistic and learning problems students encounter in EMI classrooms. With that knowledge, teachers can modify their explanations, materials, and teaching strategies to include more students. For curriculum designers and administrators, the research enables them to have evidence on how the content of the course, assessment forms, and language support systems can be enriched. Theoretically, this might help English language skills to be more integrated with academic learning and make things easier for students coming from Arabic- rather than English-medium schools.

2. Literature Review

The **Theory of Planned Behavior** links this framework to EMI, which is the teaching of **content through** English in private higher education institutions, as a framework useful **for understanding students' intentions and attitudes** toward it. According to Ajzen (1991), there are three basic factors influencing human behavior, **attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.** There may be situations that positively or negatively affect students' participation in EMI courses, and this also reflects their ability to control their behavior, which in turn reflects their confidence in their ability to succeed in this environment, including their academic readiness and language proficiency. Private higher education institutions have applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain why some students view EMI as an opportunity for academic growth, while others might see it as an obstacle, both academically and professionally, due to their limited English language skills. In Oman, this theory helps predict the factors that may influence how students adapt and behave in EMI-based classrooms.

According to Gardner (1985), the Socio-Educational Model emphasizes the role of motivation and the social context in learning another language. The present study focuses on two types of motivation: first, integrative motivation, which is related to the learner's desire to integrate into the other language group; and second, instrumental motivation, which is related to the learner's desire to achieve his/her academic and professional goals. The academic motivation of the students learning through EMI in private HEIs in Oman is evident. However, some learners lack motivation to participate in class activities and group work taught in English, which is very important for their future work. Additionally, Gardner pointed out that the role of the cultural and social environment is very significant for the successful learning of another language by the students. These variables play an important role in developing the motivation of Omani learners towards EMI. Hence, this framework is intended to give an overall picture of how to deal with the social and educational variables affecting the attitudes of the learners and how to improve the performance of the Omani learners in learning the subjects taught in English in private HEIs.

The attitudes of learners towards EMI are not developed in a vacuum and can be affected by some psychological and social factors and the learners' experience within the academic environment. The learners' perception of the value of learning and using the target language for their studies, the instructors' expectations, and the learners' self-confidence while learning the target language are all significant for the learners' feelings of comfort while learning within the EMI program. Most learners develop a very positive attitude and enthusiasm towards learning the target language when they perceive that the EMI program is very important for their future academic and professional life and feel supported by the instructors within the academic environment; thus, they develop a very positive attitude and a developed perspective.

In this study, the two frameworks are used together to explain students' attitudes toward EMI in Omani private HEIs. The Theory of Planned Behavior supports the analysis of how students' beliefs about EMI, social expectations, and perceived ability to cope with English-medium study shape their attitudes and participation. Gardner's Socio-Educational Model supports the analysis of motivational and social influences, especially instrumental goals, integrative orientation, and classroom context. Accordingly, variables such as prior schooling medium, English proficiency, discipline, and classroom/assessment practices are examined as factors associated with students' attitudes toward EMI.

Many studies show that students often have positive attitudes toward EMI across several higher education contexts. **Researchers report** that students generally value EMI because it helps to **improve t**heir English and **supports** their future careers, opportunities, and **academic motivation**. However, positive attitudes often exist together with learning challenges (Tien, 2023; **Bolton, Hill, Bacon-Schon, & Peyronnin, 2023).** At the same time, studies **have shown** that students' motivations to improve their English, develop their subject knowledge, **access** international opportunities, **and** increase their future job prospects were largely driven by intrinsic goals, and indicated that EMI was overall linked with high-ranking academic institutions and high English proficiency (Nguyen et al., 2023; Tajik et al., 2025).

Additionally, these positive attitudes towards EMI have been **closely** associated with the motivation and perceived preparedness of students **to** achieve success in EMI programs. There are many sources that **note that** some students are also driven to register in EMI because they have intrinsic motivations, including language development, acquisition of subject knowledge, and employability in globalized labor markets (Nguyen et al., 2023; Banu et al., 2024). Also, these positive impressions tend to be even **stronger** when students are sure of their English skills and understand the future advantages that they will gain when studying in English (Bolton et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, despite the overall positive attitude of students towards EMI, studies propose that **these attitudes are not uniformly positive**. Studies have shown that the way students **perceive** EMI depends on how they **cope** with academic requirements in English, **their** institutional context, and access to language support (Tien, 2023; Ekoc Ozcelik et al., 2024). Although EMI is appreciated as a beneficial program, it may negatively affect the overall classroom experience due to several issues, **for instance**, language proficiency, workload, and low classroom participation (Banu et al., 2024; Tajik et al., 2025). Overall, these findings **indicate** that although EMI is largely viewed as positive, positive attitudes are usually accompanied by underlying issues that influence students' experiences in English-medium institutions.

Although students value EMI, many struggle with lecture comprehension, academic vocabulary, and speaking confidence. These challenges often lead to anxiety and reduced classroom participation (Raffaa and Ali, 2023; Tien, 2023). Moreover, these findings **lead to** decreased participation, occasional frustration, and a tendency for students to engage only in superficial learning. Although students appreciate studying in English, **studies indicate** that effective language support and preparatory programs are necessary to improve learning outcomes in EMI contexts.

In addition, **Mahawattha and Rassool (2023) highlight** the difficulties associated with this transition and **call for** re-evaluation of planning and instructional guidance for students' academic skills. The findings revealed that lecturers reported a lack of clarity in institutional policies regarding EMI, and that students faced difficulties in mastering English due to limited and inadequate language assistance and the abrupt shift to English as the language of instruction. To improve the effectiveness

of EMI programs, they suggest building an academic skills approach and providing adequate language **support** for students to improve their performance upon transition to higher education institutions.

Moreover, some **studies** conducted in international **newly implemented** EMI program contexts demonstrate the extent to which challenges persist across settings and program types. Students indicated that writing and speaking were viewed as the most difficult language activities, especially where academic style, coherence, and confidence are required for communication. As indicated by the research of Simbolon et al. (2025), challenges related to new accents, scientific terminology, and different cultures in the classroom have also been identified. However, through the early stages of EMI implementation, the benefits of EMI in the future, such as the availability of academic resources and future professional opportunities, have been identified by the students and professors. The challenges associated with low English fluency, low level of engagement, and low comprehension of the subject matter have also been identified. The research has also identified the application of curriculum modifications, such as the use of the first language, by the professors (Navas Munoz, 2026). The results show the potential benefits of EMI in the future, while the benefits of its application in the early stages might depend on the level of preparation of the students.

Research indicates that students' attitudes towards EMI are affected by their proficiency, motivation, linguistic background, and educational background. For example, students' proficiency in English is a significant factor affecting their attitudes towards EMI. Students who are more proficient and motivated tend to have more positive attitudes towards EMI (Nguyen et al., 2023; Tajik et al., 2025). Moreover, a positive learning environment is essential in sustaining students' motivation towards EMI, and this is because students' confidence in learning in English might affect their motivation, ability, and attitude towards EMI.

Additionally, students' motivation and educational background play a significant role in affecting their attitudes towards EMI. For example, research indicates that students are very enthusiastic about EMI, especially when they believe that EMI is linked to their academic success and increases their opportunities for employment. This, in turn, helps them develop positive attitudes towards EMI. Generally, the research indicates that students need adequate language support and academic resources, and simply being exposed to English as a medium of instruction is not adequate (Nguyen et al., 2023; Banu et al., 2024). On the other hand, students who lack proficiency in English might be negatively affected in terms of their learning experiences and attitudes towards EMI (Tajik et al., 2025).

In addition, the existence of differences in students' attitudes regarding EMI is attributed to the presence of institutional and policy-related factors. According to Rahman & Hu (2025), the implementation of EMI without the provision of adequate support and the consideration of the different views of the students could lead to inequality between students with high and low English proficiency levels. The findings also indicate that EMI policies promote English-only practices, which focus on internationalization and global competitiveness, while classroom practices rely on translanguaging and the use of the students' native languages in the learning process.

Another factor is the classroom practices in the implementation of EMI in the respective institutions of higher learning. The findings indicate that the lecturers had average skills in teaching and English knowledge, but their attitudes toward EMI were positive (Lo & Othman, 2023; Markjanic, 2023). The lecturers' positive attitudes toward EMI indicate the need for further training and professional guidance in enhancing their skills in teaching in order for the students to have positive experiences in EMI (Markjanic, 2023). EMI implementation requires adequate training, comprehensive planning, and consideration of the social and linguistic contexts in the process of implementation.

Furthermore, the findings of the various studies indicate the importance of the provision of adequate support in the implementation of EMI in the respective institutions of higher learning. The findings of the research indicate the requirements that need to be met in the process of enhancing the quality of EMI in the respective institutions of higher learning (Akincioglu, 2023; Rahman & Akter, 2024). The strategic use of the first language is reported as beneficial in the process of clarifying complex concepts in the respective institutions of higher learning (Kalantar, 2026).

Overall, these studies specify that most EMI experiences are significantly influenced by institutional support and education quality, not just by language proficiency. If lecturers take a more student-centered and flexible approach, EMI can be more easily implemented, and its effectiveness can reach more students. For EMI to be successfully implemented, there must be continuous development and practices in the classroom to cater to both language and content demands.

Some research points out that EMI can lead to inequality, as students who have a stronger background in English benefit more than students who have a weaker background. Many studies have shown that promoting EMI is part of internationalization policies, and its implementation can benefit students who have a stronger background in English, whereas other students can be put in a disadvantaged position (Sah & Fang, 2023). EMI can lead to inequality between students who have adequate English and students who are not linguistically ready to learn in English.

Similarly, policy-level decisions about EMI show that EMI plays an important role in affecting students' learning experiences. According to Rahman and Hu (2025), students who have low proficiency in English can be challenged to adapt to academic demands when EMI policies are implemented hastily. This can lead to lower class participation, lower content comprehension, and lower achievement. These studies show that simply having EMI is not enough, and other conditions must be met, especially when language support systems are not adequate.

Several studies have also supported the fact that inequality in EMI environments is a result of the implementation of policies. For instance, Akincioglu (2023) found that when international policies are implemented to focus on students' global orientation instead of their preparation for EMI, students who are not good at English will likely be marginalized. Therefore, it is clear from the studies that a balance must be achieved to ensure that students with average English proficiency are not marginalized in EMI policies.

In the global context, EMI has been implemented in numerous educational environments in India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In Pakistan, numerous EMI problems have been identified. For instance, there is a notable inequality among students from different socioeconomic classes. In other words, students from elite schools tend to perform better in English than students from other social classes (Coleman, 2006). In India, some students have been identified to be experiencing challenges in EMI environments due to language barriers. EMI also helps students to access knowledge globally (Sharma, 2016). In Saudi Arabia, some studies have identified that some teachers have been reducing the curriculum to accommodate students' English proficiency levels. EMI also helps students to access knowledge globally (Alyas & Al-Hoorie, 2024). In the United Arab Emirates, Belhiah & Elhami (2015) found that numerous private colleges and universities have been giving priority to students who are good at English instead of accommodating students' English proficiency. In the United Kingdom and other Western countries, numerous studies have been conducted to identify the contributions of EMI to students' intercultural competence.

In Oman, EMI is used in private higher education institutions, and several studies revealed that EMI has an impact on Omani students in private higher education institutions, with most Omani students facing challenges in adapting to higher education from Arabic-medium schools. Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2016) indicated that most Omani students in private higher education institutions appreciate EMI for enhancing their English language skills in their studies, everyday life, and work. However, they also experience challenges in listening to lectures in English and completing their assignments. Al-Busaidi and Al-Maamari (2019) indicated that Omani students, particularly Arabic-medium secondary schools, experience speaking difficulties, anxiety, and low self-confidence when adapting to EMI, which consequently affects their academic performance. Some studies on EMI in Oman, particularly on teachers, also revealed several challenges, including teachers' lack of training in EMI and their overuse of translation (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). These studies on EMI in Oman, particularly in private higher education institutions, generally revealed that EMI is an important strategy in promoting internationalization in higher education, which is in line with Oman Vision 2040, with EMI effectiveness depending on several factors.

EMI has been an important issue in several studies in various countries, including Pakistan, India, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, among others. However, in Oman, particularly in private higher education institutions, several studies on EMI are still limited compared to other countries. One of the reasons for this limitation is that EMI in Oman is relatively new, with most studies on EMI in Oman having been conducted recently, which is relatively short compared to other countries. Most of the studies conducted in Oman on EMI generally focused on several challenges, perceptions, and did not focus on deeper issues, including self-confidence, behavioral motivation, and intentions. Thus, the present study aimed to address these limitations by exploring students' attitudes toward EMI in private colleges and universities in Oman using two theoretical frameworks.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research study employed a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design to examine students' attitude towards English Medium Instruction (EMI) in private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman. The quantitative study offered an overview of students' attitude towards EMI, whereas the qualitative study offered in-depth explanations of students' experiences with EMI.

3.2. Participants and Context

The research study was carried out in private HEIs in Oman, where students receive EMI in credit-bearing disciplinary courses. A total of 350 students participated in the questionnaire study. The participants of this study were enrolled in multiple fields of study, including Business, Information Technology, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Computer-related fields, and English

Literature/Language. Subsequently, 20 students participated in an interview to explore students' in-depth perspectives on their learning experiences with EMI.

3.3. Sampling

For the questionnaire, convenient sampling was used to select students who were enrolled in EMI content courses. For the interviews, purposeful sampling was used to select participants with diverse disciplinary and language learning backgrounds.

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. Student Questionnaire

Quantitative data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985). The questionnaire consisted of five sections.

Section A gathered background information (major, year of study, prior schooling medium, self-rated English proficiency, and number of EMI courses), which were used to examine subgroup differences (RQ2).

Section B measured overall attitudes toward EMI (6 items), including perceived academic and career benefits, language improvement, and willingness to continue EMI study. One negatively worded item was reverse-coded.

Section C assessed confidence and social influence (6 items), including perceived behavioral control, classroom support, and speaking-related anxiety.

Section D measured instrumental motivation toward EMI (3 items).

Section E examined perceptions of classroom and assessment practices, including clarity of explanation, vocabulary support, interaction, fairness, feedback, and marking focus (RQ3).

All attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.4.2. Semi-Structured Student Interviews

Interviews were used to elaborate questionnaire findings, especially students' perceived benefits, challenges, and support needs in EMI classrooms.

The tools were aligned with all three research questions through complementary quantitative and qualitative evidence.

3.4.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure had two stages. In the first stage, questionnaires were used as a data collection instrument for the eligible students who were taking EMI courses. Permission was sought from the participants, and the participants were asked for their consent to participate in the study. In the second stage, the participants for the interview were selected from the participants who had completed the questionnaires. The participants were asked for their consent to participate in the interview, and the participants consented to participate in the study.

3.4.4. Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

The development of the research instrument was based on theoretical frameworks that helped connect the study with the research questions. The questionnaire was reviewed for its clarity before it was fully administered to the participants. The reliability of the questionnaire was established based on the internal consistency.

The study followed the ethical considerations for conducting the study. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and the participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any given time.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Students' Overall Attitudes Toward EMI

4.1.1. EMI as an Investment in Future Opportunities

The research findings suggest that the students' attitudes toward EMI tend to be positive, primarily due to the students' future-oriented aspirations. The quantitative research findings (see Figure 1) reveal that the majority of the students agreed or strongly agreed that it is beneficial for their future career and important for their academic success to study the program in English. Moreover, the majority of the students stated that they would choose the EMI courses again if they had the option to do so. This reveals the students' overall positive attitude toward EMI.
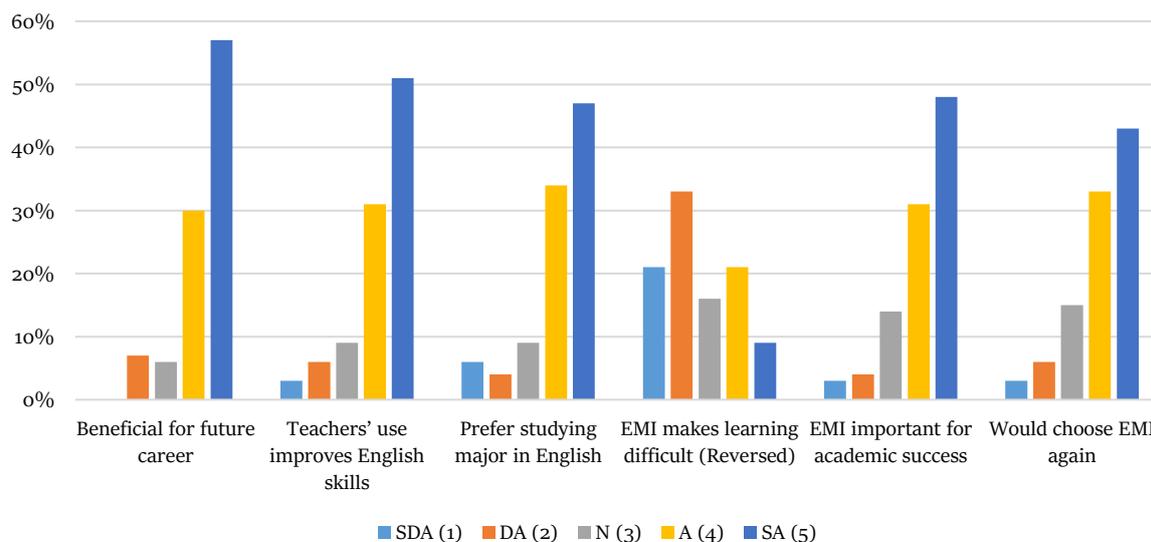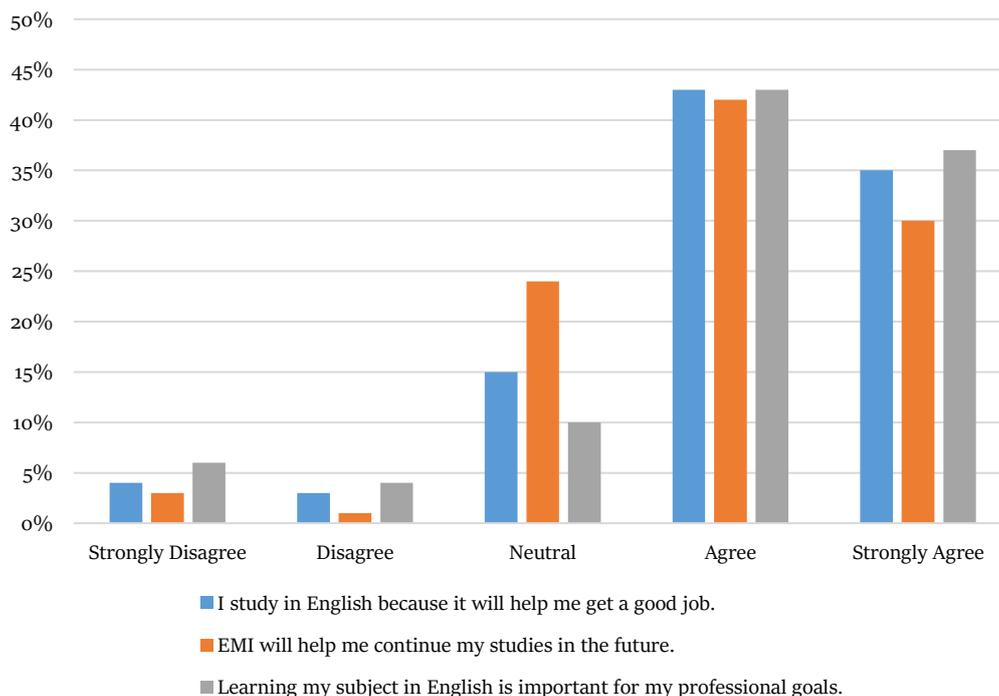

Figure 1: *Distribution of Students' Responses to EMI Attitude Statements (RQ1).*

Note. The figure displays the frequency distribution of responses across the five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) for six EMI-related attitudinal statements: perceived career benefits, language improvement, preference for studying major subjects in English, perceived difficulty (reverse-coded), academic importance, and willingness to choose EMI again.

The interview data offer more depth on the positive orientation. For instance, some students directly linked EMI with employment and academic mobility. Thus, while studying, Charlie said, "That it will help me get a job in the future," while another student, Sam, indicated that learning the English language would offer "more opportunities in the future if I want to proceed with master's." Similarly, while discussing the importance of EMI, student Avery said, "It's important for my academic success and future career," while Drew indicated that the benefits of learning the English language would extend "globally to improve my education, my career, my everything".

The converging findings of the study, both at the quantitative and qualitative levels, reflect the strength of the students' instrumental motivation, as defined by Gardner's (1985) socio-educational theory of second language acquisition, where learning the target language is seen as important for the pursuit of extrinsic, or instrumental, goals such as career advancement and academic success. For the students, EMI represents not only the way of learning but also the way to climb the social ladder. The positive attitude of the students, as defined by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), reflects the positive beliefs about the behavior, which would strengthen the students' intention to engage in the behavior despite the possible difficulties.

Figure 2: Distribution of Instrumental Motivation Items Related to EMI (RQ1).

Note. The figure presents the frequency distribution of students' responses across a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) for three instrumental motivation statements: studying in English to obtain a good job, EMI supporting future studies, and learning subjects in English for professional goals.

4.1.2. EMI as a Means of Language Development

In terms of other benefits, quantification of the data reveals that there is strong agreement that students' language skills are enhanced by their teacher's use of English. There is also significant agreement that learning their subject in English is beneficial to their future career aspirations.

The interview responses also lend themselves to this interpretation. The students' responses to EMI consistently focused on its ability to improve their language skills. Sam stated that it helps them to "improve my vocabulary and learn new academic words." Taylor made a direct link between speaking skills and their future employability. Drew stated that they had improved their skills in terms of "accent and grammar skills." Sky appreciated that it had helped them to "improve my English and learn new terms"

This suggests that students perceive that EMI has two functions: to aid content learning and to aid language learning. From a theoretical perspective, students' perceptions of language skill improvement will have reinforced their attitude under the attitude construct of TPB, since they evaluate EMI positively in terms of its skill-enhancing effects. Again, Gardner's model is supported in terms of the instrumental dimension of language learning being inextricably linked with their aspirations in terms of their future career.

4.1.3. Confidence as a Dynamic Element of Attitude Formation

The quantitative results, as demonstrated in Figure 3, further show that students have relatively high confidence levels, as most students have responded that they feel confident when studying in English and understanding lectures when they are delivered in English. However, a notable number of students expressed that they were worried about making mistakes when speaking in class.
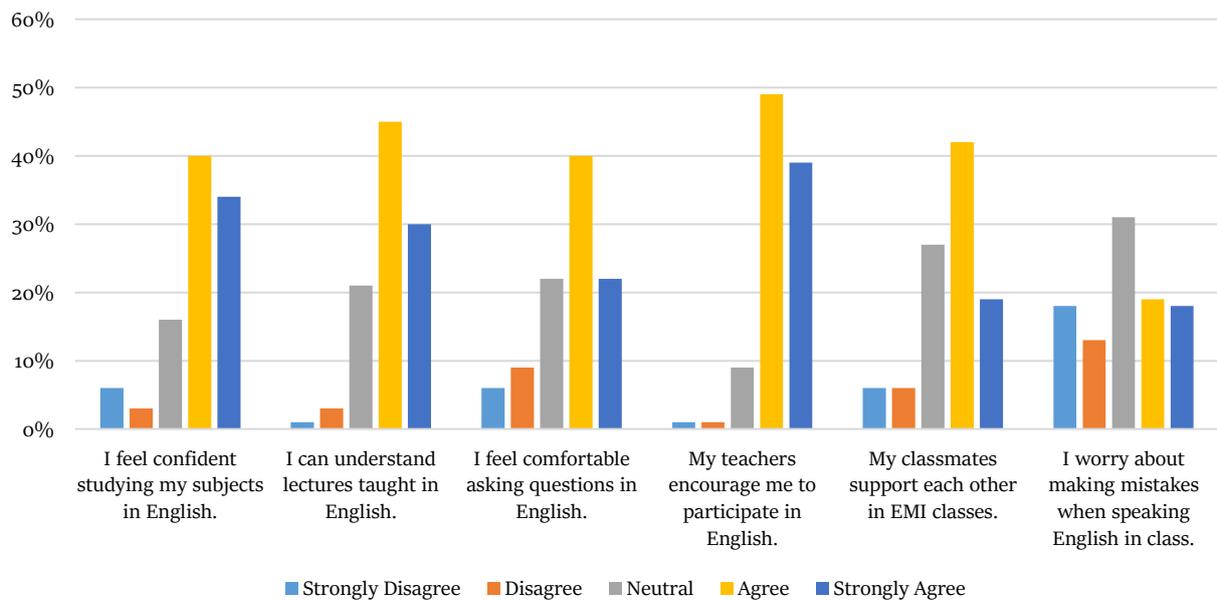
Figure 3: Students' perceived confidence, classroom participation, peer support, and speaking anxiety in EMI courses (percentages across Likert-scale responses).

Note. Percentages represent the distribution of responses from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher agreement levels indicate stronger perceived confidence, comprehension, and classroom support in EMI, while responses to the final item reflect levels of speaking-related anxiety.

Qualitative data helps explain this process. Blake commented, "With time, I improved a lot... and became more confident in speaking with teachers and classmates," and Casey stated, "I feel more confident when I understand academic words in English." Such quotes indicate that attitudes toward EMI are not static and change along with perceived competence.

In TPB, this construct can be related to perceived behavioral control, which refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a given behavior. The more linguistic competence students develop, the more control they feel, which, in turn, reinforces positive attitudes and behavior.

In this case, it can be suggested that there is a mutual relationship between EMI and students' linguistic competence, which, in turn, boosts their confidence and reinforces positive attitudes.

4.1.4. Comfort and Familiarity Among Higher-Proficiency Students

A small number of respondents also expressed a sense of enjoyment and comfort with EMI. For example, Jamie said: "English had always been my favorite subject... EMI courses were never confusing... straight and clear." This is in contrast to other students who admitted to experiencing some challenges with EMI course content

This disparity shows that students' attitudes toward EMI are likely linked to their existing proficiency and familiarity with English. For students who are proficient in English, EMI does not impose a mental strain but a natural environment. In other words, TPB theory shows that perceived behavioral control is extremely high for students who are proficient in English. This results in a lack of resistance to EMI and hence a sense of natural comfort and even enjoyment. Therefore, students' attitudes toward EMI are generally positive but subject to a number of considerations.

The results show that students' overall attitudes toward EMI are generally positive. The results from the surveys show that students strongly agree that EMI benefits their careers and is valuable for their academic and linguistic development. The results from the interviews show that students' attitudes toward EMI are a strategic investment in their future.

According to Gardner's theory, students' instrumental motivation is the most dominant motivation for supporting EMI. At the same time, TPB theory shows that students' positive attitudes toward EMI and their increasing self-confidence also result in a strong engagement in EMI.

The results show that students' attitudes toward EMI in private HEIs in Oman are generally positive. The results from the surveys show that students strongly agree that EMI benefits their careers and is valuable for their academic and linguistic

development. The results from the interviews show that students' attitudes toward EMI are a strategic investment in their future.

The results show that students' attitudes toward EMI in Oman private HEIs are not necessarily linked to linguistic preferences but to other considerations and increasing self-confidence. The results show that students' attitudes toward EMI are subject to a number of challenges and anxieties but that these challenges do not override the benefits that EMI poses for their future.

4.2. The Influence of Schooling Medium, English Proficiency and Discipline on Students' Attitudes Toward EMI

4.2.1. The effects of difficulty in vocabulary among lower-confident students

Through the quantitative data findings, it reveals differences in students self-related English proficiency levels (see Figure3). There is a big number of participants who reported their English proficiency as "Good" and "Medium", although a smaller group who identified their level as "Very Good" or "Low". According to this distribution, it shows that most of the responses hold good English skills, while there are also a few students who may experience some linguistic challenges when learning through EMI classes.
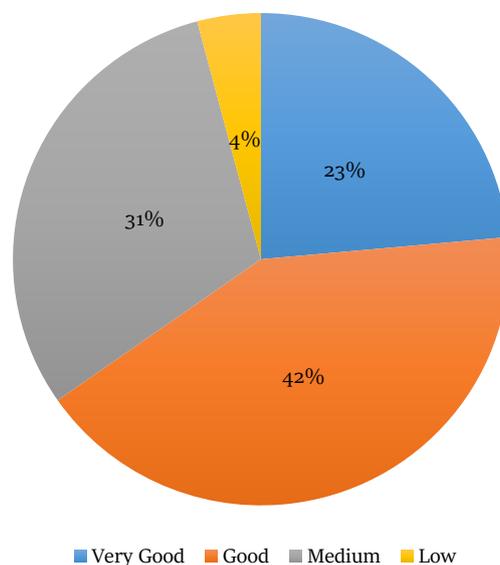
Figure 4: RQ2: Students self-related English levels.

Note. The figure shows the percentage of the participants who reported their English proficiency levels from (Very Good - Good- Medium- Low).

The interview data it shows more clearly how competence is shaped for the EMI experience among students. The students who consider their English level as low they mentioned having some vocabulary challenges. For example, Joy says, "My biggest challenge is difficult words. Sometimes I don't understand quickly," even though Quinn talked about difficulties regarding "technical terms." At the same time, SAM pointed out that "fast explanations delivered in English. On the other hand, students with a higher English proficiency level say that they have just a few barriers. Jamie stated, "I'm very fluent in English so I haven't really had much challenges throughout my EMI classes." Through these comparisons we can see the students attitudes regarding EMI are mediated by perceived linguistic competence partly.

These differences reflect the perceived behavioral control through planned behavior theory. Students with stronger English language skills often feel more capable of meeting and managing the demands of the EMI, thus fostering positive student attitudes. However, many students also struggle with issues such as anxiety or hesitation when speaking English, even if they understand the importance of the EMI for their studies and long-term future.

4.2.2. Anxiety and Fear during speaking and presentations

In addition to the difficulty in learning vocabulary, language anxiety also appeared to affect students' experiences as another factor. The results regarding confidence during speaking (see Figure 3 in RQ1) showed that many students felt confident when

studying in English, while smaller groups expressed anxiety about making mistakes when speaking to the teacher or in classroom discussions with other students when conducted in English.

This qualitative data illustrates this concern. Avery stated, "I struggle to explain my thoughts clearly in English, especially during presentations." Similarly, Sam said: "I feel nervous also I have to speak in English during class discussions." Additionally, Blake said: "I also felt nervous about speaking at first." This reflects that at the beginning speaking in English was challenging.

All the responses indicate that when tasks require communicative communication in English, it increases the pressure on students, especially when speaking in public. While students may understand the content presented during the lecture, speaking orally in English in front of other students can increase their anxiety. The Theory of Planned Behavior again relates to perceived behavioral control, as students' speaking performance affects their confidence in managing and controlling EMI. Furthermore, students who initially felt anxious speaking English later acknowledged that with practice, they saw the benefits of EMI, stating that anxiety actually improved their performance rather than leading to relaxation and acceptance.

4.2.3. The challenges of Transitioning from Arabic to English

The previous English language distribution of students shows that the majority came from students who studied in intermediate Arabic schools, while the smaller percentages came from intermediate English and bilingual backgrounds.
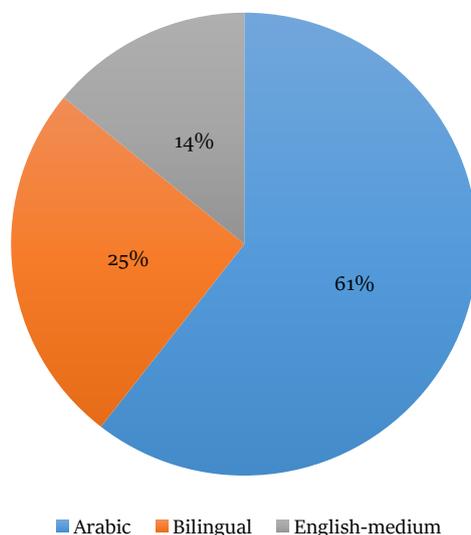
Figure 5: Distribution of students school language background (RQ2)

Note. These figure shows the percentage of the participants based on their main language that they used during school (Arabic, Bilingual, English-medium).

This background indicates how students adapt to EMI. Drew described the transition from studying in Arabic directly to English by saying "The transfer from Arabic to English classes was a quiet a struggle at the beginning." This indicates that students with no prior experience in English may need more time to adapt, although these students may develop stronger skills over time and with continuous practice. A sudden shift can create a feeling of uncertainty and a lack of self-confidence when practicing English, and it increases cognitive effort. Nonetheless, there are many students who have prior backgrounds in studying in English and at a good average level whose transition is smoother because their sufficient prior knowledge of academic English reduces the difficulty of connecting with EMI. Therefore, the benefit is that it allows them to focus more on studying the course content instead of just processing language learning from the beginning.

These results are consistent with TPB theory on perceived control that students who have previously been exposed to EMI have a higher level of confidence and greater willingness to study in English. On the other hand, students who move directly from Arabic to English education must first adapt linguistically to studying courses in English before benefit from EMI.

4.2.4. Students of Higher Proficiency-Complain of Fewer Difficulties

Students described the EMI English program as comfortable and manageable, unlike those with low confidence in practicing English. JAMIE declared "I'm very fluent on English so I haven't really had much challenges throughout my EMI classes."

According to this response it shows the importance of prior language proficiency in shaping the different EMI experiences among students.

Students who demonstrated a higher level of control over perceived behavior showed a greater emotional regulation while speaking English and also increased their participation in classes, engaging more comfortably and confidently. EMI did not represent a major language transformation for these students, but their continued practice of the language resulted in consistently positive attitudes towards EMI programs.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that while proficiency levels may influence perceived difficulty, this does not fundamentally alter students' long-term recognition of the importance of EMI. The motivation remains strong across proficiency levels, and students continue to associate EMI programs with their academic success, future career advancement, and access to better opportunities.

When combined, the results of both the quantitative survey and the qualitative interview results demonstrate that the attitude of students towards EMI is affected by the level of their English proficiency and past school education background. The statistical data indicate the variation in self-rated proficiency and language of instruction in school, whereas the responses to the interview explain how the two factors influence the experiences of students in the classroom, specifically in terms of vocabulary difficulty, speaking anxiety, and initial adjustment to EMI.

All these disparities notwithstanding, the general attitudes toward EMI are rather positive. More advanced students report a lesser number of challenges and are more confident, and less skillful students report a greater linguistic struggle. Nevertheless, the two groups still acknowledge the academic and career gains of EMI in the long run. Combination of both quantitative and qualitative information hence proves that the background factor affects comfort levels although this does not diminish the overall support to EMI in any notable way.

4.3. Classroom and Assessment Practices as Predictors of Positive Attitudes Toward EMI 4.3.1 Classroom Practices

 Quantitative results indicate that, based on classroom practices, most students agreed that they received clear and organized explanations and clarifications during learning, which greatly helped them understand the lecture (see Figure 6). The fact that most participating students selected "agree" or "strongly agree" demonstrates that classroom teaching practices are clear and accessible, enabling the students to feel more comfortable and confident with EMI and reducing its difficulties.
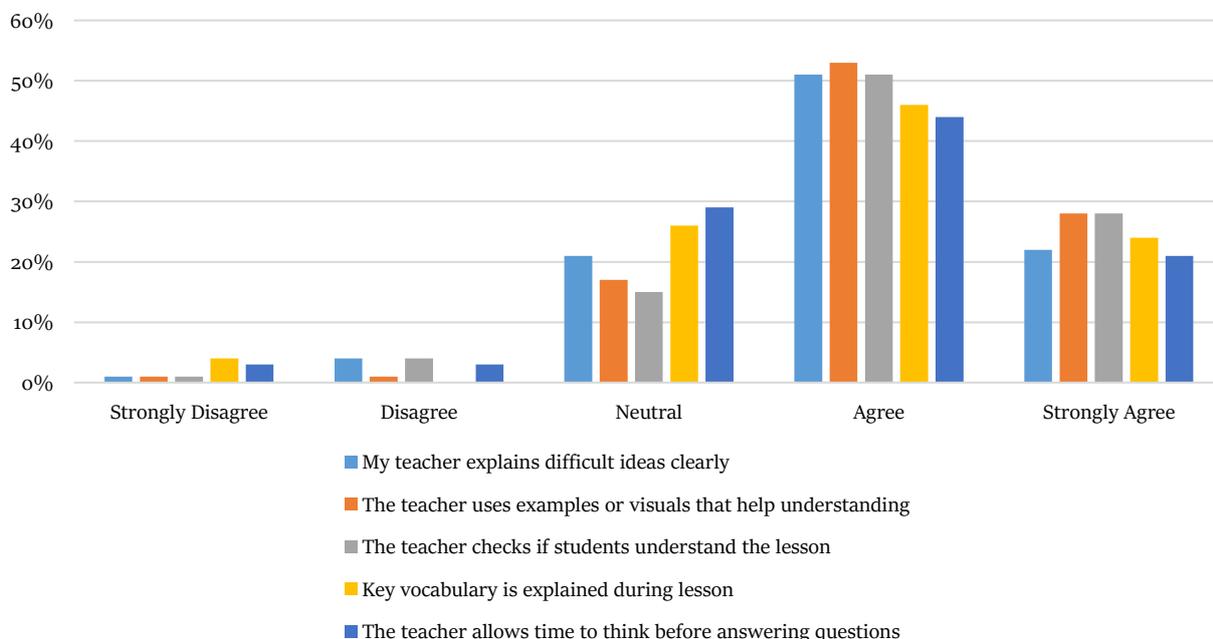
Figure 6: Students point of view toward teaching practices in classroom.

Note: The figure shows the percentage of the students responses regarding the teacher's use of explanation, and how they support students during class, by using clear strategies in order to enhance students understanding.

From the interview data its strongly supports this design. There are many students who emphasize that the teacher's strategy of explanation depends largely on how the students will understand the lecture in a clear way. For instance, Joy stated, "Simple explanation helps me a lot." Sam also mentioned the need for more pace and clarity by saying, "When teachers explain clearly and slowly, using simple language helps me a lot." Additionally, Avery highlights the importance of structured instruction by noting, "When the teacher explains step by step and gives real life examples it really helps."

Simultaneously, these responses indicate that when teachers use simplified methods to explain and the lessons, and follow a structured teaching system, EMI becomes less demanding. In other words, when pressure is reduced in the classroom, students are more prepared to participate in EMI. These responses help to understand why some students report challenges in EMI, which stem from rushed or complex explanations in the classroom. Conversely, when the teacher provides a simpler and clearer explanation of the course material, students have a better grasp of the material during lectures and feel more confident.

4.3.1. The Importance of Vocabulary Explanation

Figure 6 indicates that teachers prefer to explain the main vocabulary during lessons because the difficulty of vocabulary among students is one of the most important and significant obstacles that students face in English language classrooms. When the teacher explains the vocabulary in a more detailed and simple way to the students during the lesson, the student can understand the rest of the lecture well and focus on the presented academic content.

Qualitative results also provide direct evidence, as Resse said "Explaining the meaning of new words helps a lot." She also explained the support for the vocabulary on time "When teachers introduce a new word and immediately explain it, it helps students stay focused." Similarly, Quinn emphasizes the importance of clear vocabulary explanations by saying, "Explaining difficult words helps me understand better."

Student feedback during interviews revealed that they currently benefit more from lexical scaffolding. Instead of being stuck in the middle of a lecture trying to understand or guess the meanings of certain words, when the teacher provides a vocabulary explanation simultaneously, the student remains engaged and comprehensible. Therefore, when the teacher provides a vocabulary explanation before delving into the deeper parts of the lesson, it enhances student understanding and affective support about vocabulary acquisition in EMI context by facilitating these practices.

4.3.2. Multimedia and Visual Aids Understanding

As Figure 6 highlights that student responded positively to teachers using visual examples during lessons, which greatly aided understanding for most students. Multimedia teaching indicates that it plays a significant role in EMI classes, especially since visuals allow students to rely less on language instruction alone.

The interview data shows us the consistency of this pattern. For example, Taylor mentioned the effectiveness of multimedia by saying, "When the teacher shows us some video during classes." As well, Blake stated about visual support, "Videos, pictures and visual presentation help me a lot." In addition, Sam connected how visual can be improved for understanding, she said "I understand better when the teacher uses picture and PowerPoint slides."

The students indicated in their responses that visual materials and multimedia helped them understand the concepts faster and with less effort. When processing content in another language, they believe that visuals can help them grasp the material more quickly and effectively, confidence building when they don't understand certain points. These visual approaches can also help them develop a more positive view of EMI and maintain a positive learning experience.

4.3.3. Discussion and Interaction Improve Engagement

To ensure students understand and have sufficient time to respond, it is important to have interactive practices organized in the classroom as mentioned in Figure 6. Through these practices, greater support can be provided to them, and their fear of EMI can be reduced, especially for students who struggle or may hesitate when they want to participate and speak in the classroom in English.

This theme is further clarified in the interview responses from several students. Including, Jamie said "Teaching practices that involve student and teacher interaction are what's best." As well, Sam clarified the significance of interaction and dialogue between students and teacher during classes, she said "Group discussions and asking questions help me understand better."

In their responses, the students indicated that interaction helps them understand and process content positively, rather than negatively. When students sit in groups, talk to each other, and ask each other questions, they better understand vocabulary and content. It also boosts their self-confidence through consistent interaction, and their fear gradually diminishes. Therefore,

the students explained that interactive group classroom practices enhance student participation and improve their views and attitudes toward EMI over time.

4.4. Assessment Practices

4.4.1. Clarity and Simplicity in Exam Wording

The quantitative results, shown in Figure 7, indicate that clear and easy-to-understand assessment practices are appreciated by students. Students learning a second language also benefit from clear instructions that play a significant role in their perception of fairness when EMI assessments are made.
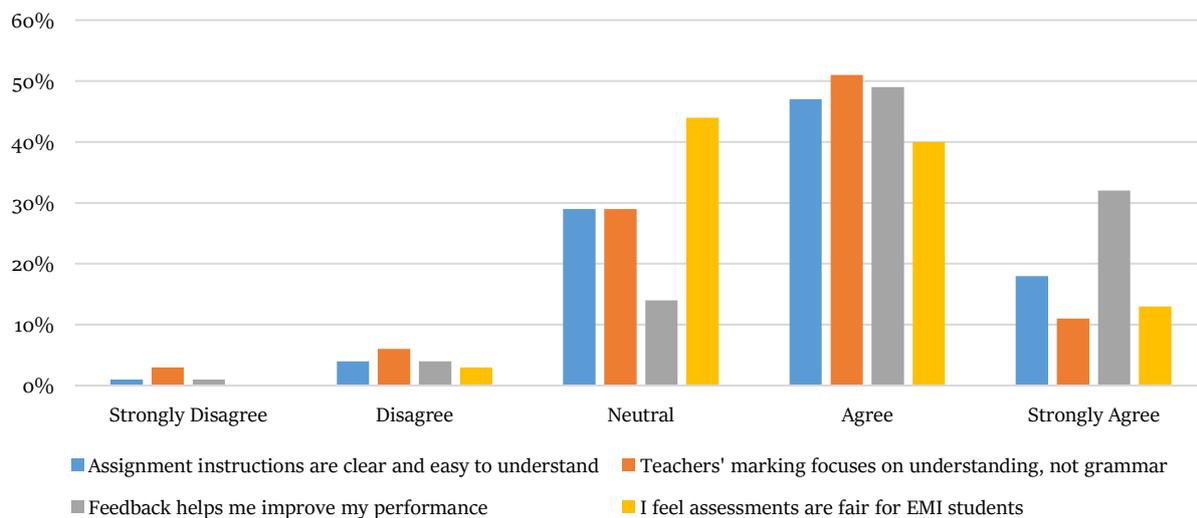
Figure 7: Frequency table of the answers of students on the assessment practices in EMI courses such as the clarity of instructions given on assignments, the focus of marking, the usefulness of feedback, and the perceived fairness of assessments.

Note: The figure shows that the majority of students expressed their favor to the practices related to assessment, especially when it comes to the clarity of instructions, fairness of marking, and utility of feedback in facilitating academic performance.

Also, this point is supported by the interview responses. For example, Sam indicated, "Assessment can be improved by using clear and simple instructions." In addition, Taylor stated the importance of instruction clarity and said, "More explanation in instruction for assignment." Furthermore, Quinn underscored the significance of the clear language used in the exam, saying, "Using clear and simple language in exams."

These student responses indicate that students are not only concerned with the difficulty of the content but also with how teachers write assessments. When the wording is difficult or unclear, students may face numerous challenges in understanding and answering questions they already know. Consequently, clear strategies and instructions in assignments and exams can reduce the difficulty students face in understanding and result in better and fairer outcomes for EMI students.

4.4.2. Prioritizing Content Understanding Over Grammatical Accuracy

Figure 7 also relates to students' perspectives on grading. Specifically, students expressed a preference for grading that focuses more on comprehension than on linguistic accuracy. Some students indicated they favor assessments that emphasize understanding rather than solely focusing on grammatical and spelling errors in test or assignment answers.

In addition, it reflects the evidence in the interview. For instance, Sam mentioned, "Focus on understanding the subject not only perfect English grammar." As well, Blake argued when distributing grades that focus solely on content, "Teachers should focus more on understanding the content rather than small grammar mistakes." Moreover, Avery highlights the student's concern regarding the evaluation, formulation, and understanding, by saying, "Exams should focus more on understanding the concept not just difficult wording."

These responses indicate that students perceive language scores as unfair in the context of EMI, especially when they struggle to express their ideas in English rather than simply understanding the subject matter. Thus, prioritizing student comprehension

can foster more positive student perspectives on EMI. In this situation, the assessment, based on understanding, provides greater logic and support for students.

4.4.3. The Role of Extended Time in Reducing Assessment Pressure

Despite the ability of EMI tests to determine the knowledge content of the students, the students may need more time to process all the information when the students are reading, interpreting, in responding in a different language from their native language. However, this was a problem that was also indicated in the interview data. As Quinn asserted, "Giving extra time during exams can help students do their best." Additionally, highlights the benefits of giving more time during exams for better results, saying, "Teachers could give us extra time to solve the exam."

Based on these responses, it is indicated that time pressure might cause anxiety, and the performance of the student will deteriorate even when they have enough knowledge about the materials that are coming in the exam. Furthermore, it will be beneficial for them when giving them more time and to make EMI students feel less stressed, so it will facilitate better experiences and more positive student attitudes toward EMI assessment.

On the whole, the results of the quantitative survey from both (Figures 6 & 7) and the qualitative interview answers indicate that the experiences of the students regarding EMI are significantly influenced by classroom and assessment practices. The data of the survey, it reveals the reasons behind these responses about why these practices make the tasks easier, decrease the anxiety, and assist the students in their performance with better results.

The students highlighted the significance of paced instruction, simple and clear vocabulary explanations, and the benefits of using visual aids during classes. Furthermore, the students emphasized that assignments should be clear, giving the students enough time during exams to decrease their pressure for better performance, and to pay attention to the students understanding rather than just focusing on their grammar mistakes. According to these results it reveals that students attitudes towards EMI not only focus on the language by itself alone, but it also provides support and fairness for students to learn better.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the attitudes of Omani private higher education students towards English-Medium Instruction (EMI), including their general attitudes towards EMI, differences based on their backgrounds, as well as the impact of classroom and assessment practices on their attitudes towards EMI. The study reveals that the general attitudes of Omani private higher education students towards EMI are positive, mainly because of the academic and professional benefits associated with EMI. Despite the challenges faced by some of the Omani private higher education students towards EMI, such as those associated with vocabulary, speaking anxiety, and the Arabic-medium instructional context of their past academic experiences, the study reveals that these challenges were not enough to affect their positive attitudes towards EMI. Furthermore, the study reveals that the attitudes of Omani private higher education students towards EMI were more positive among those who were proficient in English. Additionally, the study reveals that the attitudes of Omani private higher education students towards EMI were more positive among those who perceived that they had more control over EMI. Finally, the study reveals that the attitudes of Omani private higher education students towards EMI were more positive mainly because of their strong instrumental motivation towards EMI, as indicated by Gardner's socio-educational model of second language motivation. Overall, the study reveals that the effectiveness of EMI is not only associated with the language proficiency of Omani private higher education students but is also associated with classroom practices as well as assessment practices. It is recommended that future studies on EMI attitudes explore the changes in attitudes over time or examine EMI practices in different contexts of Omani private higher education institutions.

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