Challenges in Incorporating English as the Medium of Instruction at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences

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Abstract
In contexts where English is not a mother tongue, several institutions implement English as the medium of instruction. This paper argues that Saudi students pursuing tertiary education in scientific disciplines like health sciences must study in English-medium settings where they encounter several academic challenges related to the English language. Pre-university education for Saudi students is conducted in Arabic, which may have resulted in a jarring transition when they were expected to be instructed in English at the university. This abrupt change in the instruction medium challenges students’ English language proficiency. This paper aims to answer this question “What do perspectives students and instructors at KSAU-HS have regarding the challenges of implementing EMI in CAMS-A? ” It may also question the institution’s language policy and the quality of its educational outcomes. By using data from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the findings of this paper attempt to comprehend challenges such as 1) pre-university English language preparations, 2) misaligned expectations between content instructors and English instructors regarding improving students’ English language, 3) time and effort in preparing and delivering lectures using EMI, and 4) impeding students’ comprehension of content knowledge and driving them to rote memorization. This paper discusses these obstacles to provide potential explanations and solutions by calling into question the monolingual bias of EMI programs in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, English medium instruction, English language proficiency, Language policy, Preparatory year program, Students’ academic challenges, Teaching English in tertiary education

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Introduction

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is becoming a fashion in many leading global tertiary education institutions in non-English speaking nations, and they view it as an essential answer for their reputations (Shimauchi, 2018). The tertiary institutions in Saudi Arabia are involved in the Englishization of science-related specializations. In other words, they seek to enhance their tertiary education by affiliating it with EMI. These nations seem to understand internationalization, the enhancement of their education, and the improvement of their students’ communication skills through the Englishization of tertiary education (Chowdhury & Ha, 2014; Delgado-Marquez et al., 2013). Such an understanding is believed to influence many students in the Arabic Gulf area, so many educators view EMI as a primary way to improve student English language proficiency (Ismail, 2011; Macaro, 2015). However, such a linearity between EMI and language competency is less often than many would like to believe (Macaro, 2018).

This emphasis on EMI education surging in many Middle East and North Africa (MENA) tertiary education could be associated with the critical role that English plays in constructing “economic globalization” and socio-political and educational discourse in these areas (Barnawi & Alhawsawi, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Barnawi, 2017). This sentiment is reiterated by experts like Canagarajah (2005), who cautions against taking for granted the role of EMI in improving students’ English language proficiency. Canagarajah (1999) further argues “that the local languages may have an equal or greater role to play in educational and social development is often ignored” (p. xv). Thus, when introducing EMI, especially in Saudi higher education, it is critical to consider the academic and language-related issues students and teachers may experience. Therefore, this paper comes to answer this question “What perspectives do students and instructors at KSAU-HS have regarding the challenges of implementing EMI in CAMS-A?” Such investigation may assist in evaluating EMI’s influence on local students, institutions, and knowledge production.

Literature Review

EMI and its Significance for Higher Education

The internationalization of higher education has a significant effect on the language used to teach in universities all over the world. Many tertiary education institutions that aspire to compete in global tertiary education for excellence use EMI to obtain autonomy and academic freedom, reputation, rankings, and excellence programs (Alkhatteeb, 2021; Dearden & Macaro, 2016). EMI has been defined in many different ways, one of which is the definition that is provided by Dearden (2015), who explained that “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of most of the population is not English” (p. 2). Macaro (2018) emphasized that when using EMI in pedagogical settings, the focus often becomes on communicating the subject knowledge, and language learning takes the last seat.

Although EMI could be seen as a face of neo-colonialism (Barnawi, 2017), the need for using it in many higher education systems is well argued. One such argument suggests that English is used in most scientific production globally and that articles are easier to be found and read in English (Montgomery, 2013; Ramírez-Castañeda, 2020). Thus, most Saudi universities teach science using EMI (Alhawsawi & Jawaher, 2022). Moreover, EMI improves university rankings, economic growth, and knowledge access, and it enhances graduates’ employability and English competence (Dearden, 2015; Jawhar et al., 2022; Macaro, 2018).
English Medium Instruction in Saudi Language Policy

The state of the Arabic language is well-established in the language of Saudi Arabia. Its prestigious status is emphasized in Article 24 of Saudi Arabia's Education Policy, by suggesting that "the Arabic language is the official language for the whole education level in the kingdom except if there is a requirement to employ other languages" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9). However, English was introduced in Saudi education to assist students in interacting worldwide, advancing global knowledge and experience, and passing their uniqueness to Saudi Arabia, among other objectives. Such a view toward the English language could bring many unquestionable “advantages to the millions who learn it" (Habbash & Troudi, 2015, p. 57). Therefore, English is used by Saudi higher education to teach Saudi students different disciplines of natural sciences(Jawhar et al., 2022).

Attitudes toward English Medium Instruction

The attitudes held by students and educators toward EMI vary based on different contexts. This variation could be attributed to various factors, including socioeconomic and political factors (Alkhateeb, 2021). In the Saudi context, for instance, although most instructors and students see EMI as an impediment that might affect students’ academic progress, they pragmatically favor it because of the abundant resources that come with it and the broad access it allows to global scientific production (Alshareef et al., 2018; Al Zumor, 2019).

However, there is a view that suggests that Arab students of the Gulf prefer to use AMI in their education as they feel that AMI allow them room to improve their scientific knowledge acquisition and understanding (Ellili-Cherif & Alkhateeb, 2015). A study by Solloway (2017) discussed that the spread of the English language not only negatively influences students' education but also may threaten the student mother tongue and their religious and cultural identities. Alhamami (2015) demonstrated that Arab scientists in a Saudi university prefer teaching their students in their mother language since it helps to demystify EMI’s academic obstacles in science education at the undergraduate level. Even with such held views, many students still view AMI as hurting students’ future employment and their post-graduate pursuits (Al-Kahtany et al. (2016). Thus, some experts suggested bilingualism as a pragmatic solution to protect the original language and national identity while enhancing students’ English skills and giving them access to current knowledge being produced in the English language (Macombe, 2015; Raddawi & Meslem, 2015). Alternately, as suggested by Macombe (2015), monolingual language policies could be replaced with bilingualism in specific courses.

Concerns Related to English Medium Instruction

The misconceptualization of what EMI instructors are and what is expected of them poses a significant challenge for EMI programs and their instructors. Teachers of EMI find it challenging to juggle the responsibilities of teaching class material and assisting students in improving their English proficiency. Shohamy (2013) claimed that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students experience find it challenging to follow the lectures when new specialized linguistic terms are introduced in their science classes. Such encounters are attributed to most science lecturers not emphasizing language learning when teaching sciences (Ali, 2013). Sciences or subject lecturers see their role as English language teachers and assume that students already have sufficient English skills to satisfy EMI demands (Dearden, 2015). In addition, content instructors’ language abilities and pedagogical skills may constitute a barrier to successfully conveying academic content (King,
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2014, Jiang et al., 2016). In observations for Norwegian lecturers, Griffiths (2013) revealed that despite their scientific competencies, many science lecturers do not possess sufficient English language competencies when they teach science and that their “limited vocabulary caused problems in all disciplines.” Some content instructors choose to teach in their native language because they find it easier to communicate their content (Alkhateeb, 2021). However, some institutional language regulations may prohibit such practices, placing instructors in a precarious position because they lack the training to teach using EMI (Dearden, 2015; Macaro, 2018).

Additionally, students experience difficulties when utilizing EMI, especially in reading and writing. Sengupta (2002) argued that purposeful and critical tasks for lengthy scientific material could be daunting for EMI students with low English language skills. Hellekjær (2009) investigated challenges facing European college students when reading in English. It was concluded that new words and the ability to read fast were the leading causes of reading difficulties among these students. Furthermore, Shen (2013) stated that science or academic texts produced in English are primarily designed to be read by native English audiences or students with advanced English proficiencies. In the Saudi context, Al-Nasser (2015) noted that passing exams, not developing English language skills for EMI contexts, has always been the focus of most English language instructors. Therefore, English academic proficiency has become a barrier for most Saudi EMI students. The academic writing demands of EMI courses are an additional barrier for Saudi students. EMI students in tertiary education struggle with writing and cannot meet literacy requirements (Al Zumor, 2019). According to Barnard (2015) and Hyland (2013), what worsens the matter is that students in these EMIs never receive sufficient comments from their content instructors on their English writing; the scientific content is always the focus. Despite the importance of accuracy in English language composition when writing scientifically, most EMI lecturers do not emphasize it when correcting their students’ academic work; instead, they only focus on science knowledge (Hyland, 2013). This finding is echoed in Alghammas’s and Alhuwaydi’s (2020) research, which reported that lack of practice in English writing in science courses and insufficient feedback have badly influenced EMI students’ writing production. Most EMI teachers view themselves more as content educators than language specialists, thus paying less attention to the language and more attention to the subject of their students’ writing (Al-Bakri &Troudi, 2020). The literature showed that subject teachers believe students are responsible for improving their language skills.

Ortega (2015) argued that not all students can benefit from studying in an EMI. Students with limited English language competencies cannot access academic resources published in English. These resources are only accessible to students with the required linguistic competency to study in an EMI context. Therefore, the challenges mentioned earlier are significant, critical and require immediate attention from educational policymakers. The literature on EMI has yet to thoroughly explore these issues and highlight their impacts on academic standers, knowledge acquisition, and overall pedagogical effectiveness. EMI program managers must create appropriate programs to educate instructors who are expected to teach science in a language other than the student’s mother tongue to help students enhance their English language proficiency and subsequently meet the language demands of the program.

The literature review emphasized the importance of understanding EMI and its effects. However, Saudi health science education EMI research is scarce; a few studies have been found to address this field (e.g., Al-Abdaly, 2012; Al-Kahtany et al., 2016; Alkhateeb, 2021; Alshareef et al., 2018; Ebad, 2014). Except for Al-Abdaly (2012) and Alkhateeb (2021), most of this research
compared EMI to AMI without examining instructors' pedagogies or students' experiences. Empirical identification and comparison of instructors' and students' EMI experiences in the same learning setting have received little attention in Saudi Arabia. Thus, this research seeks to update Saudi higher education’s EMI debate by adding students’ and instructors' health science education experiences.

**Method**

To answer the research question of this study, which is: What perspectives do students and instructors at KSAU-HS have regarding the challenges of implementing EMI in CAMS-A, we used a qualitative case study design to explore the perceptions about EMI among students and instructors at CAMS-A and gain insights into EMI implementation challenges, concepts, and phenomena. We answered the research question by identifying how EMI is practiced in the study context.

**Participants**

**Context of the Study**

This study was conducted at the College of Applied Medical Sciences in Al-Ahsa (CAMS-A, henceforth), a college in KSAU-HSo, in 2021. The CAMS-A divides its bachelor programs into two phases. In the first phase, which is the pre-professional phase, students enroll in an intensive English language program and introductory science courses. Second, the professional stage teaches the students their core courses in their disciplines, using English for instruction and official communications (Alhawsawi & Jawhar, 2022).

Admission to KSAU-HS is based on three criteria, none including English language proficiency requirements. Since most of the teaching and learning in pre-university education was done in Arabic and the education in the university is expected to be in English, implementing the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) is necessary. The PYP helps rectify the significant incompatibilities between public education language policy and EMI programs, but in most cases, such a language intervention does not always yield the desired results for the EMI requirements (Al-Bakri, 2017; McMullen, 2014).

For this study, we gathered data through direct observations in both classroom and online settings. We closely examined relevant documents provided by the university and conducted semi-structured interviews to understand better how EMI is implemented in our context. A total of ten participants were involved in this study. Among them, two were English language instructors; one spoke English as a mother tongue, and the other was an Arabic native speaker.

Since KSAU-HS admits Saudi nationals, the students included in this study spoke Arabic as their L1. Their ages range from 19 to 22. They all studied their pre-university education in government schools that use AMI, except one. Only one student studied in Canada. Their self-assessment and grades in English courses revealed that these students possess above-average English proficiency for Saudi university college students. The students were selected to represent each of the four academic years of the college. The instructors, however, were selected to represent general science disciplines taught in the first two years of college.
Table 1. Details about instructors’ participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Duration of Teaching</th>
<th>English Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Khli</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Six years</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Zafa</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Nine years</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Muhin</td>
<td>Pharmacology</td>
<td>Ten years</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Azmi</td>
<td>Biochemistry</td>
<td>Six years</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Nassir</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Salim</td>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>Five years</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Details about students’ participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Duration of Study</th>
<th>English Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Thamir</td>
<td>Pre-professional</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Suliman</td>
<td>Pre-professional</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sajjad</td>
<td>Respiratory Therapy</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ammar</td>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Instruments

The interviews were piloted to determine whether they required modifications (Goldstein, 1995). After reviewing the pilot interviews, we clarified and reorganized the interview questions and procedures into three parts with 20 questions. Also, we observed three CAMS-A content-subject classrooms to learn about EMI implementation. One Arabic native English teacher and one subject teacher were observed in person. Due to access issues, the third observation was conducted online. We were trying to see how student mother tongue may influence their interaction when taught science by non-Arabic speakers. Document analysis was also done on the university’s EMI policy documents and website. Until our study, we could not locate detailed facts or authorized records outlining the reasoning for EMI adoption by university colleges.

To answer its questions, this study sampled six experienced teachers and students from each academic year. All study participants were from CAMS-A. This study's participants were male students and instructors from Al-Ahsa City. Two of them are at CAMS-A, where they participate in the EMI program despite Arabic being their first language. This study includes CAMS-A students and instructors who work in EMI settings. Ten people—six instructors and four students—participate. Two instructors—a British English specialist and a Pakistani biologist—are the only non-Saudis. The main reason for choosing only instructors and students is to allow people directly involved in the education process at CAMS-A to be heard.
Research Procedures

The interviews were transcribed using speech-to-text recording software. The text was not entirely accurate; therefore, it must be modified and revised. The data was organized, condensed, and summarised. "Generative codes" were used to dive information directly from the collected data (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). This study used phenomenology and symbolic interaction to interpret data. The symbolic interaction permits a socially formed rather than an individually constructed interpretation of meaning (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). To summarise and interpret the findings, the interview transcriptions and observation notes were analyzed and categorized.

Findings

This section discusses the most significant challenges facing EMI implementation in CAMS-A. Instead of categorizing these challenges based on who met them (i.e., instructors or students), we focus the discussion on the challenges themselves. This way of presentation will provide a better understanding of the challenge and how the participants felt about it. These challenges include a lack of students’ sufficient preparation in the English language, a lack of communication between English specialists and content instructors, misalignment between students and instruction expectations, and motivation issues.

The most significant challenge the data reveals was the pre-university English language preparations for the students. Although our participants’ students studied English for at least thirteen years before studying in the EMI, they still believe that their English language proficiencies are inadequately developed to the level where they can use the English language as a medium for their education. The notion is clearly articulated in the students’ following quotes:

"English education in schools was insufficient and limited to grammar instruction with no valuable results. (p.96)

We learned about English grammar many times in school, thinking it would help us learn the language, but it didn't help at all. (Student’s Quote, p.96)

----- "If the teacher speaks English to students, it's hard for me to understand most of the conversation. But if the teacher speaks Arabic when they teach, we will be able to comprehend what they're trying to teach us” (p. 105)

The quotes about the students clearly explained how they saw their school English language preparations were not particularly helpful for their university education. They saw that their preparation was solely focused on learning abstract grammatical rules and developing using vocabulary and its usage. This kind of learning, the student described as unbeneficial and useless for comprehension in science classes. Such an inadequate way of teaching the English language caused some students in the quote above to express the need to use Arabic in teaching. They felt that EMI could not be solely applied to teaching students with significant English language deficiencies. They felt that using EMI greatly challenges their comprehension of the knowledge taught in English.

Misunderstanding expectations is another challenge for implementing EMI in the current study context. Both content and English language instructors shared this misunderstanding in CAMS-A, Alahsa, as they have different expectations for each other. These misunderstandings can be observed in the quotes below of content versus English language instructors.

"I won't teach students how to improve at English, but I will focus on the scientific aspects of the language. I won't cover grammar, reading, or language skills since students should have already been prepared for the foundation in English before they come to my class. I
don't have the expertise even if I wanted to help with their language skills. My main goal is to provide them with the science part of the subject, which I am specialized in and will help them succeed in my course." Muhin, the pharmacology instructor.

Assisting students in improving their English proficiency is outside my responsibilities as such tasks require time and expertise to teach language skills. Salim, an Emergency Medical Services lecturer,

"Our students often enter our preparatory program lacking the necessary language skills to pursue tertiary education in English. Our role is to successfully enhance their proficiency in studying health science in English. However, due to time constraints and the initial language level of our students, it is not always possible to fully bridge the gap. We do our best and rely on the content teachers to further support their progress." Nassir, English language specialists.

The content instructors need to enhance the student's English skills, as the English instruction in the pre-professional program is insufficient. The content teacher must strive to develop the student’s English proficiency further. (English language specialists, 2021, p. 109)

The above quotes show apparent tension in the expectations between content and English language instructors. They both drop the responsibility of improving students’ English skills on each other for different reasons. Although the language instructors believed that it was their job to help improve students’ English language proficiency, the time allocated for such a task by the program was insufficient, especially for students who entered the program with inadequate English proficiency. The content specialists also seem to need more time or expertise to help improve students' English language proficiencies, as they need to focus more on passing the scientific knowledge and skill to the students. The expectations of each group from the other are different and not communicated. Such tension between the content and the English language instructors seems to negatively influence the successful implementation of the EMI program in the college.

The various dialects and accents of English by which our content instructors spoke English posed a further challenge to the successful implementation of the EMI in the context of this study. The content instructors came from various backgrounds, and most did not speak English as their mother tongue. Although they could be great at science, the same cannot be said about how they spoke or used English. They spoke English with different vocabulary choices and speed when they taught. Such a variation in accents seems to have presented a great challenge for our students whose English language proficiency was inadequate. This sentiment is captured in the students' following quotes.

"Some teachers who don't speak English as their first language might not be clear, and it can be hard to understand them." (p. 119).
"During our time in government schools, we had Arab English teachers. It was common for them to use Arabic while instructing us in English. We were unaccustomed to teachers speaking solely in English or with unfamiliar accents, which challenged our understanding."

These quotes highlight how accents could be challenging for successfully implementing EMI in our context. In addition to the students’ inadequate English proficiency, these Saudi students seemed unaccustomed to different ways of speaking English. The sound and speed at which the
content instructors use the language are unfamiliar to the students. Students’ lack of exposure to
different fluency and speed with which the content instructors speak English seems to have
negatively influenced the students’ study using EMI. These findings reflect a similar discussion in
the EMI literature where content instructors’ linguistic abilities, including accents, are seen to
hinder students’ comprehension in EMI settings (Saraceni, 2015; Vu & Burns, 2014). In her study,
Al-Bakri (2017) reported that many of the students at Sultan Qaboos University faced challenges
understanding content instructors who spoke with a rapid and heavy Indian accent.

The student’s participation during lectures is another area that was influenced by the
implementation of the EMI in our context. During our observations, we noticed very limited
interaction and participation in the classroom when content instructors used EMI. Most of the
interactions were limited to a yes or no type of seeking clarification. Most of the students were
following these patterns for asking for clarification, except for a few. We noticed that few students
could ask detailed questions and provide further comments. In such observation, we noticed how
the students' limited command of the English language could negatively influence their
participation in an EMI course. We also observed first-hand how EMI can negatively influence
students' comprehension. Such lack of engagement in EMI classes has been reported in many
second language literatures (e.g., Ortega, 2015; Vogel & García, 2017). It was suggested that
students often resort to their first language to understand lessons and often use fewer words of the

Rote memorization of scientific texts is another challenge resulting from implementing
EMI in our context. Instead of attempting to understand the scientific concepts or problem-solve,
many of our participants found themselves resorting to rote memorization, not for vocabulary but
for entire texts. Such memorization could be daunting, tedious, time-consuming, and
counterproductive. This notion was captured in Sajjad’s -a respiratory therapy student- following
quote when discussing challenges for implementing EMI.

In addition to the burden of remembering many new words in English courses, many of us
felt the need to memorize scientific texts also…; without truly understanding them. As a
result, we often forget what we learned shortly afterward. (p. 130)

Because of their limited English language competencies and the lengthy nature of the scientific
texts as well as the nature of the exams, our students use various coping techniques to compensate
for their lack of understanding of scientific texts and to pass exams barely. Despite the challenge
of lengthy scientific texts being discussed in the literature as being of the challenges that confront
non-native students when studying in EMI (Sengupta, 2002, Shen 2013), rote memorizing of the
entire scientific texts for passing exams in new. The problem here is not only about the
implementation of EMI but could also be about the type of exams the students were subjected to.

Preparing lectures for EMI to be delivered to students whose English language ability is
limited is a real challenge for many of the content instructors in our context. This preparation
requires time and effort to simplify the science language to a level accessible to the students.
Diluting scientific concepts and jargon was not something that many of the content instructors
were able to do perfectly or were willing to do often. The following quotes reflect this argument.

I find teaching in English to be increasingly draining for these students. Their level of
English proficiency is quite limited. As a result, I have to spend hours of preparation time
trying to find a way to use English that is both understandable in conveying the knowledge
and not compromising the scientific concepts and terms." (p.125)
Creating lesson plans in English takes longer than in Arabic. Finding the right balance between using Arabic and English in the classroom can be challenging. Due to the students' low English proficiency, much of class time is spent paraphrasing and thinking of what to say and write. This process is both time-consuming and effortful.” (p.127)

The quotes highlight the struggle that content instructors often battle within our context when using EMI. They often need to decide the right balance between diluting and simplifying science. Others, especially those who know Arabic, tended to use a mix of Arabic and English to be able to deliver their lessons. Those content instructors who were fortunate enough to know Arabic spent most of their lesson paraphrasing, hoping that they could get the science or the content to the students. This finding echoes Borg’s (2016) research, where a similar struggle was reported among Iraqi university professors who taught using EMI. They agreed that simplifying the science language is not only a daunting task but carries a risk of distorting scientific concepts and notions (Borg, 2016). However, when presenting such a challenge about EMI, one must be careful not to conflate bad teaching with EMI challenges, as suggested by Başibek et al. (2014) and Dearden and Macaro (2016).

Discussion

The abovementioned outcomes align with the existing research, such as that of Al-Bakri, (2017) and McMullen (2014), where it was suggested that typically gulf students have very limited English language skills when they finish high school. Such inefficiency in the English language competencies negatively influences the student's ability to engage in any EMI. This highlights a need to restructure the language policy and how English language education is dealt with, as the “students themselves believe that they leave high school without gaining the requisite English skills necessary to enter their academic majors” (McMullen, 2014, p. 137). This finding is also consistent with Al-Bakri (2017), as many of her Omani university students believed that pre-university education does not prepare them adequately to get enrolled in programs accommodating EMI. These recognized challenges propel many Saudi tertiary education institutions to introduce additional English language education with various lengths for students enrolling in tertiary education (Macaro, 2018).

Moreover, the findings are not a complete surprise to us as they echo findings from other research studies on EMI, such as the one done by Al-Bakri (2017), Alkhateeb (2021), and Macaro (2018). At Sultan Qaboos University, Al-Bakri (2017) reported that many content instructors who taught using EMI did not believe that enhancing students’ English language proficiencies a key role in their teaching. They believed that the role was limited to helping students understand the knowledge and skills required for scientific topics in whatever form. Thus, it can be safely suggested that the content instructors care less about students’ English language competencies. Similarly, Alkhateeb (2021) reported that university students specializing in health sciences majors sometimes tend to adopt rote memorization strategies to study English-medium materials. This kind of strategy is useless and wasteful because students do not comprehend the materials appropriately and cannot maintain their knowledge for a long time. The results of this paper are strong indicators of the necessity of (1) reevaluating the implementation of EMI in tertiary education, (2) tackling students’ and instructors’ academic and language challenges, (3) reassessing the language policy in the university education where English is the only language of teaching, and finally (4) creating a harmonious learning environment where Arabic and English are utilized as a medium of instruction.
Conclusion

This paper explored the issues faced by students and instructors in the CAMS-A program at KSAU-HS when EMI was implemented. This paper argued that Saudi students in CAMS-A, whom AMI educated in pre-university education, experienced a sudden shift toward EMI at the university level. Consequently, such an immediate shift creates challenges for students’ English language skills, the language policy implanted by the university, and the expected learning outcomes. While in CAMS-A, students experienced inadequate preparation in the English language as there was a lack of communication between English specialists and content instructors. Thus, this paper proposed strategies to improve college students’ learning in EMI. These strategies include getting content and English language instructors to work collaboratively. The concept of collaborative Teaching Approach (CTA) proposed by Alkhateeb (2021) could work nicely in addressing most of the challenges that EMI is facing in our current context. This concept promotes cooperative work and effective and interactive communication among these three stakeholders, i.e., students, English specialists, and content instructors. Through such collaboration, all stakeholders can learn about the needs of each other and work of each other and thus adjust their expectations. However, for such collaboration to work, the university administration and policies should mediate the collaboration by creating an environment conducive to such a framework. These include careful attention to the synergy between the use of functional language in academic content areas, the process of language acquisition, and the appropriate design of English language curricula. In short, Policymakers must rethink their plans for implementing EMI in professional specializations to meet global and local needs. EMI’s strict adoption unfairly, indeed, affects students with inadequate English language competency. Therefore, it is important to officially recognize the supportive role of Arabic in helping students understand course materials. Many EMI instructors already use Arabic unofficially, so officially recognizing it would help students save time and effort by not having to root memorize or translate English materials into Arabic.

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