

English the koine of academe: The Dubai student experience.

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This exploratory study of students' views on English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in tertiary settings in Dubai was conducted to add to the emerging number of EMI studies in the United Arab Emirates and in the Arabian Gulf. While other UAE studies have canvassed views from two or more stakeholders, this study focuses only on students and their perceptions of the implications of EMI. The students receive all course content in English, talk about their work in tutorials and with supervisions in English and are assessed through oral presentations and assignments in English. When they need to communicate both orally and in writing about their research at local and regional conferences, English will dominate. While Arabic is, *de jure*, the official language, English is the lingua franca in all seven of the United Arab Emirates.

From a population of 48,058 students enrolled in Higher Education in Dubai, a stratified random sample of 500 participants were selected. A self-administered questionnaire was designed, piloted and administered to these participants.

The questionnaire began by eliciting from the participants important 'demographic' information about their nationality, mother tongue, language learning experience, age, gender and subject of study and intended profession. There followed a 'semi-open' question asking participants why they chose their university and their course of studies. In the final section of the survey, participants were asked if they preferred instruction to be conducted in English, in Arabic, or in a combined English-Arabic medium. The objective was to determine whether participants thought that the English medium of instruction should be maintained, or whether reverting to students' mother tongue, or to a bilingual English-Arabic medium would be more appropriate. The question of the absence of Arabic in the higher education curriculum was addressed (particularly as mother tongue, symbol of identity and language of Islam).

Biodata

John McKenny hails from Ireland. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and Cambridge, Aston and Leeds Universities. He has been an EFL and ESP teacher and teacher trainer for many years. He has taught EFL/ESP/EAP and Applied Linguistics in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Oman, Sweden, England, Wales, Hungary and at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China. He now works in the Faculty of Education with the British University in Dubai. He co-edited *World Englishes Vol 1 Englishes of the British Isles* with Dr Tommetro Hopkins. His research interests include corpus linguistics, academic literacy, syllabus and material design, phraseology and teaching vocabulary.