

**English Medium Instruction at a National University: Students', Teachers' and  
Administrators' Views**

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in Multilingual Education

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October 2019

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**English Medium Instruction at a National University: Students', Teachers' and Administrators' Views**

has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.


Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Xabier San Isidro'.

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## **Abstract**

### **English Medium Instruction at a National University: Students', Teachers' and Administrators' Views**

The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan is implementing ambitious reforms which are aimed at the modernization and internationalization of higher education in the country. One of the main aims of these reforms is the introduction of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at higher educational institutions (HEI) which involves teaching more subjects through the medium of English. Despite the ambitious plans of the government towards internationalization, it must be noted that the introduction of the initiative does not guarantee its successful implementation. Since the vast majority of Kazakhstani people are either Kazakh-or-Russian- speaking, the English language as medium of instruction in Kazakhstani education may be challenging, as it is a foreign language for almost everyone. (Mehisto, Kambatyrova & Nurseitova, 2014). As the experiences of different stakeholders are crucial for the successful implementation of any initiative, this study explored the views and experiences of university administrators, teachers and students with EMI at a national university, where several content disciplines are delivered in English. This study looked at the benefits and challenges students experience from EMI courses, and their motivating drivers for this choice of language of instruction. Moreover, it investigated whether teachers conducting courses in EMI receive any support from the university administration, and how the selection of staff and students takes place. The study used a single exploratory case study. The findings showed that, in general terms, participants hold positive views towards EMI as it is associated with better career and study opportunities for students, funding and promotion opportunities for teachers, and a preparation of more competent graduates for administrators. Some recommendations might include introducing benchmark tests to examine students' language levels and monitoring their performances.

## Аңдатпа

### Ағылшын Тілі Ұлттық Университетте Оқыту Тілі Ретінде: Студенттердің, Оқытушылардың және Әкімшілердің Көзқарастары

Қазақстан Республикасының Үкіметі елдегі жоғары білім беру саласын жаңғыртуға және интернационалдандыруға бағытталған өршіл реформаларды жүзеге асыруда. Бұл реформалардың негізгі мақсаттарының бірі жоғары оқу орындарында (ЖОО) ағылшын тілін көбірек пәндерде оқыту тілі ретінде енгізу болып табылады. Үкіметтің интернационалдандыру жөніндегі өршіл жоспарларына қарамастан, бастаманы енгізу оның табысты іске асырылуына кепілдік бермейтінін атап өткен жөн. Қазақстандықтардың басым көпшілігі қазақ және/немесе орыс тілінде сөйлейтіндіктен, және ағылшын тілі барлық халық үшін шет тілі болып табылатындықтан, қазақстандық білім беру саласында ағылшын тілін оқыту тілі (АОТ) ретінде пайдалану қиындық тудыруы мүмкін (Мехисто, Камбатырова & Нурсейтова, 2014). Кез келген бастаманы табысты іске асыру үшін түрлі мүдделі тараптардың тәжірибесі шешуші мәнге ие болатындықтан, бұл зерттеуде бірнеше пәнді ағылшын тілінде оқытатын университет әкімшісінің, оқытушылар мен студенттердің көзқарастары мен тәжірибелері зерттелінген. Бұл зерттеу бағдарламаның студенттерге қатысты артықшылықтарын, ағылшын тілі арқылы оқу барысында тап болатын мәселелерді және осы оқу тілін таңдауға әсер еткен факторларды айқындауға бағытталған. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу университет әкімшілігі тарапынан оқытушыларға қандай да бір қолдау көрсету мәселесін және қызметкерлер мен студенттерді іріктеу әдісін талдады. Зерттеуде жекеленген кейс-стади әдісі қолданылды. Зерттеу нәтижесі қатысушылардың АОТ қолдану туралы жалпы оң пікірді ұстанатынын көрсетті, себебі студенттер АОТ-н олардың мансаптық өсуі мен оқуы үшін мүмкіндіктерінің жақсаруымен, мұғалімдер –

қаржыландыру және қызмет бойынша өсу мүмкіндігімен, ал әкімшілер-неғұрлым құзыретті түлектерді даярлаумен байланыстырады. АОТ сәтті қолдану үшін ұсыныс ретінде оқушылардың тілдік деңгейлерін анықтау тестілерін және олардың үлгерімін үнемі бақылауды енгізуді айтуға болады.



## Аннотация

### **Английский в качестве Языка Обучения в Национальном Университете: Взгляды Студентов, Преподавателей и Администраторов**

Правительство Республики Казахстан осуществляет амбициозные реформы, направленные на модернизацию и интернационализацию высшего образования в стране. Одной из основных целей этих реформ является введение английского в качестве языка обучения (АЯО) в высших учебных заведениях (ВУЗ), что предполагает преподавание большего количества предметов с помощью английского языка. Несмотря на амбициозные планы правительства по интернационализации, следует отметить, что внедрение инициативы не гарантирует ее успешной реализации. Поскольку подавляющее большинство казахстанцев говорит на казахском и/или русском, использование английского в качестве языка обучения в казахстанском образовании может вызвать сложности, так как он является иностранным языком почти для всех (Мехисто, Камбатырова & Нурсейтова, 2014). Так как опыт различных заинтересованных сторон имеет решающее значение для успешной реализации любой инициативы, в этом исследовании были изучены взгляды и опыт администраторов, преподавателей и студентов в национальном университете, где несколько профилирующих дисциплин преподаются на английском языке. Исследование направлено на рассмотрение преимуществ программы для студентов, проблем, с которыми они сталкиваются при обучении, и факторов, влияющих на выбор именно этого языка обучения. Кроме того, данное исследование изучает вопрос получения преподавателями какой-либо поддержки со стороны администрации университета, и метод отбора персонала и студентов. В исследовании использовался метод одиночного кейс-стади. Результаты показали, что в целом участники придерживаются положительного мнения об АЯО, поскольку

студенты ассоциируют АЯО с улучшением возможностей для их карьерного роста и обучения, учителя – с возможностью финансирования и продвижения по службе, а администраторы – с подготовкой более компетентных выпускников. Рекомендации могут включать в себя введение контрольных тестов для определения языковых уровней учащихся, и большего контроля их успеваемости.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **Background Information**

The trend of English-medium instruction (EMI) at different levels of education including primary, secondary and higher education is taking place almost all over the world due to different reasons (Shohamy, 2012). According to Wilkinson (2012), such rapid development of EMI “has been driven by economic, social and political forces, and sometimes even educational” (p.3). One of the reasons why universities are striving to implement EMI is their desire to be placed on top positions in international ratings and the need to “internationalize” (Wilkinson, 2012). Another reason to implement EMI is attraction of foreign students to the local universities who are eager to be educated in English and the attempt to pertain domestic students as well like the situation in Japan (Shiumauchi, 2018). Moreover, in some contexts EMI is introduced as a solution to the needs of multilingual community where obtaining degree in HEI in their first languages (L1) is not always possible for the speakers of different languages. As Coleman (2006) stated, different motives to introduce EMI in HEI “ranges from the ethical and pedagogical through the pragmatic to the commercial” (p.4). He also points out that the learning a foreign language is not the final desired outcome and motive why HEI use EMI. Summing up, it might be suggested, that the main reason many universities are in a rush to implement EMI is the striving to become a “global” university as “students and academics are more mobile than ever before, and competition for both is becoming fiercer” (Coleman, 2006, p.3).

### **Setting the Kazakhstani Context**

Kazakhstan is actively promoting the Trinity of Languages across the country, according to which Kazakh is a state language, Russian is a language of interethnic

communication, and English is a tool to successfully integrate into world educational space (Zharkynbekova, Akynova, & Aimoldina, 2013).

In Kazakhstan, EMI is being promoted by the state policies and initiatives. The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan is implementing ambitious reforms which are aimed at modernization and internationalization of higher education in the country. One of the main aims of these reforms is introduction of EMI at higher educational institutions (HEI) including teaching more subjects through the medium of English. These reforms are stated in a range of documents which determine state policy regarding higher education (British Council, 2018). For instance, according to the State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan 2011-2020 (SPED), the share of teachers lecturing in science and mathematics in English should be increased up to 15 % by 2020 compared to 0, 6 % in 2010 (MoES,2010). According to the data of the Committee of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan the number of students studying in English at universities constituted 4, 5 % in the academic year 2018-2019 (“Bolee poloviny studentov,” 2019). Regarding the number of courses delivered fully or partially in English language of instruction, it is 13, 4 % for graduate students and 10, 2 % for undergraduate students in the academic year 2018-2019 (British Council, 2018).

Kazakhstan was registered as the 47th member of the Bologna Process in 2010 (Yergebekov & Temirbekova, 2012). Apart from its 10 Action Lines, Bologna Process' members should follow fundamental principles, one of which is “promotion of international mobility of students and personnel” (p. 1475). As Yergebekov and Temirbekova (2012) suggest in their study on the implementation of the Bologna Process in Kazakhstan, students' and teachers' mobility is restricted because of the low level of English proficiency, and consequently, they are not able to participate in the exchange programs with partner universities. Despite the fact that it is early to say that “Kazakhstan's



higher education practices fully match the Bologna Process' requirements" (p. 1477), introducing more EMI programs across Kazakhstani HEI can be considered a tool to enhance the internationalization process of higher education (HE) in Kazakhstan. The internationalization of HE in Kazakhstan is promoted by state documents. For instance, according to the State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan (SPED RK) for 2011- 2020 (2010) one of the objectives is integration into European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Kazakhstan also strives to see its HEI in international rankings as one of the target indicators of SPED RK is that by 2020 at least 2 universities should be listed among the world's best universities (SPED RK, 2010).

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the ambitious plans of the government towards internationalization, it must be noted that the introduction of the initiative does not guarantee its successful implementation. Local context should be considered, and the preparedness and willingness of different stakeholders, potential benefits and challenges should be calculated. Since most Kazakhstani people are either Kazakh or Russian- speaking, the English language as medium of instruction in Kazakhstani education may be difficult, as it is a foreign language for almost everyone. (Mehisto, Kambatyrova & Nurseitova, 2014).

### **Research Purpose**

As the experiences of different stakeholders are crucial for the successful implementation of any initiative, this paper aims to explore the experiences of university administrators, teachers and students related to EMI at a national university, where several content disciplines are delivered in English. This paper looks at the benefits and challenges students gain from the EMI courses, their motivating drivers for such a choice of the language of instruction. Moreover, it aims to explore whether teachers conducting courses

with EMI get any support from the university administrations, how the selection of staff and students take place. The reason why this paper aims at exploring administrators' perspectives is to identify whether it is top-down policy and what purposes the administration of the university is trying to achieve by implementing this policy. Therefore, this paper aims to find the answers for the following questions: Research questions:

- 1) What are the university administrators' views on EMI?
- 2) What are the university teachers' views on EMI?
- 3) What are the university students' views on EMI?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study's findings can be significant for the policy makers and administrators who oversee development of trilingual educational policy as the study gives different stakeholders' valuable insights into their experiences and possible challenges of this practice. Additionally, this study may be beneficial for the stakeholders themselves as participating as interviewees gives them an opportunity to reflect on their weaknesses and predict possible challenges. Moreover, the findings of this paper might be of interest to future teachers or administrators who will somehow be related to the implementation of EMI in HE. This paper might also be useful to the universities who have just started introducing this initiative and want to draw on previous experience.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### Medium of Instruction

Ahmed, Zarif, & Tehseen (2013) gave the following definition for the medium of instruction: “the language that is used inside the classroom for instruction by the teacher” (p. 609). Authors further explain that in many cases state or official languages do not necessarily serve the role of mediums of instruction.

### English Medium Instruction

It is necessary to identify the right label for the EMI for further discussion as according to experts, this term is still poorly defined or misunderstood in different contexts (Airey, 2016). Different studies call this practice differently. In their study Dearden and Macaro (2016) choose the following definition of EMI: “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” derived from Dearden’s earlier study in 2015. Dearden (2015) reports that this definition is important as “it provides a conceptual separation between EMI and content and language integrated learning (CLIL)” (p. 4). The author also points out that it should be noted that “whereas CLIL does not mention which second, additional or foreign language (L2) academic subjects are to be studied in, EMI makes it quite clear that the language of education is English” (p. 4). Dearden and Macaro (2016) also point out that EMI is a term used worldwide and basically in higher education (HE), whereas CLIL is a term which is originally used for the European context and is applicable to the secondary school context. Moreover, since the most recognizable characteristics of the CLIL approach as suggested by Schmidt-Unterberger (2018) in her work *The English-Medium Paradigm: a Conceptualization of English-Medium Teaching in Higher Education* is its “dual focus”

both on language acquisition and content knowledge, this becomes its major difference from EMI as the principal aim of EMI is “the acquisition of subject knowledge” (Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018, p. 529). Therefore, it can be assumed that neither the label “CLIL” nor “Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education” (ICLHE) are applicable to the context of higher education. So, summing up it is more appropriate to use the term EMI (Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018).

### **Rationale for Implementing EMI**

There appear to be “various and context-dependent” reasons for a massive increase of EMI throughout the world (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018, p. 37). One of the main reasons why higher educational institutions are introducing EMI programs is their intention to “internationalize” (Dearden, & Macaro, 2016; Airey et al., 2017). As reported in the work of Dearden (2015) *English as a Medium of Instruction- a Growing Global Phenomenon* where respondents from 55 countries worldwide were involved, for many countries “internationalizing the higher education system is a high priority and languages are seen as key” (p. 15). Similarly, according to the Kazakhstani respondent, Kazakhstan is using EMI in HE in an attempt of introducing a pedagogy which will be able to meet world standards of education.

Another reason for a high number of HEI striving to implement EMI is attracting the international student body (Airey, 2007; Dimova & Kling, 2018; Shohamy, 2012; Shimauchi, 2018; Wilkinson, 2012;). Shimauchi in his work *English-Medium Instruction in the Internationalization of Higher Education in Japan: Rationales and Issues* reports that in Japan the driving factors for the “English-ization” of its tertiary education are both internal and external. Shimauchi further explains that the external factor is the growing mobility of international students, and Japan is well-known to receive high numbers of

foreign students, particularly from Asia. This trend has been greatly supported by the Japanese government, one of whose measures was to introduce more English-taught courses. The internal factor which influences the number of EMI courses is the desire to prepare a global workforce, for which young Japanese need to improve their English communication skills, and the attempts of the government to keep up with the world university rankings and upgrade their HEI to world status (Shimauchi, 2018). The percentage of international students in Denmark has substantially grown in the last 20 years as well, since the introduction of EMI (Airey et al., 2017).

Wilkinson (2012) suggests that the trend of growing EMI across the world has been accelerated by ranking organizations who establish assessment criteria according to which HEI are evaluated. As a rule, the top positions of these rankings are taken by universities from The United States and Britain. Such rankings develop competitiveness among HEI, and, therefore, senior administrators are striving to see their institutions taking high place in them. Since American and British universities are offering courses in English, introducing an EMI program might seem logical for the administrators to be successful in these ratings.

### **Benefits of EMI**

Apparently, the most popular benefit researchers have identified is the possible improvement of language through EMI. However, since in EMI language mastering is not considered to be an initial goal as in CLIL, it might be argued whether this expected benefit is in fact achievable. Wilkinson (2012) in his work *English-Medium Instruction at a Dutch University: Challenges and Pitfalls* states that students enrolled in EMI programs at Maastricht University expect to acquire both content and language knowledge. He further elaborates that the principal goal of the subject teachers is to motivate students to

learn the subject matter, and they rarely see themselves in developing students' language knowledge. At Maastricht University, to develop students' language competence the collaboration between subject and language teachers was practiced. The author points out that the structure of this collaboration can vary from "highly integrated team-teaching" to "parallel or adjunct teaching" (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 16). Contrary to Wilkinson's opinion, Airey (2012) views "all disciplinary learning as a form of language learning" (p. 66) since "their job is to introduce students to the discourse of their chosen discipline" (as cited in Airey, Lauridsen, Räsänen, Salö, & Schwach, 2017, p. 572).

According to the study conducted by Özer & Bayram (2019) in one of the HEI of Turkey, it was found that students who were already enrolled in English-taught programs answered that EMI gave them an opportunity to easily access primary data in the field and updated information, whereas in Turkish language the up-to-date literature is considerably less, or it is a translation of English originals. Moreover, students in the same study emphasize the benefit of EMI when "entering the global job market" and that it raises their competitiveness (p. 64). Chinese students who participated in Yeung & Lu's (2018) study also associate EMI with their opportunities for future studies and careers. Besides that, according to Karakas, many students thought of their universities as "more prestigious" than the Turkish-medium ones (p. 4).

In a Chinese study conducted by Muthanna & Miao (2015) researchers revealed that students' positive attitude towards EMI is partly explained by their understanding that English is "a key language in scientific communication" and that it is very important for their future (p.63). The participants of this study also focused on the necessity of "academic network" and that they need English in case they want to become international researchers or if they are planning to be published in high-impact journals (p. 63). Other participants focused on the fact that EMI gives them an opportunity to enroll in English-

taught postgraduate programs in future, and that they prefer English more than their native language in the academic context as it gives access to a large number of references.

Another unusual finding of this study is that its respondents associated the knowledge of English with leadership, and that while searching for a leadership position in future, the mastery of English will give them an advantage.

### **Challenges of EMI**

Despite all the above-mentioned benefits of the EMI programs, there are many questions in EMI which are to be addressed. Coleman (2006) elaborates that nowadays EMI is being widely used despite some problems such as not enough language skills, negative attitudes due to the perceived threat to the cultural identity and the native language, resistance of personnel to use English as a medium of instruction, the absence or shortage of Anglophone cadres in the international market, the communication issues between hired native speakers to non-native speaking students, low level of host language proficiency among international students, low motivation of local students, shortage of critical mass of international students, availability of teaching materials, equity of assessment for native and non-native English speakers.

The most expressed concern in related literature is vague understanding of the required level of English language of both teachers and students. Dearden and Macaro (2016) in their work *Higher Education Teachers' Attitudes Towards English Medium Instruction: A three-Country Comparison* point out that it is still necessary to answer to the question of what level of English proficiency can be considered adequate to enter and to exit the programs with EMI (Dearden, & Macaro, 2016). In case of recruiting students with low level of language preparation, there is a risk that inadequate knowledge of English among students may lead to the poor acquisition of content knowledge, or it might

negatively affect the test results (Shohamy, 2012). Macaro, Curle, Pun, An and Dearden (2018) in their work *A Systematic Review of English Medium Instruction in Higher Education* raise the question of the level of language proficiency of both lecturers and students. According to the authors, almost no research has been done to ask if the teachers and students are for or against EMI in their countries. In some contexts EMI implementation may be particularly challenging for teachers as “in many countries the introduction of EMI is not supported by pre-service teacher training or teacher professional development” and that not all teachers are “equipped linguistically to be able to effectively deliver subject content to students” (Macaro, Hultgren, Kirkpatrick, & Lasagabaster, 2019, p. 232).

Another area where concerns may arise is the context of international students in English-speaking countries, and the question whether the General English is enough in order to be educated in English or potential students do need to accomplish English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Special Purposes (ESP). The authors report that most lecturers are worried about their students’ ability to cope with the requirements and to prosper in their studies when being instructed in English (Macaro, et al., 2018).

Another concern of the researchers in the field is that EMI “would entail a vast investment in terms of resources and would probably exceed most universities’ budgets” and that it is still necessary to research if the such investments are really worth it as the main purpose of the higher education is to equip students with the expertise in their professional fields. (Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018, p. 535). Therefore, Schmidt-Unterberger suggests that for a successful implementation of EMI it is required to combine it with courses of ESP and EAP. In her work *A Critical Perspective on the use of English as a Medium of Instruction at Universities* Shohamy (2012) also discusses the issue of language versus content dilemma in EMI, and suggests that in an ideal situation the content logically



should be taught in a language where the proficiency of students is highest. Shohamy also points out that it may be particularly related to immigrant students who usually face difficulties of acquiring knowledge in second or even third languages. The author offers that there should be done more extensive research in order to address this issue (Shohamy, 2012). In Kazakhstani context, such concerns may be related to repatriate students from China, Mongolia or other countries.

As the study of Hu et al. (2014) as cited in Hu (2019) on EMI in China suggest, there were several pitfalls of the EMI, namely inadequate communicative command of English of professors, students' low proficiency of language which negatively influence the quality of EMI. And it is not only professors who think that their level of communicative command is inadequate, but also is the opinion of their students and colleagues. It is said that, despite having taken graduate training and completed EMI coursework in foreign universities, Chinese lecturers might be able to conduct lessons by strictly following the textbook, but they are likely to fail in using authentic oral English to deliver the content. According to Hu (2019), this leads to the professors' inability to teach interactively and spontaneously, and their manner of teaching is less flexible than of their colleagues who use Chinese as a medium of instruction. The problem with the proficiency in English relates to the Chinese students involved in EMI as well. As reported in this study, the EMI students faced difficulties in understanding the instructional content through English. As a result, it was found that professors and students employed different coping language practices such as

simplifying the curricular content, appropriating the language of the English textbooks, staying close to the copious teaching scripts prepared, minimizing interaction and improvisation, doing what is necessary to avoid spontaneous discussion, switching from English to Chinese when explaining difficult materials,

repeating the same explanations when students failed to understand, translating instructional content from English into Chinese, depending on Chinese textbooks to compensate for their lack of understanding in EMI classes, and preparing for subject content tests by writing down and memorizing answers from Chinese and English textbooks (Hu, 2019, p.4).

Professors and students involved in this study admitted that despite the efficiency of these language practices, they also had a negative effect on the learning process and acquiring content.

Hu (2019) sums up that without adequate ability to use the medium of instruction effectively, professors are not able to involve students in “complex cognitive processes, scaffold their effort to master disciplinary knowledge or provide rich language input to develop advanced English proficiency in the students”, whereas students in their turn are likely to fail to understand deeply, to think critically and to construct knowledge. As a result, both content and language learning will be negatively affected (Hu, 2019, p.8).

### **Chapter Summary**

The present chapter reviewed the literature and gave the definition of the key terms, identified rationales for implementing EMI, explored benefits and challenges of the EMI implementation in higher education in different contexts.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

This chapter presents the justification for the methodology used in this study. Since the purpose of this study is to present different stakeholders' views on EMI at HEI in Kazakhstan, identify the potential benefits and possible challenges of the EMI introduction, three research questions were posed. First, the views of the administrators, the rationale behind the implementation, the challenges associated with the EMI introduction were investigated. Second, the study looked at the opinions of faculty members regarding EMI, the advantages of the program for them, the motivation to teach through the medium of English, and what difficulties they are facing. Third, the students involved in the EMI program were asked about their opinions on the program, how and why they enrolled in this program, what benefits they would gain upon its graduation, and which challenges they were already experiencing.

This chapter first justifies why a certain research design was chosen to conduct this study. Next, it describes data collection instruments that were used, and gives details about data collection procedure. Furthermore, this chapter includes discussion of the data analysis approach that was used, and identifies the limitations, ethical considerations, and conclusion.

#### **Research Design**

As this study aims at exploring views, qualitative research design is chosen because it allows researchers to “pose general, broad questions to participants and allow them to share their views relatively unconstrained by researchers' perspective” and enables to gain in-depth insights. Moreover, an open-ended response to a question allows the participant to give different possible responses (Creswell, 2014). Since the aim of this paper is to explore the topic from the participants' perspectives the choice of qualitative research design is

justified (Creswell, 2014). The type of qualitative research design used in this project is exploratory single case study as it enables “investigate a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2009). Here the phenomenon is implementing EMI at higher education institutions, and the case of national university where EMI is introduced has been explored. According to Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2001), one of the strengths of the case study method is that when there is a restricted focus, it is easier to construct a detailed understanding of what to be studied. Since this paper aims at exploring views of the participants in this very context, the use of exploratory single case study is well justified.

### **Research Site**

According to the National Report on the condition and development of the education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the number of Kazakhstani HEI which offer EMI is growing annually. For example, in 2016 their number was 42, and the total number of students being educated in English is 17000, and in comparison, with the indicators of 2009, this number is 1, 7 times more (National Report, 2016).

For this study, a national university located in Almaty was chosen because it is one of the higher education institutions in Kazakhstan where EMI is currently being implemented. The students enrolled in this program were taking all classes in their third and fourth year in English only. Moreover, this university is known to have partner relationships with foreign universities which offer academic mobility programs. This may mean that this university students are prepared to be educated through the medium of English abroad that may be a result of the EMI program introduced in the university. For the purpose of gaining deep understanding of the context and seeing the bigger picture, it

was decided that the administrator, teachers, and students should have been from one school.

### **Research Sample**

Purposeful convenience sampling was used in this study as the participants had to meet certain criteria. The central criterion was having experience in EMI as an administrator, teacher, or a student. Regarding students, the requirement was for them to have completed at least one semester studying specialty subjects in English, and they also should have had the experience of being taught either in Kazakh or in Russian so that they could make effective comparisons between different mediums and draw on their previous experience. The faculty members recruited for this study had to be the ones who were already engaged in the process of EMI implementation, and who had at least one semester of experience in teaching content subjects through English. The researcher recruited the administrator who oversaw and monitored the implementation of this initiative, and who was well-informed of the whole process. The respondents were three fourth year students, two teachers who were involved in EMI teaching and 1 Head of the department. After the permission from the Ethics Committee to conduct the study was acquired, the gatekeeper at the research site shared the contacts of the Department's Head. After appointing a meeting by telephone, the Head of the Department was approached at his office and asked to participate in the study as a respondent, and to recruit the department's teachers and students as well. After the head of the department agreed to participate in the study, and gave the list of the teachers and students involved in the EMI teaching to the researcher, the potential participants were contacted by telephone and were asked if they agreed to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the potential participants. They were provided with information about the researcher as a MA student at Nazarbayev University, the reason for contacting (offer to participate in the study), the

purpose of the study and a consent form outlining major features of the study. After some of them agreed to take part, the time and the location were discussed and arranged according to the availability of the interviewees.

### **Instruments**

The main tool for the study was semi-structured face-to face individual interviews which were conducted with each participant separately. The interviews consisted of approximately 15 questions each. The administrator, faculty members and students were asked to answer 3 sets of different questions developed beforehand according to their roles and positions. The questions were general and broad enough so that the problem from the participants' view could be explored. The locations for interviews were chosen by the participants for their convenience and comfort and were agreed upon beforehand. The interviews were audio-recorded after the permissions from the participants for audio-recording were taken by the consent forms. The interviews lasted from 15 minutes to 45 minutes each.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection started on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December and lasted for 10 days until the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. Overall, six interviews were conducted during that period. One administrator, two faculty members and three students were interviewed. On the day of the interview, each participant was given a consent form to sign, where they could read the purpose and the procedures of the study once again. Also, participants were informed on the duration of the interview, their rights to withdraw from the participation at any moment and the interviewer verbally explained all the details of the study and showed the willingness to answer any questions related to the study and its future use. The participants

were given a choice to be interviewed in Russian, Kazakh, or English. Finally, all of them chose English over other languages, and were interviewed in English.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

To analyze elicited data, the interviews were firstly manually transcribed in order to “convert these words to a computer document for analysis” (Creswell, 2012, p.239). After transcription was completed, and the texts were read for several times, in order to “select specific data to use and disregard other data that do not specifically provide evidence” the interviews were manually coded (Creswell, 2012, p.240). The researcher preferred the hand analysis of qualitative data as the database was small, and to “be close to the data and have a hands-on feel for it” (Creswell, 2012, p.240). The codes were initially divided in themes, while major themes were further categorized according to the research questions. In the findings chapter, these categories were introduced in the sequence of the research questions and in the form of codes and quotes of the respondents.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants were informed that no personal information would be recorded and revealed during or after the interview. Each participant was assigned a numeric code (e.g. Student 1, Teacher 1) instead of names or pseudonyms. The confidentiality of the information obtained during the study was guaranteed by the password security of the computer, telephone used during the data collection, and cloud storages where the data was stored. The consent forms in paper were stored in locked drawers. The confidential data (audio recordings) was not shared with any third persons. Since there are few national universities in the country, and particularly in Almaty, the research site was described without any details.

There were minimal risks associated with this study as, firstly, the interviews were conducted on an individual basis, and the participants did not know about other interviewees. And, secondly, since the interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, the participants did not feel any discomfort while sharing their experiences related to EMI. The interview questions were considered not to cause any psychological harm as they were about their everyday experience related to their work and studies. The employment status of teachers and an administrator and the student status of participants is not affected by the study as their identities remained confidential, and the research site was described without any details.

### **Chapter Summary**

To sum up, in this chapter the adopted research design was explained and justified. The research site and sample, data collection and data analysis approach were described in detail in this chapter. In the following section the findings of the study will be presented.



## Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of data collected through six semi-structured interviews that were based on the above-mentioned research questions. As a result of data analysis, three major categories were identified: the benefits of the EMI program, its peculiarities and differences from the non-English medium program, and the challenges. These three categories are presented from the perspective of different stakeholders: an administrator, teachers and students. First, this chapter answers the first research question by revealing the views of the administrator on the EMI by revealing the rationale for implementing EMI, the way this program is designed and the challenges in the introduction. Then, the chapter proceeds to the second research question where it sheds light on the views of teachers involved in the EMI program and their motivation to teach, associated benefits and professional challenges. Finally, the chapter presents findings on the views of students in terms of the motivation behind their choice to enroll in the program and advantages of the program.

### The Perspective of an Administrator

**Novelty of the program.** While being interviewed, the head of the department emphasized the program's novelty since it had been only several years that they started implementing it.

#### Extract 1

I think that English as a primary instruction was more than 2 years, but since only the last year- from 2018 we started implementing it in our department, so, starting from the third year students take classes fully in English, and their main classes which are taught (major disciplines) for the specialties are being taught through EMI more than a year. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

**Rationale for implementing EMI.** When asked about the motivation to implement EMI at their department, the administrator emphasizes the requirements of their graduates' potential employees. Consequently, the first reason seems to start implementing the EMI program seems to be graduates' better preparedness to their future work:

Extract 2

First of all, since we are preparing the graduates for a certain industry, and the industry's language is English, so our graduates will be working worldwide, in different locations, and English will be the main language of communication, so this is the main reason. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

Another reason seems to be the administrators' understanding of the importance and convenience of the English language in education:

Extract 3

Besides that, the information in English is abundant, I would say, even I mean the literature in Russian is also abundant, but they still have a lack of new technologies, solutions, innovations, and advancements. This is a second reason that most of the published literature, scientific journals are all in English. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

Moreover, the administrator also admits that the implementation of the EMI program in the department has been driven not only by internal factors such as willingness to better prepare the graduates or direct access to world scientific literature, but also by external factors such as the government and the industry's requirements.

Extract 4

Although there is no state regulation saying that we must offer the courses only in English, as for the last five years, the Government has been pushing trilingual education, so that is also one of the reasons. Another reason why we started this program is that we are collaborating with big companies in the industry. They initiated this pilot project to develop professional education in Kazakhstan. For them Kazakh and Russian language programs are not enough, they do not need it. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

### **Challenges associated with the EMI program.**

*Students' low content knowledge.* When discussing the difficulties faced by the department during the implementation of EMI, the head of the department named several issues including students' low preparation in specialty subjects, due to which faculty had to put extra pressure:

#### Extract 5

The problem is that, first, students come to the third year not much ready from the content's side. And then when we put additional pressure to study content knowledge in English, they are not ready technically. And we are using additional workload to level up their content knowledge, and then also learn English. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

*Inconsistency of English classes with EMI requirements.* This difficulty seems to double due to the students' low English language proficiency. The head of the department particularly emphasizes the role of the English classes taught at the university during the first two years of their study. There seems to be an inconsistency between the language instructed by the English department and the one necessary for succeeding while being educated through the medium of English.

#### Extract 6

But, when we talk about English as a medium of instruction, there is also a lack of English skills, I would say. Because, to be honest, I mean, I do not see much connection between the English lessons and their professional career. In the past, we had, like 2-3 years ago, this English class, which was trying to develop their professional terminology, and so on. And then these classes were eliminated, and they were given to the English Department. And they are teaching basic English skills, not kind of adapted, not suitable for their profession, let's say. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

Moreover, the administrator points out that difficulties while taking English classes during the first two years of the study may affect the students' decision to enroll into the EMI program in their third year of study.

#### Extract 7

I mean that percentagewise there are fewer students involved in the English program in comparison with the last year. I do not know why it is happening, but I think it is because there are maybe too high expectations from the English Department, that they (students) lose their motivation. I am not saying that we should give them the easiest tasks, I think that there should be some balance that English language classes should be motivational so that they want to learn more, and when they come to us, they are more motivated. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

Nevertheless, the administrator seems to understand that some students' low level of English proficiency may have resulted from their poor preparation at the secondary education stage.

#### Extract 8

I mean I understand the English Department; they also have some struggles with students as they did not study much at school. They try to equip them, but at the same

time they give them so much hard time during classes, so that when they come to us, they lose their motivation to study in English, because when I was trying to invite students to English program this September, only 22, I mean, even out of these 22, 4-5 students they were just kind of skeptic to study in English. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

***Students' behavioral habits.*** Besides gaps in content and language knowledge, the administrator particularly emphasizes the students' behavioral habits in learning. There seems to be a tendency among students to act from a lower position which may be the result of fear-based education, where the teachers welcome students who do not counteract or express contrary opinions.

Extract 9

Students cannot freely express their opinion. Sometimes they do not even have opinions. Maybe we need to teach them how to critically analyze information so that they can provide their opinions, they can argue. Sometimes I guess the challenge is teachers, they do not encourage these talks in classes, as in the old Soviet Union taught all of them, the teacher is a main guy, you cannot argue with them. It is all complex. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

***Absence of clear regulations.*** One of the major challenges named by the head of the department happens to be the absence of clear regulations from the university administration's side.

Extract 10

I think that there must be a clear policy from the university side. The problem is that we are positioning ourselves like a university, which is moving to trilingual education, but at the same time the policy is that there is no clear policy. There are no clear administrative procedures-policies. There should be strict regulations you

must follow, otherwise people will not learn. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

According to the administrator, the absence of financial motivation or career promotion for teachers involved in the EMI may also serve as one of the challenges associated with the EMI as the number of teachers willing to instruct in English is very low.

Extract 11

Regarding teachers who are teaching in English, they are not having any advantage, and there is no financial motivation for them. Because, for example, when you mention teachers, the university encourages and pushes them to have IELTS 6.0. At the end of the year during interviews when they have their contract prolongation, and teachers are asked questions in English, since the faculty members do not see advantage, they come with zero preparation. If there is no encouragement, why should they do it. If we want to encourage faculty to learn English, so that they will teach in English, there should be a clear regulation that the primary language of instruction must be English, because for us it is a must. (Head of the Department, December 10, 2019)

### **Teachers' Views**

**Personal interest.** When the teacher participants were asked about their motivation to teach through EMI, both of them stated personal interest in practicing English and establishing network with practitioners and other academics:

Extract 12

Well, first of all, I am practicing really good level of English, not general, but academic, and also I have the opportunity to cooperate with some professors from other institutions, to be closer to the industry, even right now we have the senior lecturer from another university, that is really frequently, we have guest lectures from

foreign companies, who share their experience, and they provide some workshops, seminars to increase our knowledge. That is a big advantage. (Teacher 1, December 12, 2019)

Another teacher emphasizes the opportunity to grow professionally through teaching in English and a direct access to the vast amount of scientific literature:

Extract 13

For me why I agreed for this class- first of all, it is interesting for me, as you know all the modern material about, I can take from English material. Books, articles, all the articles, what we can find in WebScience, if it is really with a solid theoretical background, they are all in English. That is why in order to improve my own skills, my own language, and to improve my own knowledge in science, I decided to study by myself and to teach these subjects to students. (Teacher 2, December 11, 2019)

**The differences of the EMI program from non-English medium programs from teachers' perspective.**

*Cooperation with foreign partner university.* One of the biggest themes that has emerged during data analysis of the interviews with teachers is the amount of support the department and faculty get from the cooperation with their partner university located in the USA.

Extract 14

From the university side we have a big support because we cooperate with our foreign partner university, with other big universities with the expertise in the related industry, and they kindly provided us with the materials such as lectures and assignments. (Teacher 1, December 12, 2019)

It is also important to emphasize that the teacher respondents find the borrowed materials to be of high quality:

## Extract 15

I use materials given by our partner university, it is well-designed, it has the structure, the logic, all the modules are interconnected, when we take the next module, it does not mean we forget the first module, it is always linked. (Teacher 2, December 11, 2019)

Additionally, it appeared to be not a one-time case, but rather a long-term collaboration process during which foreign partner university consulted teachers online and helped them adapt the course according to their needs.

## Extract 16

They kindly provided some lectures, and for homework we also cooperated through skype, and asked questions how to adapt, how to adjust the stuff because some of the questions were a bit challenging for them, and we bit changed them. (Teacher 1, December 12, 2019)

Moreover, the teachers appear to get consultations not only on the subject matters but also on the methods of teaching during their guest lecturers visits.

***Cooperation with industry.*** Another theme which was frequently occurring during the interviews is the tight cooperation of the department with the industry. It appeared that large companies with the expertise in the specialty field of the department influence its educational process by initiating internships, funding travel expenses of students, and even sponsoring faculty's graduate and postgraduate studies. According to the teacher respondents, one of the reasons why they find the EMI program to be of high efficacy for students is partly due to the industry's support.

## Extract 17

We have an opportunity to invite guest lecturers from other companies to increase the knowledge of our students, and it also helps us to be closer to the industry. It is



effective because we have relations with manufacturers and they kindly provide us with software. Basically, they cost really a lot, but due to the institution account provided by them, we have the opportunity to use this stuff. (Teacher 1, December 12, 2019)

Therefore, it might be understood that by partially covering financial needs of the department, companies greatly support and help to raise future professionals in the field as indicated in the response of one teacher participant: “because these students are their future workers” (Teacher 1, December 12, 2019).

It might be suggested that such a high interest in research among students was provoked partly due to the active participation of the industry. Furthermore, teachers as well as students confirmed the positive influence of the guest lectures held by companies on the learning process. According to Teacher 1, guest lectures help students “to be closer to the industry” and even at the period of data collection there was a guest lecture happening at the department where the guests from the companies were to “share their experience, provide workshops, seminars to increase our knowledge” (Teacher 1, December 12, 2019).

It must be mentioned that the companies support the department of this university not only in terms of their contribution to the learning process of students, but they also sponsor teachers’ foreign studies:

#### Extract 18

They try to improve our skills, for example we have two teachers in our department, who are now studying abroad, one of them is on internship during her doctoral studies, and the second teacher also taught in English, she is doing her PhD, in February our third teacher is going to do his doctoral study. I think this is a good reward for us, so we have an opportunity to go abroad, to do some research at this

university, and the financial part is on the companies. (Teacher 2, December 11, 2019)

It appeared to be the biggest personal benefit for one of the teachers involved in the EMI program as she commented: “I can do some research abroad, using this funding. At some top-ranking university” (Teacher 2, December 11, 2019).

**Challenges in teaching through EMI.** According to teachers, in the initial stages students had difficulties with presenting their ideas in English and in most cases they turned to their mother tongues:

Extract 19

Firstly, when students had an oral presentation, they started to switch to Russian, and it was very hard for them to speak, at first they did not understand, they wanted me to repeat in Russian, so firstly it was some mix of Russian and English. (Teacher 2, December 11, 2019)

However, teachers also inform that their level of language tends to improve in the course of time as “now they try to use only English” (Teacher 2, December 11, 2019).

### **Students' Views**

#### **The benefits of the EMI program for students.**

*Career opportunities.* The first theme that emerged from student participants' answers regarding their motivating drivers to enroll in EMI programs is potential better opportunities in the future in terms of employment, internships, further studies and networking. The respondents were asked about their motivations to study through EMI.

Extract 20

Hm, my first motivation, I think, is to get a good job with a good salary, a prestigious job, as there mainly working expats, the people who are from the USA, from Europe, and you should know English firstly, it is a first requirement if you want to work in

these big companies...Opportunity to get a job offer in these companies. Because why are we studying here? We are studying here to get a job offer. Yes, in the future, it is a main objective for us as senior students. So, I think I will be more competitive.

(Student 1, December 6, 2019)

Extract 21

For me it is important to study particularly in English as in future I want to have a well-paid job with the best conditions for the employees, and these companies are international ones, where the language of communication is English. (Student 3, December 10,2019)

Extract 22

For a student studying in English is very beneficial as we know Russian and Kazakh fluently, and studying in English we can improve the knowledge of the language, practise it as all the home works, tests are in English. For the future it is also an advantage as nowadays companies require their potential employees to have a good level of (English) language. (Student 3, December 10,2019)

According to the participants, the chances to be hired by prestigious big international companies in the field increase among the EMI program graduates as they expect the higher level of English competency to be the one of the outcomes of the program. All participants seem to greatly associate their decision of having enrolled in this program with this motive.

***Internship opportunities.*** Besides expecting future successful employment as a result of mastering English language level, students enrolled in the EMI program seem to already have access to better opportunities in terms of internship programs. The companies suggesting internship programs, one of the main requirements of which is a good level of

professional English, are reported to recruit students particularly from the EMI groups since the latter ones are expected to have a good command of English.

Extract 23

...it is their (companies) requirement (having a good command of English), because, for example, one of my mentors when I had an internship at the company was an expatriate, he is from the United Arab Emirates, and of course, he doesn't know Russian or Kazakh languages, and you should contact him in English.

I think that it (the EMI program) is really effective because...hmm...when I have been at the company, it was an industrial internship, it was helpful for me, because I knew English firstly, I knew technical English, it was really helpful. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

It might be suggested that the EMI group has a tendency to be more promising for students in terms of opportunities to participate in those internships and might have served as a reason for students to apply for the program.

Moreover, the companies are said to financially support the department by covering students' expenses related to the internships as one of the respondents elaborate:

Extract 24

Other benefits are...what else, ah, also actually these companies when we participated in industrial internships, they covered all expenses related to the internships: plane tickets to another city in Kazakhstan and back, accommodation, meals, transport, all was covered by these companies. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

***Further academic aspirations.*** Another benefit associated with the EMI program among students seems to be the opportunity to apply to the global top-ranking universities where the courses are taught in English.

Extract 25

The second motivation factor is to get a master's degree abroad, like in the USA, or in Europe, I think you should know the basics in your field, and you should have a good English level in order to get the offer from Texas University, maybe Stanford.

(Student 1, December 6, 2019)

From the extracts above it may be understood that the respondents correlate the good level of language knowledge acquired during the EMI program with their future potentially higher chances to be employed by local and global companies together with current exclusive internship opportunities.

***Mastering professional vocabulary and networking opportunities.*** It is important to point out that the students considered the knowledge of the professional vocabulary and industry-related terms and networking opportunities to be one of the biggest advantages associated with the program as stated by students:

Extract 26

The main benefit of studying through English is the knowledge of industry-related terms in English and widening of the professional vocabulary. Also, it is a unique opportunity for us to enter a dialogue with foreign experts and ask them all questions that interest us. (Student 3, December 10, 2019)

Extract 27

Motivation? Firstly, I want to improve my English and secondly, in this industry English is very important, not General English, but technical English, because these companies consist of foreign employees, they do not consider our Kazakh students, how can I say. We need to be competitive in this industry, we need to know English, we need to know technical English. It is the main motivation. (Student 2, December 6, 2019)

Extract 28

The program changed my way of thinking, then it upgraded my level of English, it increased of course, it increased my technical knowledge, this program actually helped me to establish connections with companies. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

As may be understood from the extracts above, the student participants perceive the program as a platform where they can communicate with hands-on professionals during different guest lectures held by companies and upgrade their skills.

**The differences of the EMI program from non-English medium programs from students' perspective.**

*Modern teaching practices.* Since all students of the EMI program were initially enrolled in Kazakh/Russian medium groups for the first two years of their study, reflecting on their previous experiences, respondents find the EMI program more promising in comparison with the non-English medium programs. First, they emphasize the drastic difference in the methods of teaching employed in both programs.

Extract 29

I think that the quality of teaching is excellent. Our teachers can freely deliver the information in an accessible way using presentations, tests, games, and all of it is in English. First two years I have been studying through Russian, and if you compare the groups, there are great differences. In English group teachers are relatively young and they do not force students to write the whole lectures upon their dictation, they use applications which help acquire the material faster and in a more interesting way. (Student 3, December 10,2019)

It seems that outdated methods were widely used during their non-English medium period of study and currently students tend to find teaching methods employed in the EMI program more practically convenient, useful and time-saving.

Furthermore, all student participants emphasized the convenience of the usage of modern technologies which facilitate the learning process by teachers in the EMI program:

Extract 30

...we have the Google Classroom, you just go to Google Classroom and select the course, and you can see all lectures, all electronic versions of this book and also you can see the home task of this course. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

Moreover, besides modern teaching practices which involve using up-to-date technologies in the EMI program, students consider foreign graduate degrees of their teachers to be one of the advantages of the program. All student respondents emphasized that fact in their responses when asked about the effectiveness and advantages of the program.

Extract 31

As a student who is enrolled in the EMI program, I think that it is a good investment into my future. It is really amazing that our university can provide us with such an opportunity. I think that studying through English is effective as our faculty did their Master's degrees abroad and they operate fluently in English. (Student 3, December 10, 2019)

Furthermore, Student 1 comments on the department staff's background:

Extract 32

Our teachers have international experience of studying abroad, the Head of the Department has got a master's degree from the university which is in the top 5 schools in the field around the whole world. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

Extract 33

Other benefits are certainly the knowledge, next is connection with teachers who have experience (of being educated) in the university of Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt

University, Colorado School of Mines, Alberta University in Canada, etc. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

It can be understood that students evaluate the knowledge delivered by their teachers to be credible since their teachers themselves are familiar with what is being taught internationally.

**Curriculum.** Another reason why student respondents claim the EMI program to be more promising for students in comparison with non-English medium programs is its well-developed curriculum.

Extract 34

Our foreign partner university is providing course materials and lectures, now we are actually studying according to their program. It is not a program of this university, it is a program of our partner university. And we see the difference- it is of high quality. (Student 1, December 6, 2019)

All participants emphasized their department's tight cooperation with their foreign partner university based in the USA.

Finally, students tend to comprehend that by being enrolled in the EMI program, they have direct access to world literature related to their field.

“studying in English, students have more information in all the spheres they are interested in. Also, students do not have to translate research articles”.

**The challenges of the EMI program for students.** One of the challenges mentioned by the student participants is their low confidence in level of English language knowledge and the efforts they took to adapt to the new medium of instruction:

Extract 35

Firstly, I did not understand our teacher because my English was very bad: I could not explain what I thought. And, I was afraid to discuss something with the teacher.



Teacher asked something, I knew the answer, but I was afraid because I did not know some words. Because I was afraid to make mistakes, that is why I kept silent and sat in the class. I became more open, I improved my English, I overcame my fear, now I can discuss with the teacher, and even make jokes. The technical terms were a problem for me. First, I learn them by heart by translating into Russian. When I did not know English, it was a bit difficult. (Student 2, December 6, 2019)

#### Extract 36

First, it was my fear that I would not be able to digest all the information. Secondly, it was operating with so many unfamiliar words, terminology which I knew in Russian. I faced difficulties in the first semester: I had to spend more time on my homework, and taking finals was also challenging as I needed to try to remember words in English and simultaneously construct sentences properly. (Student 3, December 10, 2019)

Another challenge faced by students during the first period of the EMI program seems to be the difficulties with understanding teachers' speeches and their pronunciation, transferring the knowledge acquired earlier in Kazakh/Russian into English:

#### Extract 37

The main challenge in EMI was when you had to work with lots of different information in English and understanding different pronunciations of teachers. And transferring all the knowledge from Russian into English. In my case I started studying through English from the 3-rd year, and now I think that it is better to choose the LOI first, and from the 1st year to start learning English terms. In order to start studying through English students should have a very high level of English language, and to understand the speech in English. (Student 3, December 10,2019)

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter aimed to present the findings on the university administrators', teachers' and students' views on EMI which were revealed through semi-structured interviews. The findings show that in general terms, students hold positive views on EMI as they associate this program to give them access to better opportunities in terms of career and academic aspirations. Teacher respondents emphasized the helpfulness of the international cooperation with a partner university and the industry support in implementing EMI. Finally, the administrator shared the concerns regarding the low level of English language proficiency among students, inconsistency of English classes with the requirements of the program, and absence of clear regulations.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

The previous chapter presented findings based on the qualitative data obtained from six semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and an administrator who are involved in the EMI program implemented at the national university in Almaty. The present chapter provides the discussion of these findings according to the posed research questions. The research questions of this study are as follows: 1) What are the university administrators' views on EMI? 2) What are the university teachers' views on EMI? 3) What are the university students' views on EMI?

### **RQ1: What are the University Administrators' Views on EMI?**

**Finding 1.** The department's administration introduces the EMI program in order to prepare more competitive graduates ready for the local and global labor market, and to meet the government's requirements.

The administrator of the university equated the success of their graduates in terms of employability to one of the crucial indicators of the quality of the offered education. It may be understood from this finding that the administrators of the university are firstly driven by the motivation to give more educational opportunities for its students. Contrary to the popular motivation of HEI administration behind the EMI implementation worldwide (Macaro et al., 2018), the administrator of this university did not name recruiting international students as one of the reasons to introduce EMI. The administrator rather focused on the need to train local students to become highly qualified professionals for the industry globally.

Secondly, the department seems to have tight relationships with industry, where the companies themselves are interested in the university's preparation of future quality cadres for them. This may demonstrate that EMI introduction at this university does not possess

top-down character, but rather is a result of cooperation with industry which demands training personnel that is fluent in English and is familiar with global practices.

**Finding 2.** Students' low content knowledge, inconsistency of English classes taught at the university with the EMI requirements, the difficulties in learning English at the university, students' behavioral habits and absence of clear regulations are the major challenges in the EMI implementation, from the administrator's perspective.

This finding demonstrates the administrator's concern about inadequate content knowledge of students at the time when they start taking courses in English, which combined with EMI may put additional pressure on students.

In the Italian context, most universities focused on "students' insufficient English language competence" (Cost, & Coleman, 2013, p.15) while naming the difficulties in implementing EMI.

This finding also illustrates that the administrator feels that more support for students should be given in terms of improving their English language levels at the university from the language department. Schmidt-Unterberger (2018) points out that "the curricula of English-taught degree programmes should ideally also include English for academic purposes (EAP) classes" (p.530). However, Schmidt-Unterberger (2018) further claims that since there is no universal course which would be able to meet the specific needs and demands of every English-taught degree program, cooperation between language and subject departments in designing EAP courses should take place. Therefore, the administrators of the university might need to consider designing different courses to equip the students of different EMI programs with sufficient academic language skills.

According to the administrator, the fact that students face hardships in completing their English classes at the university may serve as a reason for low enrollment to the EMI program.

**RQ2: What are the University Teachers' Views on EMI?**

**Finding 3.** Teachers involved in the EMI program are mostly encouraged by the opportunity to grow professionally by practicing English, establishing networks with other academics, and having access to world most recent scientific literature.

This finding demonstrates that teachers involved in the EMI program perceive the experience of teaching through EMI as an opportunity for self-development by maintaining their levels of English proficiency mastered while doing their degrees abroad, by establishing networks with other academics in the world, and by having access to up-to-date scientific literature. It corresponds with the results of Briggs, Dearden and Macaro's (2018) study, where university teachers were "aiming to improve their English by teaching through English" (p.684) among other goals. The teachers in the Taiwanese study by Yeh (2012) also named the importance of maintaining their own English proficiency by means of teaching in English as one of the reasons behind their motivation to teach through EMI. The Spanish and Indonesian university teachers as well, while discussing the personal benefits gained with the help of EMI, named improving their fluency of English (Aguilar, 2017; Floris, 2014). However, it must be pointed out here, that in the research site only those teachers who demonstrated willingness to join the EMI program were recruited to teach through English, while in many contexts teachers are forced to teach in English (Costa, & Coleman, 2006; Tsui, 2018). Thus, the motivation of improving one's language proficiency behind joining the EMI program cannot be applied in any context.

Similar to the case of the Vietnamese teachers, the teacher respondents of the current study focused on the importance of English language proficiency for establishing academic networks (Vu, & Burns, 2014).

**Finding 4.** Cooperation with a foreign partner university in terms of course design and implementation, together with industry involvement have a positive impact on the EMI program introduced at the university, from teachers' perspectives.

This seems to be a popular practice among the universities implementing EMI, as, for instance, in Italy, according to Costa and Coleman (2013), 60 % of public universities collaborate with foreign institutions. Moreover, as stated in the report of British Council (2018), universities in Kazakhstan tend to establish partnerships with foreign universities to “enhance university’s esteem, to improve students’ learning experience and to internationalize the curriculum” (p. 11).

The research lacks literature on the contribution of the companies representing the industry to the educational process of HEIs which introduce EMI, its effects and outcomes on the EMI implementation. However, the present finding may serve as a positive example of the cooperation of the university with the industry.

**Finding 5.** Students’ low language proficiency is a major challenge for teachers in the initial stages of the EMI program.

This finding demonstrates that in the beginning of the semesters students usually face difficulties in expressing their opinions or answering questions in English. The teachers speculate that such difficulties may be a result of poor alignment of English classes offered at the university and the requirements of the EMI program itself. This finding goes in line with the results of the study investigating EMI in Turkey by Macaro, Akincioglu, and Dearden (2016), where the teacher respondents “believed that most students’ language skills were not at a satisfactory level to start their academic studies through English” (p.59). Smith (2004) also listed the “inadequate language skills and the need for training of indigenous staff and students” among the issues to be dealt with in EMI (as cited in Coleman, 2006, p.6). Similarly, Iranian, and Indonesian teachers as well

perceive students' low levels of English to be one of the main obstacles in the EMI implementation (Zare-ee, & Hejazi, 2017; Floris, 2014). Hu (2019) who studied EMI in the Chinese context also identified students' limited proficiency to be one of the major problems in comprehending the material in English. According to Hu (2019), in order to cope with students' low English levels, teachers employed different coping practices such as "simplifying the curricular content, appropriating the language of the English textbooks, staying close to the copious teaching scripts prepared, minimizing interaction and improvisation" (p.4), which in most cases had negative impact on the learning process both from teachers' and students' views. Hu (2019) further suggested that if improving English language proficiency is to be one of the goals of EMI, then students involved in EMI should be given adequate support to raise their English proficiency to the required level.

This finding is rather surprising as, it must be noted, that the recruitment of students to the EMI program at this research site included the requirement of high GPAs and English language testing by oral interviews as well. Thus, it may be suggested that teachers may have interpreted students' inability to formulate and effectively communicate their answers and thoughts to their low levels of proficiency in English. Jiang, Zhang and May (2019) based on the findings of their study of EMI in China, suggested that "English for Specific Purposes (ESP) be tailored to EMI needs based on the collaboration of subject and language specialists" (p.116). According to Jiang et al. (2019), ESP courses should be designed so that they could equip students with necessary skills to successfully cope with EMI.

### **RQ3: What are the University Students' Views on EMI?**

**Finding 6.** Students overall have positive views towards EMI as they associate this program with better employment, academic and networking opportunities, and mastering professional language.

This finding illustrates the students' satisfaction with the EMI program implemented at their university because of the gained benefits. This finding is similar to the results of the study which investigated EMI in the Chinese context by Hu (2019), where higher proficiency in English as an outcome of the EMI program was perceived by students as an instrument for "greater competitiveness, enhanced employability, and improved educational opportunities" (p.3). However, the same study questioned whether the EMI program is effective in upgrading students' competence in English. Having studied students from both EMI and Chinese-medium programs, Hu (2019) identified that EMI students did not perform better than their peers after taking courses through the medium of English for a year. Surprisingly, the findings also showed that EMI students in China did not appear to be less anxious about learning and using English out of the classroom (Hu, 2019). In the study of the United Arab Emirates students' experiences of EMI by Belhiah and Elhami (2015), though, the EMI students reported significant improvement in English including reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Therefore, although improvement of English language proficiency is not considered to be a primary goal of EMI (Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018), it may still be perceived as an associated benefit, as similar to the opinions of Hong-Kong students, who believe that "EMI environment could force them to use English and as a result improve their English" (Yeung, & Lu, 2018), the student participants of the current study reported that doing homework assignments in English contributed to their improvement of the language.

The participants of the current study also consider their EMI experience to be beneficial in case they decide to enroll in EMI programs abroad upon graduation as they will be able to freely operate with professional terms, which otherwise would have been unfamiliar to them. This tallies with the previous literature on the topic. For instance,



according to Kim and Yoon (2018), Korean students supported their university's initiative of introducing EMI courses as they may be of help for their academic aspirations abroad.

In general terms, it may be understood from this finding that students expressed positive opinions towards EMI which is consistent with the previous literature (Goodman, 2014; Muthanna, & Miao, 2015).

**Finding 7.** Students find the EMI program to be effective thanks to the modern teaching practices used by the instructors who have foreign degrees, its well-designed curriculum and abundance of literature in English.

Contrary to the claims of several studies, according to which EMI teachers mostly adopt rather traditional teaching styles (Costa, & Coleman, 2013; Vinke, Snippe, & Jochems, 1998), this finding suggests that EMI teachers at this university use a highly-interactive student-centered approach to teaching, which is positively evaluated by students. Airey and Linder (2007) who studied physics students in Sweden, found that students mainly tended to display "unwillingness to ask and answer questions" while instructed in English despite Sweden being considered one of the countries in Europe with the highest levels of English ability. However, they still recommended using discussions in small groups to enable students "to check their understanding, come up with answers to questions and to generate new questions for the lecturer" (p.6). Therefore, this finding may illustrate the research site's teachers' attempts to make lessons interactive, but if this interaction really takes place and students' contribution to interaction should be further investigated.

This finding also suggests that teachers use different digital tools to improve students' participation such as Kahoot to play games on checking their acquisition of content knowledge and prefer initiating lively classroom discussions to traditional lecture-

type classes. By sharing the subject materials in online classrooms, teachers are reported to manage class time effectively, which is also perceived positively by the students.

Moreover, it was found that students find their teachers' levels of English to be adequate to teach in English because of their Master's degrees completed abroad. However, as the study of the Vietnamese context suggests, teachers' own EMI experience abroad "do not automatically enable lecturers to teach in English" (Vu, & Burns, 2014). The same can be said about the findings of the study in China by Hu (2019), where teachers themselves perceived their communicative command of English to be inadequate despite their graduate training overseas. Nevertheless, the student respondents of the current study reported their satisfaction with the teachers' levels of English involved in the EMI program.

According to Wilkinson (2012), the curriculum design depends on whether the course is new or adapted from the previous L1-instructed one. In the present study, the course has been designed by the foreign colleagues from the partner university and is not a translation of the previously taught courses, which may partly explain why the program is so positively perceived both by teachers and students.

**Finding 8.** Students' major challenges in the EMI program are their low level of English language, difficulty in understanding teachers' pronunciation, and transferring the content knowledge into English.

This finding echoes the results of the study on Korean engineering students' perceptions of EMI by Kim and Yoon (2018), where EMI students expressed their concerns about "communication problems" occurring because of their low levels of English language. However, it must be noted that, contrary to the students of the present study, some of the Korean students enrolled into the EMI course unwillingly, because of the schedule conflicts, and if given the choice, they would prefer to take the same course

with the Korean medium of instruction, whereas the student participants of the present study consciously chose to enter the program.

This finding has demonstrated that, although students' English language levels are checked upon their enrollment into the program with the help of oral interviews, they still face difficulties in dealing with the disciplinary content in English in the initial stages. It may imply that these interviews are not sufficiently effective in identifying students' English language proficiency, and, perhaps, some other tools to measure students' English skills should be used. However, at the same time the researchers claim that "there is a potential difference between general English proficiency and the competence to learn effectively in an EMI context" (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2017). In other words, it means that students' high English language proficiency does not necessarily guarantee them success in the EMI program, and, perhaps some ESP training should be done before enrolling into the program.

It was also identified that it is rather problematic for some students to understand their teachers' pronunciation, one of the possible reasons of which is the fact that the teachers of the EMI program are non-native English speakers, and, perhaps, their pronunciation differs from a standard one. There is also a scarcity of research on what levels of English proficiency teachers should have in order to effectively teach through EMI (Dearden, & Macaro, 2016; Macaro et al., 2017). The administrators of the investigated university might have measured teachers' language proficiency to be adequate because of their Master's degrees completed abroad, similar to the cases of Austrian, Italian and Polish university teachers, where teachers' foreign PhD degrees were considered to be enough, but the authors themselves point out "teaching through EMI would appear to necessitate both English and pedagogical skills, so a PhD was not always enough" (Macaro, & Dearden, 2016). According to Breeze (2014), who studied

EMI at a Spanish university, those HEI which do not provide language support to their students, but still introduce EMI courses, there is a need for lecturers “to slow down their speed of delivery, to provide an overview of their lecture to make it easier for students to follow, and to programme in some pauses” (p.157).

Finally, the students might have faced challenges with transferring the content knowledge into English due to the fact that in the first two years of their study, they took the specialty courses in Russian or Kazakh, and enrolled in the EMI program in the third year of their undergraduate studies. This finding may imply that in order to eliminate these possible challenges students face, teaching specialty subjects through the medium of English should start from the first year of their studies.

### **Chapter Summary**

Summing up, it may be concluded that, in general terms, the findings of the study are in line with the previous literature. All stakeholders including an administrator, teachers and students hold positive views towards EMI implementation at their university, and each of the stakeholders gain benefits from the program. Despite the novelty of the program, students’ difficulties with the English language proficiency in the initial stages, the fruitful collaboration with the foreign partner university and the companies representing the industry, strong portfolios of teachers contributed to the program’s success in terms of its design and implementation.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the views of different stakeholders – an administrator, two teachers and three students on EMI at a national university, where a partial EMI program is being implemented. The study was guided by three research questions. The first research question aimed to explore the views of the administrator regarding the rationale for implementing EMI at this university, and the challenges associated with the EMI introduction. The second research question aimed to look into the views of the teachers involved in the EMI program, their motivation, advantages of the program for them, and the difficulties they are facing while teaching through the medium of English. Finally, the third research question investigated the views of EMI students regarding the program, what drove them to enroll in the program, what benefits they gain from it, and with which challenges they have to deal with while studying in English.

This chapter first gives the main conclusions of the study, and then provides the limitations of the study and implications for further research.

### **Main Conclusions of the Study**

The first conclusion of the study is that, in general terms, all the stakeholders including the administrator, the teachers and the students perceive the EMI program implemented at their university positively as each of the stakeholders gain benefits from it. While discussing the rationale for implementing EMI, the administrator emphasized university graduates' better preparation to the local and global job markets because of mastering professional vocabulary in English according to the program adapted from the foreign partner university. On their part, teachers pinpointed the opportunities for their professional self-development by maintaining English language proficiency mastered during their studies abroad, establishing academic networks with the field professionals

worldwide, and the abundance of world up-to-date scientific literature compared to Kazakh and/or Russian sources. Finally, the students associate this program with better employment or job opportunities due to the knowledge of professional English and a well-designed curriculum, with further study opportunities abroad because of the study skills gained during the EMI program, and with internship opportunities as the knowledge of English is among the requirements for participation.

Another main conclusion is that the success of the program may be due to the fruitful cooperation of the university with a foreign partner university and the companies representing the industry. The guest lecturers, together with the course and curriculum design and the seminars on the innovative methods of teaching provided by the partner university along with the student internship and faculty study funding opportunities by the companies contribute to the study participants' positive views on EMI at their university.

Regarding the challenges associated with the program, the administrator identified students' low content knowledge at the start of the EMI program in their third year of study, which combined with their low confidence in English language doubled the challenge. Moreover, the students' behavioral fear-based study habits obtained during their school education, which do not allow them to think critically and express their opinions freely, are also perceived as one of the main challenges to make the learning process more efficient and interactive. Finally, the English language courses' inconsistency with the needs of the English-taught programs, and the level of pressure put by the English Department is another challenge in the EMI implementation. The students' low confidence when using English in the initial stages of the program is also a challenging factor. However, there seems to be an improvement in students' English skills in the course of time.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The first limitation of the study is in its scale. Since there was a constrained time limit, and the data collection period coincided with winter holidays, the researcher was able to recruit only six participants: one administrator, two teachers and three students. The findings of the study could have been different had the scale of the study been larger.

Another limitation is that only one research site was investigated, and the findings of the study cannot be generalized due to the specific features of the research site, which other HEI may lack, such as cooperation with a foreign partner university, industry support or the level of preparedness of faculty members. Although the participants were given the choice to answer in any language including English, Kazakh or Russian, five out of six respondents preferred to be interviewed in English, which may have affected the length of their answers.

Finally, during the interviews the respondents could have expressed the opinions that they thought to be more preferable and welcomed by the researcher, or could have resisted to shed light on the drawbacks of the program so that it would not affect the reputation of their university in the researcher's eyes. Due to time constraints, another possible limitation might point to the fact that the respondents might have had limited time to think and reflect on the questions asked by the interviewer. Therefore, if the follow-up interviews or observations could take place during the data collection, it could add some more validity to the findings of the study.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the main findings and conclusions of the study, some recommendations for university administrators can be offered.

Firstly, the university administrators should develop a clear university-level policy on EMI implementation which should outline minimum English language requirements for both teachers and students intending to join the EMI program. Besides language requirements, university administrators should consider adding the opportunity of financial or any other reward systems for EMI teachers so that non-EMI teachers are eager to raise their competitiveness and master their English language proficiency. The reward system might also include short-term exchange programs at a partner university, where faculty members could attend their colleagues' seminars and gain experience. The introduction of such a system would make it possible to attract more teachers to the EMI program, and, consequently, to provide more students with the opportunity to be educated through English, together with the benefits associated with EMI, as for now only a small number of students are enrolled in the program. This reward system might also motivate current EMI teachers to maintain their positions by mastering their teaching methods and practices.

Secondly, university administrators should take into account that the instruments to measure students' English language proficiency should include not only oral interviews in English, but also should be thoroughly designed in accordance with the international standards and in cooperation with EMI teachers to ensure students' ability to cope with the specialty courses taught in English.

Thirdly, the departments willing to introduce EMI courses should establish tight cooperation with the English instructors and foreign colleagues from partner universities or should consider establishing networks with industry. The language department, well-informed on the needs of the EMI students, as a result of such cooperation, could provide students with adequate language training and support to deal with the program. Instead of General English courses, the immediate introduction of tailor-made Professional English courses upon students' start of university education may be considered. The alignment of



the English classes held at the university with the EMI courses could raise the students' levels of motivation to enroll in the EMI program.

Finally, the university administrators should consider developing a quality control system to ensure that the EMI program is working to its fullest. Rather than using individual interviews with teachers and students, and occasional class observations, administrators should consider the possibility to develop a clear logical procedure which may include students' satisfaction surveys upon the course completion, which would help identify weaknesses of the program, and take timely measures to overcome them. A system of periodic class observations by peer colleagues and/or heads of the departments with the feedback system might also help teachers use effective strategies in EMI.

### **Future Areas of Research**

Since there is a scarcity of research on this topic in the Kazakhstani context, and lack of awareness on how EMI is actually being implemented, future research recruiting more respondents from different research sites can be done so that the findings could be generalized and some implications for policy-makers could be derived. Future research might also use different data collection instruments such as surveys and/or class observations, document analysis to compare with the findings obtained from this study.

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**Appendix A: Interview Protocol****For students:**

1. How long have you been studying with English as a medium of instruction?
2. How many courses do you study in English?
3. What motivates you to study with English as a medium of instruction?
4. What is your opinion as a student regarding EMI implementation at your institution? Is it effective or not?
5. What can you say about the quality of teaching through EMI? What is the difference of courses taught in English from the ones taught in Kazakh/Russian?
6. How does the selection of students to enroll in EMI programs take place? What are the criteria?
7. What are the benefits of EMI for you as a student?
8. What is the biggest benefit of EMI implementation for you as a student?
9. What challenges do you face while studying through EMI?
10. What is the biggest challenge in studying through EMI?
11. What would you change in the EMI courses? What could be done to improve the EMI program?
12. What resources does the university provide to help you to succeed in the EMI program?
13. What resources, in your opinion, should the university provide?

**For teachers:**

1. How long have you been teaching with English as a medium of instruction?
2. How many courses do you teach in English?
3. What motivates you to teach through EMI? Has there been any support from the university to teach through EMI?
4. What is your opinion as a faculty member regarding EMI implementation at your institution? Is it effective or not? What is the difference of courses taught in English from the ones taught in Kazakh/Russian?
5. How does the selection of teachers to conduct courses in English take place? What are the criteria?
6. How do administrators motivate teachers to conduct their lessons in English?
7. Were you reluctant at the beginning? Did you have a positive or negative opinion?



8. How does the selection of students to enroll in EMI programs take place? What are the criteria?
9. What are the benefits of EMI for you as a faculty member?
10. What is the biggest benefit of EMI implementation for you as a faculty member?
11. What challenges do you face while teaching through EMI?
12. What is the biggest challenge in teaching through EMI?
13. How are EMI programs designed? What is your contribution to the design of the program?
14. What resources are teachers provided with to successfully teach through the EMI? What resources, in your opinion, should the university provide?
15. How do administrators control and ensure the quality of EMI courses introduced at your institution?

**For an administrator:**

1. How long have you been using English as a medium of instruction?
2. How many courses are taught in English in your department?
3. Why did your university decide to introduce courses taught in English? Has there been any state support or guidance in EMI introduction?
4. What is your opinion as an administrator regarding EMI implementation at your institution? Is it effective or not?
5. How does the selection of teachers to conduct courses in English take place? What are the criteria?
6. How do administrators motivate teachers to conduct their lessons in English? Do you perceive any resistance from the faculty's side? (Administrators can answer this)
7. How does the selection of students to enroll in EMI programs take place? What are the criteria?
8. What are the benefits of EMI for your institution?
9. What is the biggest benefit of EMI implementation for your institution?
10. What challenges do you face during EMI implementation at your institution?
11. What is the biggest challenge in EMI implementation for your institution?
12. How are EMI programs designed?
13. What resources are teachers provided with?
14. What resources, in your opinion, should the university be provided with?

15. How do you control and ensure the quality of EMI courses introduced at your institution?

## Appendix B: Informed Consent Forms

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM for an administrator

English Medium Instruction at a National University: Students', Teachers' and Administrators' Views

**DESCRIPTION:** You are kindly invited to participate in a research study to share your views related to English Medium Instruction (EMI) which is being implemented at your university.

The study aims at exploring challenges and benefits of EMI for different stakeholders as it is important to find out what practices are successful, what challenges university staff and students encounter regarding EMI at higher education.

Moreover, since EMI implementation has been introduced into higher education in Kazakhstan relatively recently and no sufficient empirical research has been done your participation will contribute to better understanding of what a current situation with EMI implementation is like.

**PARTICIPATION AND DURATION OF THE STUDY:** You will be asked to give an interview on the given topic. The interview will contain approximately 15 questions. You will be assigned with a number in all stages of the research including all field notes, computer files, and all project texts including the final thesis to keep your identity in secret. Consent forms and other documents with identifiable participant information will be kept in a separate, secure location: a locked desk drawer. I will ask your permission to record the interview. In case of your refusal for recording I will only take notes of the interview. The recording of the interview will be kept in a secure, password-protected computer. Notes of the interview will be also kept in a locked desk drawer. In case of presenting the findings at scientific meetings, pseudonyms will also be used.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The risks associated with this study are minimal. Your answers regarding implementation of English as a medium of instruction will not be used to make judgements about university students and the program. Your participation in the research will have no negative effect on your student status. The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are that you will broaden your understanding of EMI and will be able to reflect on the most successful learning practices in EMI.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Questions:** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Associate Professor Xabier San Isidro, [xabier.sanisidro@nu.edu.kz](mailto:xabier.sanisidro@nu.edu.kz) phone: +7 (7172) 70-91-10

***Independent Contact:*** If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz)

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided.
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study.
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM for a teacher**

English Medium Instruction at a National University: Students', Teachers' and Administrators' Views

**DESCRIPTION:** You are kindly invited to participate in a research study to share your views related to English Medium Instruction (EMI) which is being implemented at your university.

The study aims at exploring challenges and benefits of EMI for different stakeholders as it is important to find out what practices are successful, what challenges university staff and students encounter regarding EMI at higher education.

Moreover, since EMI implementation has been introduced into higher education in Kazakhstan relatively recently and no sufficient empirical research has been done your participation will contribute to better understanding of what a current situation with EMI implementation is like.

**PARTICIPATION AND DURATION OF THE STUDY:** You will be asked to give an interview on the given topic. The interview will contain approximately 15 questions. You will be assigned with a number in all stages of the research including all field notes, computer files, and all project texts including the final thesis to keep your identity in secret. Consent forms and other documents with identifiable participant information will be kept in a separate, secure location: a locked desk drawer. I will ask your permission to record the interview. In case of your refusal for recording I will only take notes of the interview. The recording of the interview will be kept in a secure, password-protected computer. Notes of the interview will be also kept in a locked desk drawer. In case of presenting the findings at scientific meetings, pseudonyms will also be used.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The risks associated with this study are minimal. Your answers regarding implementation of English as a medium of instruction will not be used to make judgements about university students and the program. Your participation in the research will have no negative effect on your student status. The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are that you will broaden your understanding of EMI and will be able to reflect on the most successful learning practices in EMI.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

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you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz)

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- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM for a student**

English Medium Instruction at a National University: Students', Teachers' and Administrators' Views

**DESCRIPTION:** You are kindly invited to participate in a research study to share your views related to English Medium Instruction (EMI) which is being implemented at your university.

The study aims at exploring challenges and benefits of EMI for different stakeholders as it is important to find out what practices are successful, what challenges university staff and students encounter regarding EMI at higher education.

Moreover, since EMI implementation has been introduced into higher education in Kazakhstan relatively recently and no sufficient empirical research has been done your participation will contribute to better understanding of what a current situation with EMI implementation is like.

**PARTICIPATION AND DURATION OF THE STUDY:** You will be asked to give an interview on the given topic. The interview will contain approximately 15 questions. You will be assigned with a number in all stages of the research including all field notes, computer files, and all project texts including the final thesis to keep your identity in secret. Consent forms and other documents with identifiable participant information will be kept in a separate, secure location: a locked desk drawer. I will ask your permission to record the interview. In case of your refusal for recording I will only take notes of the interview. The recording of the interview will be kept in a secure, password-protected computer. Notes of the interview will be also kept in a locked desk drawer. In case of presenting the findings at scientific meetings, pseudonyms will also be used.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The risks associated with this study are minimal. Your answers regarding implementation of English as a medium of instruction will not be used to make judgements about university students and the program. Your participation in the research will have no negative effect on your student status. The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are that you will broaden your understanding of EMI and will be able to reflect on the most successful learning practices in EMI.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

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Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

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- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### Appendix C: Transcription Sample of Interview

**Interviewer: How long have you been using English as a medium of instruction?**

**Interviewee:** I think that English as a primary instruction was more than two years, but since only the last year- from 2018 we started implementing it in our department, so, starting from the third year, students take classes fully in English, and their main classes which are taught (major disciplines) for the specialties, fully implementing more than a year. But we have separate English classes from 2016.

**Interviewer: How many courses are taught in English in your department?**

**Interviewee:** So, in the third year ten courses, five courses- fall semester, five- spring. In the fourth year we are offering six classes, three of them are mandatory classes, and three of them are elective ones.

**Interviewer: Why did your university decide to introduce courses taught in English? Has there been any state support or guidance in EMI introduction?**

**Interviewee:** There are several answers to this question. First of all, since we are preparing the graduates for the X industry, the industry language is English, so our graduates will be working worldwide, in different locations, and English will be the main language of communication, so this is the main reason. Besides that, the information in English is abundant, I would say, even I mean the Russian literature is also abundant, but they still have a lack of new technologies, solutions, innovations, advancements. This is a second reason that most of the published literature, scientific journals are all in English. The third is that there is no state regulation saying that we must offer the courses only in English, but as for the last 5 years, the Government is pushing the trilingual education, so that is also one of the reasons. This is not the reason, but the cause why we started this program is that we are collaborating with X, Y and Z companies. They initiated this pilot project, it is called the X project, to develop the X education in Kazakhstan. That is also one of the reasons. For them Kazakh and Russian language programs are not enough, they do not need it.

**Interviewer: What is your opinion as an administrator regarding EMI implementation at your institution? Is it effective or not?**

**Interviewee:** Oh, that is a difficult question. When we talk about the English as a primary language of instruction, there are several, kind of, issues involved with this. The problem is that, first, students come to the third year as not much ready, I am saying much not ready from the technical side. And then when we put additional pressure to study technical knowledge and skills in English, so they are not ready technically. And we are using additional workload to level up their tech skills, and then also learn English. But, when we talk about English as MOI, there is also lack of English skills, I would say. Because, to be honest, I mean, I do not see much connection between the English lessons and their professional career. In the past, we had, like 2-3 years ago, this English class, which was trying to develop their professional terminology, and so on. And then these classes were eliminated, and they were given to English Department. And they are teaching basic

English skills, not kind of adapted, not suitable for X, let us say. So, that is one of the problems, and if we talk about the administrative, the, I don't know, from the student's side, it is also a kind of, I don't see much motivation from the students' side. They are motivated to learn English. It's slow, it's happening, in the 4th year, graduate year we have 29 students in the English program, so they started their bachelor in 2016, now in the 3rd year we have only 22 students, studying in the English program, it is like several students less, but if we talk in terms of percentages, those 29 students are out of 120, but these 22 are out of 140. I mean that percentagewise there are less students involved in the English program. I do not know why it's happening, but I think it is because there is maybe too high level, too high expectations from English Department, that they lose their motivation. I am not saying that we should give them the easiest tasks, I think that there should be some balance that English language classes they should be motivational so that they want to learn more, and when they come to us, they are more motivated.

**Interviewer: So, you think that English classes do not equip them with enough skills to then choose courses taught in English?**

**Interviewee:** I am not saying it fully, I mean that students they come. I mean I understand the ED, they also have some struggles with students as they did not study much at school. They try to equip them, but at the same time they give them so much hard time during classes, so that when they come to us, they lose their motivation to study in English, because when I was trying to invite students to English program this September, only 22, I mean, even out of these 22, 4-5 students they were just kind of sceptic to study in English. But, from our side what I can assure is pretty much aligned with the industry first, and plus with international recognized institution like CSM, it is basically their program. They organize class materials, homework assignments, lecture materials, they are all from the CSM. And it is aligned with the industry standards. That is why I am saying that students do not want to study in English, because they want to study in the language, which is comfortable for them: Kazakh or Russian.

**Interviewer: How does the selection of teachers to conduct courses in English take place? What are the criteria?**

**Interviewee:** I was trying to add this point also. It is good that you ask this question. Teachers in our case they are willing to share, because in our department we have like 50 % of teachers who studied abroad, most of them did their studies in the UK, USA. Some of them in France, in general, they are English speakers, and the problem with them is that they are willing to share, but at the same time is that, I mean, the obvious reason is that university has set some regulations, yes, we are motivating teachers who teach in English, but when you look at their salaries, it is almost the same. It is not that they are getting twice as much than those who are teaching in Kazakh or Russian, it is like 20 per cent may be. I do not know exactly, but you can to the orders and see how much the difference is. And with the new regulations, the orders, calculate the workload, teaching, there is no coefficient that you may multiply for teaching in English. Faculty, yes, they are young, they want to share, and for them English language is more comfortable, maybe than Russian or Kazakh. But, at the same time if you talk about salary, I mean there is no motivation, I would say.

**Interviewer: How do administrators motivate teachers to conduct their lessons in English? Do you perceive any resistance from the faculty's side?**

**Interviewee:** I do not see much resistance from faculty side. I am not giving these classes to those who do not speak English, or for whom it may be difficult. Mostly I assign task to

those faculty members, who have the background, and who are willing to do it. Sometimes it happens that they are struggling, but we have sessions to help, to support. It is not like it is happening twice maybe per semester, we just discuss materials. Sometimes we ask other departments like Mining, or I mean the faculty who taught this class before to share their experience.

**Interviewer: How does the selection of students to enroll in EMI programs take place? What are the criteria?**

**Interviewee:** So, basically, we did several stages of student selection. The first is GPA because without the good GPA, we are teaching them tech knowledge. 3.0. Sometimes it 2.7. It depends. They should be guys who study to A, B, no Cs. Second, we also have psychometric test, because sometimes the GPAs do not correlate with actual knowledge and potential, I would say. And we did these test that was used in addition to GPA to rank students. What was did in this test is abstract reasoning, numerical reasoning, and mechanical reasoning. They also had to write an essay why they wanted to join the program. And then they with all these documents came to the interview, the interview was held in English just to check, make sure that they are all capable. As I said they were not so many willing students, last year we had like 30, and we accepted all of them. We just wanted to have this formal side so that they will be interested, they will have the feeling that they are selected. Because, otherwise, if you just say: “Okay, you are all welcome, they will not feel, they are selected”.

**Interviewer: What are the benefits of EMI for your institution?**

**Interviewee:** You mean the advantage? First, the primary advantage is that they will be ready to take jobs, to be hired first. These job places will be good for them, I am not saying prestigious, they will not work for low-quality places. Usually the one who select students English-speaking, they are international. That is one of the obvious advantages in English program. The second is that it is the language of communication, and if they want to continue their education, if they want to know to places like UK, or even NU, they should have good language. Maybe my words or my opinion is without evidence, but I am sure that if students study a full year with English, their level of English will be approximately 6.5. They can go abroad or stay in Kazakhstan and study in English. And the last one is that there is so much data, so much information, that is also because all published data is in English. They can study. In Russian it is 10 times less than in English.

**Interviewer: What is the biggest benefit of EMI implementation for your institution?**

**Interviewee:** I think the first one, because our assessment for us, for our department must be how successfully or how effectively our graduates are employed, so if we cannot provide students with good opportunities to be hired, then it means we are doing a poor job, I would say. Graduate program is like optional. Some students want to join the grad schools, some are not.

**Interviewer: What challenges do you face during EMI implementation at your institution?**

**Interviewee:** Okay, there are many challenges, answering your question- I would say that I mean the challenge is how we improve their English communication. It is not the matter that guys from English Department teach them grammar, it is not a goal for us. When they come to us, they must have two essential skills- writing skills and oral. They should be able to write emails correctly, putting subjects, business correspondence. But English Department, Elementary and so on, they teach basic themes, maybe they taught. I

guess the heads of the department, they know. Students cannot freely express their opinion. Sometimes they do not even have opinions. Maybe we need to teach them how to critically analyze information so that they can provide their opinions, they can argue, sometimes I guess the challenge is teachers, they do not encourage these talks in classes, as in the old Soviet Union taught all of them, the teacher is a main guy, you cannot argue with them. It is all complex. It is not only English Department, maybe some other departments. They should all be focused on critical skills of the 21st century, soft skills and so on. Students must be able to express their opinion. That is what I see. It is not a problem of English teaching, but for us, if they cannot express their opinion, it is risky that when they go to the industry, for the interview, they cannot say anything. Maybe he or she is a star in the specialty, but if they cannot deliver the message, they will not be able to effectively communicate in the workplace, because the interviewers they are looking for teamwork skills, analytical skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills and so on.

**Interviewer: What is the biggest challenge in EMI implementation for your institution?**

**Interviewee:** I think that maybe I can add to this one. I think that there must be a clear policy from the university side. I think that my opinion will not anyhow be passed to the administration, or you can pass it if you want, problem is that we are positioning ourselves like an university, we are moving to this trilingual education, but at the same time the policy is that there is no clear policy, who are teaching in English that they are having advantage, and there is no financial motivation, there is no clear administrative procedures-policies, when we talk about the English program university supports, just saying, I guess one of the problems, since I am an engineer, and I try to provide solution- there should be strict regulations you must follow, otherwise people will not learn. Because, for example, when you mention teachers, the university encourages and asks pushes to have IELTS at the end the year when they have their contract prolongation, they come and then ask them questions in English, but at the same time the faculty members, every year during interview, they do not see advantage, they come with zero preparation. If there is no encouragement, why they should do it. If we want to encourage faculty to learn English, so that they will teach in English, there should be clear regulation, that the primary language LOI must be English, because for us it is must, I hope that in next 5 years we will move this program fully in English, maybe I sound like too optimistic, but I am also realistic, I evaluate that in 5 years we can move fully in E. But it creates some problems because of the faculty who do not want to learn English, they resist.

**Interviewer: How are EMI programs designed?**

**Interviewee:** So, the general procedure was that a partner university visited us. They saw our potential, we met with them for several times. What we did was we first, we proposed our syllabi, class agenda how we see it, and they provided their feedback. And based on this feedback we created the general outline of class materials, and they prepared for us course materials, it is not 100 %, out of ten classes maybe six classes they provided, four- we ourselves. They prepared class materials, homework assignments so that we are on the same page with them and the industry. The industry trusted much to CSM, and these companies provided us with guest lectures, and they were aligned with the course plan, they lecturers helped us with practical cases, how they solved it. It is not a challenge, but it is also what we discovered, when CSM visited us, they saw that we have good potential from teaching side, but we don't have laboratories, facilities, we don't have them in some classes.

**Interviewer: What resources are teachers provided with?**

**Interviewee:** Resources is a term which is too wide to explain. In general, there are 2-3 things, that I understand. They have their workplaces, class settings, and they do not have problems in it. The greatest challenge is lack of lab facilities, we have comp labs, we use it, and we try to use it fully, but still we have some lags, time. Faculty development- from the university side, our vice-rector tries to conduct some workshops how to design syllabi, it is one-time effort. We initiated faculty development workshops, we already had 2 of them. It was 4-day seminar the first was course and syllabus design, innovative teaching and learning methods, assessment, and evaluation, sponsored by companies by a local instructor. In September we had a course on project-based learning, we had a guest lecture how to run these classes, how to come up with this project, how to assign roles and responsibilities. It is one of the requirements for accreditation.

**Interviewer: How do you control and ensure the quality of EMI courses introduced at your institution?**

**Interviewee:** That is a good question, actually. I do not have exact answer for that. I check by interviewing students; it is not university wide. It does not have clear procedure, how to control continuous improvement. Every year we monitor our students' improvement. We do not have it is being implemented. Student interviews once or twice per semester, but it is not systematical and not effective, but at least I get some insights from students, and deliver it to my members.