

**English Medium-Instruction as a Way to  
Internationalization of Higher Education in  
Kazakhstan: An Opinion Survey in the  
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**Abstract |** This article presents the results of a survey conducted in the Innovative University of Eurasia (InEU) about the necessity of implementing English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at the baccalaureate and master's degree levels. It describes the findings obtained through semi open-ended questionnaires and interviews with two focus groups: InEU administration members and faculty representatives. The data collected suggest a rather positive general attitude of the respondents of both groups to English-medium instruction at the university, a special emphasis being made on the global status of English and internationalization of education. However, the majority of respondents raised concern about the impact of English-medium teaching on the quality of subject learning since it depends on an English proficiency level of both students and teachers and their motivation to study/teach in English. The survey data also indicate other important issues connected with teaching-in-English implementation at the university, such as finance, the pace of implementation, preparedness of students and teachers, support structures and incentives.

**Key words |** English-medium instruction, higher education, internationalization, opinion survey, Kazakhstan

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## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, English has become “a global language” galloping fast all over the world. It has spread into such spheres as business, the media, science and technology, education, politics, advertising, tourism. Marsh considers that “English is viewed as the language which will be increasingly used to serve the demands of the globalizing economies” (29).

English-medium instruction in higher education is a growing trend in countries where English is a foreign language. Coleman labelled English as “the language of higher education in Europe” (1). He enumerated seven reasons why higher institutions adopt English-medium teaching, among them CLIL, internationalization, student exchanges, teaching and research materials, staff mobility, graduate employability and the market in international students, stating that “this rainbow of motives ranges from ethical and pedagogical through pragmatic to the commercial” (Coleman 4). Additionally, numerous academic researches show that English is increasingly used as a language of instruction in higher education in countries other than European (Kılıçkaya; Wu; Wong; Yen; Shahzad, Sajjad, Ahmed and Asghar, etc.). These researches generally find that universities strive to internationalize and have to adopt English as a medium of instruction to escape from marginalization at the global market.

A number of studies exploring the implementation of English as a teaching medium for non-native speaking students reveal various findings concerning the motives of its rapid expansion (Montgomery 1333; Graddol 9; Coleman 4), the language demands on stakeholders (Vu and Burns 21), language-sensitive methodologies, such as CLIL (Marsh 33), the impact of CLIL/EMI on the education process (Marsh 35; Parveen, Rafiq and Siddique 53; Manakul 61; Wong 126; Manh 265), and the attitudes of students and teaching staff to the change of the medium of instruction (Splunder; Kirkpatrick, “Internationalization or Englishization” 5; Shahzad et al. 42).

Opinion survey studies suggest diverse attitudes towards EMI phenomenon in different cultural contexts, the perspectives of both students and teachers being examined. Jensen and

Trøgersen, for example, examine the attitudes of the teaching staff of Denmark's largest university to increasing use of English in higher education and find out that "younger lecturers and lecturers with a higher teaching load in English are more positive towards the increase in English medium instruction" (13). Dietmar Tatzl through questionnaire and interview reveals a favorable attitude of students and lecturers of an Austrian university of applied sciences to EMI, however, identifies the existing challenges, such as a larger student workload, different levels of students' prior knowledge and a reduction in the amount of content that can be taught via English (257). A survey of the attitudes of 100 instructors of non-language subjects in Ankara universities towards the use of EMI in the classroom where the language of a great majority of students is Turkish, shows that instructors support Turkish as an instructional medium rather than English based on their concerns about students' performance, language proficiency, resources and student participation in class (Kılıçkaya sec. 2).

Shahzad et al. examine the effects of EMI on students' learning in a Pakistani classroom and realize that almost half of the targeted respondents have a positive attitude to studying in English and are highly motivated to do so (40). The rest of the pool shows either a neutral attitude to EMI or are absolutely against it, the latter not having "a supportive home environment and English medium educational background" and as a result being demotivated (Shahzad et al. 42). Another Pakistani experience is described by Parveen et al. concerning the impact of English as a medium of instruction on research thesis writing. Based on interviews, the authors analyze the difficulties graduate students face in writing their theses in English and come to the conclusion that students want to write their theses in native or regional language; a suggestion has been made that the English language as a medium of instruction should be removed from their educational process (Parveen et al. 53).

A mixed-view perspective of EMI is shown in a survey by Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra about English-medium teaching at the University of the Basque Country, Spain. On the one hand, all interested bodies, such as students, teaching staff and administration, are quite

positive about EMI, since it has opened a way to internationalization and widened their minds (Doiz et al., *English-Medium Instruction* 86). On the other hand, many survey respondents fear losing local languages (Spanish and Basque), Englishization and acquiring an inferior position associated with their low English proficiency (Doiz et al., *English-Medium Instruction* 99).

Morell et al. in their study explore both teachers and students attitudes, needs and motivations in the implementation and promotion of EMI courses at the university of Alicante, Spain. Thus, according to the findings obtained, the majority of lecturers admit that EMI implementation is important for the academic and professional opportunities it creates, however, there is a need in “further linguistic training and enough competence to feel sufficiently prepared to teach EMI courses with the required quality” (Morell et al. sec. 3.2.2). Similarly, students’ responses show concerns about their English mastery necessary to take EMI courses as well as their worry about their level of academic performance that could be hindered by the use of a foreign language (Morell et al. sec. 4). Both students and teachers raise the belief that there should be more courses and a greater support system for EMI at the university (Morell et al. sec. 4).

Andy Kirkpatrick examining the development of EMI programs in universities in selected Asian countries emphasizes that by providing EMI courses the universities want to raise their international profile but alongside with this, they need to establish language education policies to find a compromise between English and a local language medium education (“English as a Medium of Instruction” 24).

A Vietnamese context EMI implementation study is conducted by Vu and Burns where the authors discuss the findings from interviews with stakeholders identifying the challenges that EMI lecturers are facing such as lecturers’ language proficiency, student diversity in terms of language ability and learning styles, pedagogical issues and resource availability (22). Highlighting a national idea of expanding EMI courses in tertiary education in Vietnam Vu and Burns give recommendations to promote lecturers’ agency and improve the implementation of EMI policies (23).

Kazakhstan, alongside with other countries striving to internationalize their education systems, found itself 'in the trend' of globalization and during the latest 20 years has undergone tremendous change and growth in the educational sphere. The government's trilingual policy of 2007 proclaimed the idea of multilingual education; a specific mission was entrusted to English as a means to enter the global stage.

According to the State Program of Education Development for 2011-2020 adopted in 2010, 15 % of instructors who teach science and mathematics should do this in English by 2020 (State Program of Education Development for 2011-2020).

In 2011 the State Program of Languages Development and Functioning in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 which aimed at introducing a harmonious language policy in the republic set to achieve the following goals in the sphere of the English language development: an increase in the share of the population who speak English by 15% in 2017 and by 20% in 2020; an increase in the share of the population who speak Kazakh, Russian and English by 12% in 2017 and by 15% in 2020 (State Program of Languages Development and Functioning in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020).

In 2012 the Ministry of Education and Science devised the academic mobility strategy in Kazakhstan for 2012-2020, which sets aims and priorities of academic and cultural internationalization of higher education in the republic through the development of tools of Bologna Process. Among other priorities for academic mobility development the implementation of the principles of multilingual education – teaching in equal proportion Kazakh, Russian, English and other foreign languages, training courses and training programs based on language and culture co-teaching – was proclaimed (Academic Mobility Strategy in Kazakhstan for 2012-2020). Consequently, more and more universities are starting to design and implement programs with a language of instruction other than native, mainly English. Today 42 universities, to any extent, offer courses or programs where English is used as a medium of instruction (Zamit).

As we see, Kazakhstan has set specific goals that are not easy to achieve. Many

questions arise when we look upon EMI implementation in the Kazakhstani context; the majority of them do not ask ‘Do we need EMI?’ rather ‘What do we need to do to succeed in EMI implementation?’

In this paper we set out to explore the opinions of stakeholders and policy-makers of the Innovative University of Eurasia, one of 66 non-state universities in Kazakhstan, about the use of English as a medium of instruction. Particularly, we intend to find out people’s attitudes to EMI, needs and potential of the university to implement it as well as its positive and negative impact on students, teachers and the university as a whole. Thus, our opinion survey is guided by the following research questions:

1. Does the university need EMI? Why?
2. What are the benefits that EMI implementation might bring to students/ teachers/ university?
3. What challenges might students/ teachers/ university face during the process of EMI implementation and development?
4. What are students’ and teachers’ levels of English proficiency? What should these levels be like?
5. What should be the pace of EMI implementation? What academic subjects should be EMI shifted first?
6. Does the university possess enough potential (finance, resources, materials, qualified staff, methodologies) necessary for successful EMI implementation?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. *Participants*

The research was realized in the form of a survey exploring the opinions of two focus groups of respondents: the university administration representatives and the faculty members. The first focus group (Group 1) included 10 university administration representatives (rector, 3 vice-rectors,

2 deans, 4 department directors). From the pool of instructors who agreed to participate in the survey 20 lecturers were selected to represent the second focus group (Group 2) based on various teaching contexts and backgrounds such as discipline, overall teaching experience, experience of teaching in English, age and sex. Our assumption in grouping the respondents this way was that we might get a bi-focused view on the problem investigated. The opinion of InEU administration representatives about EMI project realization was most important as they are the university policy-makers holding key positions in academic, organizational and financial spheres and will have to finance and administer the implementation if any. Faculty members give nearly as a valuable point of view since they are the ones who will implement the changes in the classroom and provide the expected result.

Among the participants of Group 2, 13 are female and 1 is male; their age range varies between 27 and 46. The sampled lecturers teach the following subjects to undergraduates and graduates: mathematics, economics, finance, ecology, philosophy, architecture, journalism, electrical engineering, and psychology. The participation in the study was voluntary. During the interview the participants of the survey were informed of its aims, structure, procedures and duration. The research was conducted by the members of the department of theory and practice of foreign languages and translation studies of the Innovative University of Eurasia, Kazakhstan.

## **2.2. Data Collection and Analysis**

The research was conducted by means of two methods: 1. an opinion survey through written semi open-ended questionnaires, and 2. a follow-up interview.

In September 2014, written questionnaire responses were collected via e-mail from 20 university lecturers and 10 administration representatives. The survey questions aimed at identifying people's opinions as to the benefits, potential and challenges of implementing EMI in the Innovative University of Eurasia. Later the respondents from both groups were interviewed in person to discuss their questionnaire answers in detail. The language of the questionnaire as

well as that of the interview was Russian.

Data analysis was carried out to see the general trend in the participants' responses to open-ended and closed questions of the questionnaire. The responses to closed questions were analyzed quantitatively (percentages and frequencies) and open-ended question responses were analyzed qualitatively (categorized into rubrics and interpreted).

The information obtained during the interview was reduced to a number of categories for easier analysis and interpretation. Each category was given a name. To verify the accuracy of data analyses member checking was used. Interview participants were given a written draft of the 'results and their interpretation' section of the study report (in Russian) so that they could check the content and correct any misunderstandings related to their responses in the questionnaire and interview.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The opinion survey through questionnaire and interview made it possible for us to identify the attitudes of the respondents to the implementation of EMI program and its impact on educational, cultural and economic situation at the Innovative University of Eurasia. The targeted respondents were asked questions about their awareness of EMI/CLIL, the benefits, potential and challenges of its possible implementation at the university, academic disciplines which should be taught in English first and foremost, the needed English proficiency level of both teachers and students and the degree of EMI implementation in the educational process.

#### ***3.1. Administration Representatives' Opinion about Implementing EMI in the Innovative University of Eurasia***

Data analysis shows that the informants' awareness of EMI and CLIL is low: only 3 out of 10 people reported they heard about CLIL, but two of them found it difficult to explain what it is; not any of the informants heard about EMI. However, it is worth mentioning here that the majority of the respondents (8 out of 10) are aware of teaching an academic subject through English that



occurs in Kazakhstani context (e.g., Nazarbayev University, Nazarbayev intellectual schools) but they do not know a specific term or name for it; one person associated the terms EMI and CLIL as synonyms of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Two persons reported they have a rather obscure understanding of using English as an instruction medium for non-English speaking students at home universities. The table below shows the results of the respondents' awareness of using English as a means of an academic subject instruction.

**Table 1: InEU Administration Representatives' Awareness of Using English as a Means of an Academic Subject Instruction**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
CLIL (Content and language integrated learning)	3	30%
EMI (English-medium instruction)	0	0%
Academic subject instruction in English (with no specific name)	8	80%

The respondents also made comments about the sources of information regarding teaching an academic subject through English which was mainly the Internet; one person mentioned a colleague from another university, still one more person explained that she came across the idea of using English as an instruction medium while familiarizing herself with the program of multilingual education.

As a matter of fact, English as a medium of instruction is employed in a number of educational institutions in Kazakhstan. These are predominantly specialized schools for gifted children and Kazakh-Turkish lyceums, on a secondary level (ages 11-17), and several universities, on a tertiary level. On the initiative of the country's Ministry of Education a CLIL program as an innovation has been introduced in 50 to 60 schools on an experimental basis in 2007 (Decree of the Ministry of Education 387, 2007). Later, in 2008-2011, Nazarbayev intellectual schools were founded – a network of schools for training gifted children in the spheres of science, economics and politics where instruction is given in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English.

As to the university level education, instruction through the medium of English, though not introduced officially except for a small number of universities, is strongly encouraged in the framework of multilingual education by both the Ministry and the universities themselves, mostly private ones, which look at teaching in EMI as a hallmark of quality education and prestige. Among them mention should be made of Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research (KIMEP), Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages named after Ablai-Khan, University of International Business, International Academy of Business, Kazakh-American University, Kazakhstan-British Technical University, Suleyman Demirel University, where instruction is conducted fully or predominantly in English.

The present study also revealed the benefits which EMI introduction might bring for students, instructors, and the university in general. Thus, among the most frequently mentioned responses of the target group about students' benefits were (in decreasing order): participation in various international programs (Bolashak, master's degree in a foreign university, international study placement) and international projects (both academic and research); an opportunity to get further (second) education abroad (including online study mode); competitiveness of the university graduates on the labour market and wide opportunities in employment (e.g., a prestigious job in foreign and transnational companies). Some informants admitted that EMI practice will widen students' horizons and promote their personal growth as well as improve their professional English language proficiency. One person stressed that studying a major subject in English is a chance for a student to become multilingual; another person was convinced that studying in English is a marker of prestigious education. At the same time two informants raised doubt about a beneficial impact of EMI on the students on account of the extremely low English proficiency level and conservative mentality of the latter. Another reason against EMI was verbalized as follows: "The language of instruction at the university now is mostly Russian. Kazakh is used far less frequently. Using English as the only means of instruction would mean neglecting the Kazakh language." The opinion of the informants as to

the benefits students might get from EMI implementation at InEU is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: The Benefits to the Students from EMI Implementation at InEU**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Participation in international programs and projects	8	80%
An opportunity to get further (second) education abroad	8	80%
Competitiveness and wide opportunities in employment	7	70%
Personal growth	3	30%
High professional English language proficiency	3	30%
Multilingualism	1	10%
Prestigious education	1	10%
No benefit	2	20%

Furthermore, nine out of ten respondents are convinced that teaching their subjects in English will have a positive impact. They reported that lecturing in English would have a beneficial influence on instructors' careers, mainly it would raise a teacher's ranking and provide an opportunity for external academic mobility and labor migration to developed countries. It was also emphasized that for English-medium teaching, instructors would have to use specialist literature written in English to prepare for their lectures that, in turn, would raise their professional competencies and the quality of teaching materials. It would also raise the teaching staff motivation to participate in various foreign programs, including grant programs and internships, as well as motivation for writing scientific articles in publications with a high impact factor. Several survey participants admitted that the practice of English-medium teaching would make instructors more confident, since it would increase the level of their English language proficiency and, thus, improve the quality of their professional communication with foreign colleagues. One person, however, spoke against EMI introduction at the university at this point because of a low English

proficiency level and traditionally conservative mentality of instructors that would deteriorate the quality of education. The survey data analyzing the benefits for the academic staff of the university are given in Table 3.

**Table 3: The Benefits to the Academic Staff from EMI Implementation at InEU**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
International academic mobility	9	90%
High ranking among the teaching staff	9	90%
Participation in international academic and research programs and projects	9	90%
Ability to read specialist literature written in English and increase own professional competencies	8	80%
Ability to write scientific articles and publications in foreign research journals with high impact factor	4	40%
Increase in English proficiency	3	30%
Better quality of professional communication with foreign colleagues	3	30%
No benefit	1	10%

As to the benefits the university as a whole might get with EMI introduction, the respondents were almost unanimous in voicing the following: a high ranking in various rating agencies and an international status; incoming external academic mobility (with international students from Africa, Japan, India, China, etc.); international (outgoing) academic mobility of the faculty members and students; diversified international cooperation (in the spheres of education, science and culture); multilingualism policy realization on the university level; increase in income. Table 4 shows the data obtained from the respondents about the benefits the university

in general can obtain from EMI implementation at InEU.

**Table 4: The Benefits to the Innovative University of Eurasia from EMI Implementation**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
High ranking in rating agencies	9	90%
Incoming external academic mobility	9	90%
International academic mobility of teaching staff and students	9	90%
Enhanced international cooperation in the spheres of education, science and culture	9	90%
Contribution to multilingualism policy realization	6	60%
University's increased financial resources	4	40%
No benefit	1	10%

The data show that the university administration representatives predominantly agree that teaching in EMI should have a beneficial impact on students, faculty and the university in general. The idea of internationalization seems an important consideration since it will give the university a leadership status in the region as well as provide membership in the global educational scene. Besides, EMI, looked at locally, can be regarded as a potential means to realize the goal set by President Nazarbayev (Message to the people of Kazakhstan "New Kazakhstan in the New World," 2007) stating that each citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan has to be competent at least in three languages: Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication and English as the language of successful integration in global economy.

The university administration would obviously like to see their faculty highly professional on an international scale and students competitive on the labour market which is also emphasized in other studies (Soren 3; Brown 51); EMI policy might be considered as a tool for it. Furthermore, since universities today are viewed as businesses governed by market laws

(Coleman 3) the economic reasons of EMI programs with fee-paying foreign students are quite obvious. However, as we see from the data analysis, the attitude to teaching in EMI is not unanimously positive. One of the reasons why people question a positive impact of the English medium on subject learning concerns the insufficient command of the target language of both students and instructors which would inevitably deteriorate the quality of teaching and learning (See also Marsh 31; Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra, “Internationalization” 347; Manh 265). Another important reason is the opinion that using English as a means of instruction is a threat that might impact negatively on the vitality of the native language (in our case – Kazakh), which provides support for the views voiced in previous studies (Coleman 2; Kirkpatrick, “Internationalization or Englishization” 13; Phillipson 6; Doiz et al., *English-Medium Instruction* 99).

By contrast, alongside with the benefits the university, teachers and students might get from EMI project, the participants of the survey noted the challenges the university would have to face. These were: instructors’ and students’ insufficient English proficiency; low students’ learning motivation as well as low teachers’ motivation arising from their conservative mentality and psychological resistance to methodological innovation; faculty unpreparedness for EMI; absence of appropriate teaching materials and resources; insufficient knowledge of appropriate teaching methodology. The challenges arising from EMI program introduction as reported by the informants are given in Table 5.

**Table 5: The Challenges Arising from EMI Implementation at the Innovative University of Eurasia**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Insufficient English proficiency of students and faculty	10	100%
Low motivation of students and faculty	10	100%
Conservative mentality and psychological resistance to methodological innovation of students and faculty	6	60%
Absence of appropriate teaching materials and resources	6	60%
Low faculty awareness of EMI methodology	6	60%
Faculty unpreparedness for EMI	3	30%

As we see from Table 5, a serious barrier to a successful EMI program realization is a poor English proficiency of both students and faculty. Respondents in this study showed concern that taking courses in English – a language to be still mastered – as well as the instructors' insufficient command of English would have a negative effect on students' subject knowledge acquisition. Another worry of the university policy-makers deals with the psychological unpreparedness of the teaching staff to adapt and their lack of motivation which was also pointed out by other researchers (Parveen et al. 51; Yen 223; Vu and Burns 20). Judging by the responses, the administration is concerned with the lack of interest of a great part of the faculty for opening EMI programs at the university; their slow professional interaction with foreign colleagues; a low rate of publishing in English in foreign research journals. Some also stated the university's weak employment policy as to the trilingual competence of employees.

Alongside with psychological and ethical factors, the study also highlighted 'technical' challenges of EMI introduction such as absence or low quality of specific teaching and learning materials, resources and methodologies which were previously revealed by other researchers (Marsh 33; Vu & Burns 23; Dearden 2). Teaching in English will surely require a greater workload on instructors than teaching in a native language; teachers will have to develop, adapt or buy content materials and switch to a new methodology that is more learner-centered than teacher-centered. All these demand enormous physical, psychological and financial resources.

However, the majority of respondents (7 out of 10) voiced an opinion that the university possesses a considerable potential for EMI program implementation, which should be realized gradually. First, it was stated that the university has enough facilities, resources and financial means to implement the project. Second, there is a growing number of instructors whose motivation for teaching in English (and using English in their career development, in general) is increasing due to a new administration policy of financial reward as well as due to the needs professors face today in our global world, such as attending and presenting at international conferences; participating in international projects and programs (including exchange programs);

publishing articles in foreign research journals; communicating professionally with foreign colleagues; amongst other aspects. One person also emphasized that in the framework of the government’s trilingual policy “in a couple of years the majority of the faculty will not be in demand on the labour market without the knowledge of three languages”. Additionally, it was noted that motivation of students who want to have English as a means of instruction in their major increases too, which is conditioned by students’ desire to be competitive in the global world through internationalized specialist knowledge. Third, there appears a number (though quite small) of foreign undergraduate and graduate students from China, India, Poland, Germany, who are potentially able to learn in English but have to learn in Russian (which they have to learn at pre-courses) because there are no English courses in their specialist subjects at InEU. Finally, several informants noted that at the university there are already support structures functioning such as the department of foreign languages and the language center, which could assist both students and lecturers in the transition to EMI. Table 6 shows the administration representatives’ responses concerning EMI implementation opportunities at InEU.

**Table 6: InEU Potential Opportunities of EMI Introduction from the Perspective of Administration**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Good facilities and material resources	10	100%
Enough financial resources	7	70%
Growing number of motivated teachers and students	6	60%
Forthcoming foreign student programs	3	30%
Department of foreign languages and Language center as support structures	3	30%



The representatives of the University administration made special comments on the degree of EMI implementation at InEU. All respondents stated that EMI should be implemented gradually. Seven people remarked that 10-15% of subjects should be presented in English at the beginning; this number might be brought up to 50% later on. One person believed that we should begin with training in English foreign students only. As to domestic students, in his opinion, the degree of English as a medium of instruction should not be more than 10-15% (combined with enhanced training in EFL) at the 1<sup>st</sup> year, up to 30% at the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 75% at the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years. Another person stressed the fact that EMI should be looked at as part of the government's trilingual policy, thus, the correlation of lecturing in Kazakh, Russian and English should be 35%, 35% and 30% respectively. Still one more person was convinced that instead of EMI program implementation the university should increase the quality of professional training at the classes of English for specific purposes. A general trend in the administration's opinion is evident EMI support which should be introduced very carefully, irrespective of the challenges the university faces in this respect. As one of the Vice-rectors noted: "Of course, there are problems and fear that we'll be doomed to failure to start the project [EMI] right now. But we should start to do something! Otherwise we'll never know. And we should learn how to solve the problems if we don't want to find ourselves on the outskirts of the global society."

In terms of the course types which should be taught in English first and foremost, the respondents produced various points of view. Two people thought that these should be the disciplines which train basic competences in a particular specialty (major subjects) so that students could deal with concepts challenging to learn from the start. Alternatively, seven people believed that those should be elective courses where students could evaluate their learning potential first. One person considered that there should be a general English course. Overall, most respondents agreed that these should be the disciplines where lecturers as well as their students are ready for teaching and learning in English, e.g. enough level of English proficiency, an experience of lecturing in English, after CLIL, ESP or other courses.

The final issue of the opinion survey was the English proficiency level both teachers and students should possess. The proficiency level of lecturers, in InEU administration representatives' view, was formulated as "high enough". The respondents explained what they meant by this definition differently. Some, who obviously have taken/passed IELTS, TOEFL or some other English proficiency examinations, attended English courses or are familiar with the CEFR (*Common European Framework of Reference*), specified it like "IELTS 4.5 and higher", "Upper-intermediate", "B2", "C2". Others verbalized the requirements such as "can communicate with foreign colleagues", "the level of a native speaker", "can explain, read, write, listen and understand, translate".

The desired English proficiency level of the students was described as "medium" and "high enough". The first response was specified as "A2", "IELTS 3.5 and higher", "Intermediate", "can listen, understand, retell and give feedback". The second response implied "Upper-intermediate", "can speak freely", "knows and can speak about basic concepts of a particular field of knowledge", "near to foreign English-speaking students".

It is interesting to note that the university policy-makers while expressing their opinions about the English proficiency levels of both teachers and students evaluated their own target language levels. With several exceptions, the respondents admitted a "rather low" English command, although remarked that they would like to improve their reading specialist literature and communication skills.

The university administration opinion survey identified the general trend of a positive but cautious attitude to a global phenomenon of EMI. Obvious benefits of EMI introduction at InEU testify to the administration's support of the project and encouragement of the faculty to engage in it. However, problems and barriers associated with it provoke the administrative staff to take a balanced approach to its realization. A general feeling is a pilot project which would involve joint efforts of the university selected teachers and the English language instructors who would collaborate to probe how well EMI could be implemented (if it ever can) in the InEU educational setting.

**3.2. The University Instructors' Perspectives on Implementing EMI in the Innovative University of Eurasia**

The study indicated that all targeted respondents were aware of today's tendency of using English as the language of instruction at schools and universities. However, only 6 people showed their awareness of terminology: 5 lecturers (out of 20) admitted they heard about CLIL from ELT teachers of InEU; one person reported she had come across with the term EMI on the British Council website. The table that follows shows the lecturers' awareness of using English as a means of instruction.

**Table 7: InEU Instructors' Awareness of Using English as a Means of an Academic Subject Instruction**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
CLIL (Content and language integrated learning)	5	25%
EMI (English-medium instruction)	1	5%
Academic subject instruction in English (with no specific name)	20	100%

During a follow-up interview the respondents explained their understanding of CLIL and EMI in the following ways:

- "CLIL is an approach when a foreign language is used as a tool for a subject learning in an interactive mode";
- "I hear it [CLIL] uses a specific methodology which is different from a traditional methodology of teaching a language. It makes it easier to learn professional English";
- "[CLIL is] learning English through specialist subjects";
- "CLIL means teaching a subject such as physics, geography, psychology, etc. in English";
- "EMI? It comes from Oxford. I think it means that English is an instrument for mastering a subject. It is for those whose mother tongue is not English".

The responses show that there is no clear understanding of what CLIL and EMI mean. As Dearden says:

It [EMI] is sometimes used as synonymous with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). However CLIL has a dual education objective built into its title (the enhancement of both content and language) whereas EMI does not. Taken at ‘face value’ EMI simply describes the practice of teaching an academic subject through English which is not the first language of the majority population. (7)

The data analysis revealed the lecturers’ perspective as to the benefits of implementing English as a medium of instruction at InEU. All respondents admitted a positive impact of EMI introduction for students and teachers as well as the university as a whole. Thus, students’ benefits might be as follows: integration into a global educational environment by way of participating in student exchange programs; master’s degree study abroad; academic mobility; competitiveness at an international labour market; better employment opportunities at home; increased motivation to learn the subject; language practice; increased language proficiency level; deeper understanding of specialist terminology used internationally; improved critical thinking and communication skills; expanded horizons; developed self-esteem for better professional and personal results (Table 8).

**Table 8: The Benefits for the Students from EMI Implementation at InEU: Instructors’ Perspective**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Integration into a global educational environment	20	100%
Competitiveness at an international labour market	20	100%
Better employment opportunities at home	14	70%
Increased motivation to learn the subject	10	50%
Language practice	10	50%
Increased language proficiency level	10	50%
Deeper understanding of specialist terminology	7	35%
Improved critical thinking and communication skills	2	10%
Expanded horizons	2	10%
Developed self-esteem	1	5%

The lecturers also made comments about the benefits for instructors that might arouse from English instruction in their subjects. All 20 respondents agree that teaching their subjects in English is a powerful means of professional development. It may provide a deeper understanding of one’s subject via accessing new knowledge and innovation presented in English. As one of the participants remarked, “Using English as an instrument of teaching will motivate me to self-education and professional growth”.

The majority of the lecturers also spoke about the improvements of the teaching-learning process through the usage of a new methodology (many mentioned CLIL methodology) that incorporates the development of students’ communication and cognitive skills. Furthermore, the respondents stated that teaching in English could provide them an opportunity “to communicate internationally on a higher level,” particularly more confidence while presenting at international conferences, collaborative ties with foreign colleagues, academic mobility, participation in various international projects and programs.

Additionally, the faculty members noted that regular practising English in their lessons would improve their language proficiency which might be looked upon as not just a personal gain but a professional gain as well: “A foreign language mastering should be an indispensable component of one’s professionalism”.

The questionnaire and interview results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: The Benefits to the Faculty from EMI Implementation at InEU: Instructors’ Perspective**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Professional development	20	100%
Educational process improvement through a new methodology	17	85%
Improved communication at the international level	14	70%
Improved language proficiency	10	50%
Personal growth	4	20%

And finally, questionnaire and interview data analysis revealed the faculty opinion as to what benefits the university might get in case EMI program is to be implemented there. The overwhelming majority thought that courses in English may provide a higher ranking of the university at the international level as well as strengthen its leading position in the region. Besides, it would also mean “a step nearer to internationalization of domestic education,” “joining the international market of educational services”. This could ensure a better quality education which, in its turn, may lead to a greater student enrollment, on the one hand, and an increased number of recruiters who will want employ the university’s graduates. Additionally, EMI implementation might help realize the government’s multilingualism policy at the university level. Moreover, as one of the respondents stated, “A university should educate successful people and English today seems to be one of the key factors that can make it possible”. The data obtained from the lecturers concerning a positive impact of EMI introduction at InEU are presented in table 10.

**Table 10: The Benefits to InEU from EMI Implementation: Instructors’ Perspective**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
High ranking at the international level	19	95%
Leading position in the region	17	85%
Internationalization of domestic education	16	80%
Better quality education	15	90%
Greater student enrollment	9	45%
Favourable position at the labour market	5	25%
Contribution to multilingualism policy realization	2	10%
“Successful people” training	1	5%

As we see, the instructors' perspective of using English to train students is rather favourable. The faculty members questioned and interviewed are optimistic about the benefits the university might get. Those benefits include both personal gains of students and instructors and organizational gains in the academic, professional and image-building spheres.

However, a worry was voiced by the respondents as to the challenges they will have to face in case EMI is introduced. Two most difficult problems all instructors identified were the low language proficiency level of instructors and students as well as a huge amount of extra-work instructors would have to prepare for classes. In terms of their English proficiency level most of the respondents believed they did not have "level enough" to provide a quality service. However, many people admitted they needed training and were ready to improve their language ability and skills through courses and self-education.

As to the second difficult problem, the biggest concern turned out to be a weak support of department heads who reluctantly provide favourable working conditions to those engaged in EMI programs. One of the professors remarked during an interview: "This is a great pressure. It requires more preparation. We need to develop new syllabuses and other documentation, new materials. And there are extra-curricular activities and community work we still need to do. What we need are incentives."

The respondents also raised doubt about the students' readiness to learn in English because of an insufficient language ability of the latter: "Students will have learning problems because of the low English level. It means I'll have to use a simplified language which will require simplifying the content. And this is low quality education!"

Among other challenges the faculty members mentioned the lack or insufficiency of authentic teaching materials, resources and facilities, poor knowledge of relevant methodology, the faculty's inactivity and low motivation, and administration pressure. Additionally, as experience shows, a group of students who enroll in a subject taught in English very often includes mixed-ability students as well as students who learned a foreign language other than

English at school which also makes a problem. Table 11 shows the challenges identified by the faculty members in case EMI program is implemented at InEU.

**Table 11: The Challenges Arising from EMI Implementation at InEU: Instructors' Perspective**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Insufficient English proficiency of students and faculty	20	100%
Weak administration support and few incentives	20	100%
Low quality education as a result of simplified language and content	17	85%
Lack of appropriate teaching materials and resources	16	80%
Low faculty awareness of EMI methodology	16	80%
Faculty's low motivation and inactivity	13	65%
Mixed-ability student grouping	8	40%

An issue concerning the university potential to incorporate EMI identified a rather cautious attitude from the respondents. None of them were quite sure whether the university possesses sufficient finance and material resources for that. However, many lecturers admitted there was a strong will of the university administration “to start up the teaching in English project” that will definitely promote the necessary conditions for that.

Though saying that instruction in English was a difficult task, the majority of respondents were positive about its introduction at the university. Some of the comments the lecturers made included the following:

- “At our department at least a half of the teaching staff participated in international programs. So, we have a good experience of using English at a professional level”.
- “I’m not confident to speak English freely but when I have to present at



conferences I try to overcome my fear . . . . I think I will get used to using English with my students. Besides, I take English courses”.

- “I try to teach electrical engineering in English to my students from time to time. They like such lessons. It’s fun”.
- “Yes, I have an experience of teaching in English though a limited one . . . . Students like lessons in English [smiles]”.

So we can see that the participants refer to communication in English in a meaningful context (conferences, international programs, correspondence with colleagues), a growing number of motivated faculty teachers and a positive attitude of students as potential strengths of EMI implementation at InEU. The instructors’ responses concerning potentially strong issues of introducing EMI are given in Table 12.

**Table 12: InEU Potential Opportunities of EMI Implementation: Instructors’ Perspective**

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Experience of communicating in an international context (conference presentations, participation in international programs, correspondence with foreign colleagues)	20	100%
Growing number of motivated teachers and students	20	100%
“A rule of thumb” administration decision	16	80%
Experience of teaching in English	5	25%
Completed language courses	5	25%

The study also demonstrated the instructors’ opinion about the degree of EMI implementation at the institutional level. A general opinion was: the innovation should not be introduced “too quickly”. The so-called “soft” form of the project is preferable to start with. One of the instructors said during the interview: “We have to be flexible. A slow start, maybe with

some pilot group of students . . . . Giving the material in portions, a gradual switch from Russian into English so that students become accustomed to a new language of instruction are important”.

The participants reported on the percentage of implementing English as a medium of instruction. The majority of respondents (11) consider it to be 50-60% of the curriculum; 3 people believed this degree should be higher – 70-80 %. Two people supported a radical shift to English usage in class (100%), however, stating that such a revolutionary change should be realized with a limited audience of students whose language mastery is high. Another two people argued the implementation degree should not exceed 5-10% because, as they stated, “we have to realize multilingualism policy ‘The Trinity of Languages’. So we have to implement two languages – English and Kazakh, and this is a hard job”. One lecturer noted that 10% was a reasonable start; gradually it could be increased up to 30%. Still one more admitted “hard to say”. However, all respondents were unanimous in two things; on the one hand, EMI implementation should not be thoughtless and, on the other hand, a delay until there are ideal conditions would mean a rather long wait.

The issue about which subjects should be taught in English revealed two opposing opinions. Half of the instructors (10) said those should be major subjects when students from the very beginning acquire through English most important skills and knowledge necessary in their future professional activity. Seven people argued that it was logical to begin with non-major/elective subjects to minimize the losses because of inevitable simplification of content which is fatal in major subject acquisition. One person was convinced the only factor that conditions the choice of an English-medium course is the language proficiency level of the instructor and students; the remaining two respondents voiced the opinion that each student should have at least one subject taught in English per semester.

The English proficiency level of both instructors and students was identified as a key factor that could hinder EMI implementation at the university (See Table 11 above). The respondents made comments about language proficiency of instructors who would teach in

English such as “Upper-Intermediate”, “Intermediate and higher”, “Advanced”, “IELTS 6,5”. As to the students level, in the respondents’ opinion, it should be “B1”, “B2”, “Intermediate”, “Intermediate and higher”, “IELTS 4,5”. As we see, the general English level of the faculty, as perceived by most respondents, is required to be higher than that of students. When asked to identify one’s own level of English proficiency, 15 people reported it as “Intermediate”, 2 people as “Upper-Intermediate” and 3 people as “Low”. All instructors admitted they needed special language training; 8 people remarked they were currently taking an English training course.

The instructors’ opinion survey suggests the faculty’s overall positive perception of the English language instruction implementation at InEU. They pointed out various motivations for EMI courses at personal and institutional levels emphasizing internationalization of education, personal and professional growth, status and higher university ranking. Unlike administration representatives who look at EMI globally, as “a political issue”, the faculty members presented, as it were, “an outward glance” and their concerns were mostly connected with “ways and techniques” of EMI implementation directly in class.

Questionnaire and interview data analysis allowed us to identify the overall attitude of the university administration and the faculty to English-medium instruction implementation at the institutional level which we can specify as “rather encouraging but cautious.” The administration is positive about EMI and is ready to give support to its implementation due to various reasons, although understanding that a number of challenges would hamper its implementation at the university. The targeted teaching staff, in its turn, welcomes the innovation emphasizing the benefits it gives them and students. However, instructors expect from the university administration a balanced approach to EMI introduction which should be gradual since it might have a detrimental effect on subject content learning and education quality.

Data analysis also made it possible for us to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in EMI implementation at InEU.

The strengths might be identified as follows:

- Overall positive public opinion of EMI at InEU;
- Corporate culture of innovation value;
- Administration support policy;
- Available academic facilities and financial resources;
- Growing number of motivated teachers and students;
- Growing number of staff with experience of communicating in an international context and teaching in English;
- Department of foreign languages and a language center as support structures.

However, there are certain weaknesses among which mention should be made of:

- Low English proficiency of the teaching staff and students;
- Lack of appropriate authentic teaching materials and resources;
- Low faculty awareness of EMI methodology;
- People's conservative mentality and psychological resistance to methodological innovation; low motivation and inactivity of a great number of students and faculty;
- Mixed-ability student grouping;
- Few incentives for English-medium instruction teachers.

It is worth mentioning that EMI implementation at the institutional level might bring certain opportunities, for example:

- Economic opportunities: greater student enrollment (both domestic and foreign students), university's increased financial resources;
- Political opportunities: the government's trilingual policy "The Trinity of Languages" implementation;
- Market opportunities: leadership in education (EMI programs, foreign students, better quality education, varied education opportunities for students), higher

university ranking, better employment opportunities for graduates;

- Technological opportunities: distance education;
- International opportunities: integration into a global educational environment, international scholarships, participation in international programs/projects, international cooperation in the spheres of education, science and culture;
- Social opportunities: traditional ('soviet') attitude to education as a society value and a target audience as a consequence.

On the contrary, it might pose external threats, such as:

- Economic threats: decreasing social standard of living and at the same time increasing tuition fee;
- Political threats: government's supportive policy in relation to state universities exclusively;
- Market threats: strong competition among universities;
- Social threats: unfavourable demographic situation (low birth rate within the period of 1990-2000s and as a result few university applicants today), potential applicant loss due to their departure to Russia, applicants (school leavers) with a low English proficiency, psychological factors connected with instability and uncertainty.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study was a preliminary opinion survey to explore the viewpoints of the Innovative University of Eurasia faculty and administration as to English-medium instruction implementation at the institutional level. The opinion survey made through questionnaire and personal interview with respondents identified both benefits and challenges of such implementation as well as a general perception of this innovation in the university context. The survey also showed there is acceptance of EMI and recognition of its value by the university administration staff who intend

to start an EMI pilot project and motivate the faculty to develop it. The administration's decision found support among a number of instructors and students. The targeted respondents reported various positive factors for offering EMI courses, among them education internationalization; leadership opportunities and higher ranking; competitiveness; better quality education; greater student enrollment; better employment opportunities; multilingualism policy realization; professional development and personal growth.

However, a deeper look at the problem generated an awareness of factors that may become dominant in the implementation and development of English-medium teaching. The following factors might have a serious antagonistic effect on the project's success: inadequate English competence of instructors and students; lack of relevant authentic teaching materials and resources; lecturers' ignorance of EMI methodology; low motivation and inertness; lack of support structures; mixed-ability classes; extra work-load and teaching hours. An implication of this result is that EMI implementation at InEU should be seriously considered in terms of students' and instructors' preparedness to it, additional general English training programs; specific materials development or acquisition; specific EMI pedagogy training programs; available support structures and incentives.

Looking ahead, a further extensive investigation of the instructors' views and experiences, the students' perceptions as well as pilot project results analysis are required for successful planning, implementation and development of English-medium instruction at the Innovative University of Eurasia.

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