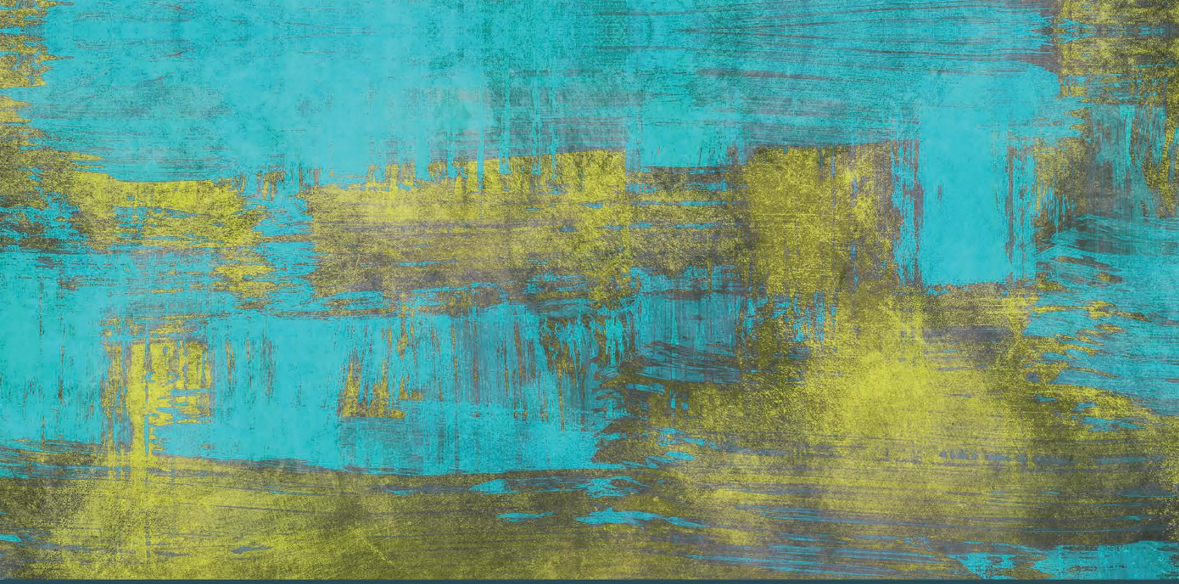

Routledge Studies in English-Medium Instruction

ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Edited by
Mark Wyatt and Glenda El Gamal

English as a Medium of Instruction on the Arabian Peninsula

Focusing on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in the Arab Gulf states, the authors consider both sociolinguistic and pedagogical perspectives and explore practical implications.

This edited volume features chapters covering how teachers are negotiating the linguistic challenges posed by EMI; issues of ownership, choice and agency; the scaffolding of academic literacies; how to support the development of content teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in EMI settings as well as the benefits of a bilingual education. Chapter authors all have extensive local experience that they draw upon reflectively in their writing. Policy-makers, teachers and teacher educators wondering how they can best balance the need to develop competence in English in students of all ages on the Arabian Peninsula in a globalizing world, together with the concern to nurture the Arabic language, culture and identity, will gain rich insights from this book.

Postgraduates and researchers exploring issues surrounding EMI, both locally and internationally, will benefit from the arguments presented in this volume.

Mark Wyatt is Associate Professor of English at Khalifa University in the UAE. He previously worked for the University of Leeds (on a teacher education project in Oman) and later for the University of Portsmouth, UK. His research interests include language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, reflective practice, practitioner research, mentoring and EMI. He recently co-edited *International Perspectives on Mentoring in English Language Education* (Palgrave).

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The Importance of Choice and Agency

Sarah Hopkyns

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Zayed University, United Arab Emirates

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5 English-Medium Instruction in Emirati Higher Education

The Importance of Choice and Agency

Sarah Hopkyns

Introduction: Bidirectional Language-in-Education Policy

Education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is characterised by ongoing and dynamic language-in-education policy changes. The implications of educational reform in Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) schooling and in Higher Education (HE) are bidirectional in that school policies affect and are influenced by policies in HE and vice versa. Arguably, the most dramatic school policy change in the UAE's largest emirate, Abu Dhabi, took place in 2010 with the arrival of the New School Model (NSM), which introduced English-Medium Instruction (EMI) for core subjects in government schools. Private and international schools at this point were already dominated by EMI (see also El Gamal, Chapter 3). In 2019, the NSM morphed into the nationwide Emirates School Model (ESM) (Gobert, 2019). The changes brought about by the NSM and subsequent ESM meant that English shifted from being a subject to a medium of instruction (MOI). Such policy changes are in part influenced by the dominance of EMI in HE, which in turn is driven by global neoliberal ideologies equating English with success and profit. In UAE HE, despite a range of options regarding type of institution (government universities, private universities, international branch campuses [IBC]), there is little choice to study in a medium other than English. The vast majority of degree programmes in the UAE are EMI with the exception of courses such as Sharia Law or Islamic Studies (Hopkyns, 2020a; Hopkyns et al., 2021). Even IBCs originating from non-anglophone countries, such as *Paris Sorbonne Abu Dhabi*, run EMI courses (Carroll & van den Hoven, 2017).

However, despite the prevalence of EMI in HE, not all students are necessarily ready for it due to having attended only partially English-medium state schools and lacking linguistic capital in the form of English at home. This is due to the current generation often being the first in their families to attend university. As a result, there is often a notable gap between students' English proficiency upon entering university and the level needed to complete their degrees in English. This situation has meant that conditional entry programmes, which are named differently according to institution (preparatory, foundation or academic bridge programmes), have traditionally been both typical and necessary

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in UAE universities to bridge the English proficiency gap. However, such foundation programmes, which usually last up to two years, are gradually being phased out in conjunction with the increase of EMI in schools (Baker, 2017; Gallagher & Jones, Chapter 2). We see here how educational policies at various levels feed into each other and work in tandem to fulfil the overarching goals of producing bilingual and biliteral Emirati students who can succeed in the job market.

While the growth of EMI is a global phenomenon, this movement is particularly interesting to investigate in the UAE due to the fast pace at which EMI has been wholeheartedly adopted in a short space of time. Pecorari and Malmström (2018) provide a fourfold definition of what constitutes an EMI setting. Firstly, in EMI contexts, English is the language used for instructional purposes. Secondly, English is not itself the subject being taught. Thirdly, language development is not the primary intended outcome. And fourthly, English is usually the second language for most learners. In addition, as Fenton-Smith et al. (2017) point out, EMI is not only about language and pedagogy, but it is also a geopolitical, economical and ideological phenomenon which affects whole university ecosystems inside and outside the classroom. Also taking a holistic approach, Dafouz et al. (2016) argue that the term 'English medium education' (EME) is more appropriate than EMI, as the former includes more than only instruction or teaching; it also involves research and the phenomenon of internationalisation. Dafouz et al. (2016) expand the term EME to include the recognition of the role languages other than English play in multilingual universities, suggesting the term 'English medium education in multilingual university settings' (EMEMUS) to be useful and more specific when discussing language ecologies in higher education contexts dominated by English.

Despite setting transparent neoliberal goals, which mirror a general trend of more English in education globally, the UAE EMI journey has not been smooth, and difficulties continue to be experienced. Well-documented pedagogical and sociolinguistic issues have been discussed in educational domains as well as in local discourses fuelled by media debates on local educational policy decisions. While there is a growing body of work exploring stakeholders' attitudes toward EMI in the Gulf (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; El Gamal, 2018; Hopkyns, 2020a, 2020b; O'Neill, 2014) as well as pedagogical challenges faced (Abou-El-Kheir & MacLeod, 2017; Al-Bakri, 2013; Hillman & Eibenschutz, 2018), the "agentive roles" (Jiang & Zhang, 2019) of students and teachers in EME contexts have been given less attention, especially in Gulf-based literature. The aim of this chapter is to explore how teachers and students in UAE HE contexts can use agency to critically engage with the discourses of EMI. Many scholars have pointed out that EMI in UAE HE is a "choiceless choice" (Troudi & Jendli, 2011, p. 41); that is, regardless of students' MOI preferences, if they want to graduate, they must do so in English. However, while such a statement accurately identifies stakeholders' lack of agency regarding MOI, it hides a multitude of other ways in which students' and teachers' agentive roles can shape the EMI or EME experience inside and outside the classroom.

This chapter will firstly explore the background of the rapid growth of EMI in the UAE in terms of the macro-level influences of globalisation, internationalisation and neoliberal ideologies; meso-level geopolitical influences; and micro-level influences relating to institutional policy. Heated public and scholarly debates on 'Englishisation' and its effects on local linguistic and cultural identities will be discussed in relation to discourses of EMI. The concept of agency is then explored in terms of constraints and affordances. The chapter looks at the sociolinguistic implications of EMI before suggesting ways in which stakeholders can exercise agency to challenge issues around Arabic attrition and to strengthen identities and sense of belonging. The chapter will conclude by stressing the need for greater choice and agency in UAE HE beyond the confines of teachers' and students' agentic roles as classroom policy-makers.

Macro, Meso and Micro Factors Behind the Increase in EMI and Resultant Consequences in the UAE

A multitude of macro, meso and micro factors have come together to catapult EMI forward in the context of UAE HE. Macro factors include the phenomena of globalisation, internationalisation of HE and concomitant neoliberal ideologies. As Block and Khan (2021) point out, it is now a truism to say that HE institutions globally have undergone intensive processes of internationalisation and commodification, whereby universities aim to climb world rankings such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) (Wilkinson, 2013). As top-ranking universities have been predominantly in Anglophone nations which teach and do research through the medium of English, they are seen as models to emulate. Internationalisation revolves around the marketisation of education, dating back to the early 1990s when globalisation simultaneously grew in importance as a wide-reaching force. Three decades later, universities today have swallowed whole the concept of "commodification of education" and thus progressively operate as if they are "businesses, competing with other businesses in the same sector" (Block & Khan, 2021, p. 5) and as if students are clients or customers (Fairclough, 1993). Internationalisation has led to increasing connections between universities globally with an accompanying increase in borderless student and faculty mobility. As Block and Khan (2021) point out, often scholars writing about internationalisation take an uncritical stance whereby the dominance of EMI and neoliberal governance of education are seen as a natural part of a "globalised" educational experience or something that "just is" (p. 7). However, recently problematic features of internationalisation have also been discussed at length in books using words such as 'toxic', 'neoliberal war' and 'consumption' as descriptors for today's universities (Giroux, 2014; Smyth, 2017; Williams, 2013). Criticisms centre around issues of access, choice, agency, inequality and social justice – issues which relate not only to EMI, but to EME, including the dominance of English in research publications as well as for communicating in academic spaces outside classrooms (Dafouz et al., 2016). Intersecting factors such as social class, gender, race, linguistic background and prior educational experiences can impact the

EME experience for students in terms of access to content as well as attainment levels, which have associated psychological effects on confidence, self-worth, well-being, identity and a sense of belonging (Sah & Li, 2018).

Together with macro-level or global influences on EMI, a host of meso- and micro-level factors have also contributed to the rapid growth of EMI in the UAE. Meso-level or local influences include the symbolic power of English in the Gulf region. Especially in the UAE, English is promoted as a language of business for its highly diverse population. The UAE is one of the most diverse nations on the planet with just under 90 percent of its population originating from overseas. Such diversity is only narrowly surpassed by the UAE's Gulf cousin Qatar (Hillman, Chapter 4; Snoj, 2019). Transnational workers have been attracted to the UAE over the past five decades since the formation of the nation in 1971 due to its oil wealth, which enables comparatively attractive employment packages and tax-free living, as well as its year-round sunshine. With almost 200 nationalities speaking more than 100 languages, the UAE uses English as a lingua franca despite the official language being Arabic. Characterised by diglossia, the Arabic language has many forms including classical or Quranic Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic or Khaleeji dialect. Diglossia in Arabic thus adds to the linguistic diversity of the country, and it has been argued that the complexities which accompany diglossia in Arabic result in English being viewed as a comparatively 'easy' or simple language to use in public spheres (Hopkyns, 2020a). The UAE's diverse demographics have amplified the power of English in the region in the sense that it is used and accepted as the de facto lingua franca between different speech communities in public domains, and it has equal, and sometimes greater, presence on signage in relation to Arabic (Ahmed, 2020; Hopkyns, 2020c, 2020d; Hopkyns & van den Hoven, 2022). With EMI policies being embedded in a context where English dominates wider society, debates relating to 'Englishisation' and its effects on local linguistic and cultural identities (Hopkyns, 2020a) are of direct relevance to both wider society and educational contexts.

At a micro or institutional level, EMI policies at UAE public universities, where mainly national students attend, include English-medium teaching, materials and assessments. Such policies are put in place based on Ministry of Education (MOE) directives but are sometimes interpreted differently by different institutions and individuals. In this sense, policies could be described as implicit, as also seen in other contexts such as Malaysian EME HE (Ali & Hamid, 2018). In practice, UAE universities have multilingual language ecologies as faculty and staff tend to have diverse linguistic backgrounds, and written top-down messages in the university are usually bilingual (English and MSA), as are digital messages such as university memos and websites. To summarise, we can see macro, meso and micro influences on the growth of EMI in the UAE, with a range of consequences. The following sections narrow the focus to explore the consequences of EMI on stakeholders' sense of choice and agency. I first conceptualise 'agency' and discuss its relevance to sociolinguistic identities in EME contexts.

Conceptualising Agency

The concept of agency has become "a source of increasing strain and confusion in social thought" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 962). For some, defining the concept tends not to go beyond the listing of associated terms such as self-hood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom and creativity (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Other scholars have discussed the concept in greater depth by connecting agency to habits or routinised practices (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), as well as recognising the importance of goal-seeking aspects and purposivity of agency from the perspective of rational choice theory and phenomenology (De Monticelli, 2021). On the other hand, certain feminist theories have placed more emphasis on deliberation and judgement when conceptualising agency (Ackerly, 2007). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that the concept of agency involves "the dynamic interplay" between the above dimensions as well as the influence of time and space, thus providing the following definition:

> Agency is a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also orientated toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).
>
> (p. 963)

When agency is being theorised, debates centre around the degree to which agency and structure influence or limit choices available. It is generally understood that individuals' agency to make their own free choices is not detached from social structure. Structure refers to the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit choices and opportunities (Barker, 2005). Such structure includes policies which are informed by dominant ideologies and agendas. Most modern social theorists recognise that agency and structure are complementary forces. In other words, structure influences behaviour and, equally, individuals are capable of changing the social structures they inhabit (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This approach is especially applicable to the current era of globalisation with the emergence of "post-traditional" societies providing more opportunities for "social reflexivity" (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 93) and critical stances to social structures.

To apply the general conceptualisation of agency to the domain of education and language policy and planning (LPP), agency can be seen as taking the form of a strategy undertaken by an actor to bring about deliberate language change in a community of speakers (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). At a top-down level, strategies take the form of campaigns, visions and infrastructures whereas at a bottom-up level, strategies relate to practices of individuals that may accommodate or contest top-down policies to varying degrees. Petrovic and Kuntz (2013) discuss a continuum of agentic strategies which teachers and students as bottom-up agents use to respond to top-down policies: 1) *Responding within an existing frame* – following

top-down policies uncritically; 2) *Interpreting the existing frame* – examining top-down policies before accommodating them; and 3) *Reframing* – examining policies and implementing them in their own ways (as a form of resistance). It should also be recognised that agency is closely connected to affordances and that students exercise their agency to engage with anticipated benefits and opportunities (Jiang & Zhang, 2019). In this sense, agency in educational contexts represents motivation or choice to engage (Cavanagh, 2019). The following sections will explore the current discourses around structure and agency in UAE EMEMUS. The sociolinguistic implications of EMI for L1 Arabic-speaking university students will be examined based on previous Gulf research before ways in which greater agency can be achieved are suggested.

The Sociolinguistic Implications of EMI for Emirati University Students

The monopoly of EMI in the UAE context has been compared to the "Microsoft effect" (Coleman, 2006) in that the more English dominates education, the harder it is to imagine a lesser presence of the language. English then has become the norm or the *assumed* language of choice. In UAE HE, through lack of alternative MOI options, English has begun to symbolise *the* language of education (Hopkyns, 2020a; Hopkyns & Elyas, 2022). However, if stakeholders were to be provided with a hypothetical MOI choice, previous studies have found that Emirati students in government universities would prefer to have both English and Arabic, with many stating they wanted the right to choose the medium of their courses above all else. For example, in Hopkyns' (2020b) study with 100 Emirati university students, 39 percent stated they would prefer to learn through the medium of both English and Arabic. This was followed by 35 percent choosing EMI, 24 percent choosing Arabic medium instruction (AMI) and 2 percent not responding. A preference for studying in the medium of both languages was also voiced amongst O'Neill's (2014, p. 11) Emirati university student participants, where approximately 60 percent wanted to study in both English and Arabic. The languages were deemed important in educational domains for different reasons. English was associated with "progression and success", whereas Arabic was seen as important in order to prevent attrition, for greater understanding, more confidence and comfort and to allow for "greater creativity" (Hopkyns, 2020b, p. 192). Calls for choice and agency regarding MOI were also made by Emirati students in Troudi and Jendli's (2011) and Belhiah and Elhami's (2015) studies due, in part, to concerns over Arabic attrition and domain loss. Emirati students have frequently expressed the need to safeguard Arabic in the domain of education and in society in general.

In EMI contexts, 'English only' classroom policies and monolingual English assessments such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are seen as jarring with students' natural and authentic language use (Freimuth, 2016; Hopkyns, 2020a). While students often mix English and Arabic through translanguaging, code-switching and Arabizi (the use of English letters

and numbers to represent Arabic sounds) (Hopkyns et al., 2018, 2021; Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003), such translingual practice is often frowned upon in EMI contexts (Bassiouney, 2020; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Exclusion of students' natural language use on an institutional scale has been labelled 'eradicationist pedagogy' (Baker-Bell, 2020) and 'linguicism' (Skubnabb-Kangas, 1988), with often detrimental effects on academic experiences and confidence levels. 'English only' policies reinforce monolingual ideologies and deprecate naturally occurring translingual practice, which often results in domain loss and "multilingual citizens being disadvantaged" (Cook, 2020, p. 52). Further concerns relating to EMI include the gatekeeper status of English. In international benchmark tests such as IELTS, which is commonly used as a university entrance and exit exam in the UAE, studies have shown cultural bias disadvantaging students from periphery contexts, including Gulf students (Freimuth, 2016). Although locally designed alternatives to IELTS are becoming increasingly popular, such as the Emirates Standardised Test (EmSAT), assessments in EMI HE remain generally inflexible and intolerant of World Englishes and translingual practice. Furthermore, having Western-imported curricula means that students' sociolinguistic realities are seldom reflected in course materials. In addition, as many faculty members in UAE HE are non-Arabic speakers, there is a paucity of local bilingual teachers as role models (Toth, 2020). Such sociolinguistic factors can negatively affect cultural identities and sense of belonging in educational domains.

From university teachers' perspectives, previous studies have also revealed dissatisfaction with English-only education in UAE HE, whereby materials and assessments are monolingual and rubrics routinely penalise the use of languages other than English (Hopkyns, 2023). For example, both Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking university teacher participants in Hopkyns' (2020b) study favoured an official policy change which would provide students with a free choice of EMI, AMI or a combination of the two due to concerns over students' level of understanding and attainment as well as observed resentment over prohibitive language struggles. The need for choice and agency was powerfully and succinctly summed up by one teacher who stated, "A choice is always better. Choice" (Hopkyns, 2020b, p. 194). However, other teachers pointed out structural constraints such as dominant monolingual ideologies, neoliberal ideals and the particularly fast-paced top-down implementation of EMI policies in the UAE, which could be compared to an unstoppable train (Macaro, 2018). In Hopkyns' (2020b) study, such structural constraints around the dominance of EMI tended to be reluctantly accepted by teachers as a "necessary evil" whereby "little alternative" was available and it was "too late" to turn back (p. 194). In the case of teacher agency, Ali and Hamid (2018) point out the paradox of neoliberal-fuelled top-down policies requiring EMI without taking into consideration teachers' resources, philosophies or the will to follow such directives. Here, lack of choice surrounding teachers' implementation of EMI policies can lead to low self-efficacy amongst teachers who may suffer from imposter syndrome (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) or question their ability to deliver course content in English (Wyatt, 2021). While some faculty are confident about using students'

L1 as a resource (Wyatt et al., 2021), for others, stigma surrounding bringing students' L1 into UAE classrooms through translanguaging has "conditioned professors to feel that they are breaking the rules when using Arabic in the classroom" (Carroll & van den Hoven, 2017, p. 153). Such teachers may also fear that straying from EMI may jeopardise their employment contracts due to the lack of a tenure system in the UAE (Carroll & van den Hoven, 2017). Such low self-efficacy, guilt and stigma surrounding the use of languages other than English in EMI settings stem from, and are interwoven with, dominant neoliberal and monolingual ideologies which position English as the language of success in educational domains and conversely position multilingualism and translingual practice as transgressive or deficient.

Ideologies once established can be hard to change. It has been argued that the dominance of English as the 'language of education', especially in HE, has positioned Arabic as 'other' in educational domains. Findlow (2006) names the separation of English and Arabic in the UAE as 'linguistic dualism' and Hopkyns and Elyas (2022) refer to the different symbolic associations of English and Arabic as causing an "ideological divide". Previous studies in the Gulf have shown a symbolic and ideological separation of English and Arabic in the minds of students, whereby English is associated with universities while Arabic is connected with home, family and the Islamic religion (Findlow, 2006; Graham et al., 2021; Hopkyns, 2020a; Hopkyns & Elyas, 2022). A contributing factor toward such symbolic representation comes from lack of choice or agency regarding MOI or medium of education in general. Here, we see a circular relationship between EMI policies and dominant ideologies, where one feeds the other and vice versa, in a seemingly impenetrable loop.

Strengthening Students' and Teachers' Agentive Roles as Bottom-up Policy-Makers

While neoliberalism and monolingual ideologies which inform policies are deeply embedded in EMI settings, there are several grassroots steps which can be taken by teachers and students as agentic players within EMEMUS to "contest the global hegemony of English" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 212) and mould EME to better suit context-specific preferences and needs. In the field of EMI, both students' and teachers' agentic roles have been explored in a range of contexts (Ali & Hamid, 2018; Canagarajah, 1993, 1999, 2013; Cavanagh, 2019; Huang, 2018; Jiang & Zhang, 2019). Studies have investigated the degree to which students and teachers, either individually or collectively, can shape their education experiences within the structure in which they are situated. As policies are embedded in social spaces, they are frequently enacted differently by arbiters such as department chairs and teachers. In this sense, while some arbiters enforce English-only policies and police non-standardised English (Cushing, 2019), as fitting Petrovic and Kuntz's (2013) agentic category of '*responding within an existing frame* – following top-down policies uncritically', others recognise students' L1 as a resource by actively creating choices surrounding language use (Shohamy, 2013).

Based on previous research, I suggest four ways in which agency can be exercised within EMEMUS:

1 'Bringing the outside in' whereby the L1 or vernacular is given legitimate space in classrooms through translingual practice;
2 Encouraging self-directed multilingual learning;
3 Inclusion of student-centred unstructured groupwork through problem-based learning (PBL); and
4 Critical awareness raising of EMI policies and paths available for "interpreting the existing frame and reframing" (Petrovic & Kuntz, 2013).

Firstly, as found in previous Gulf research, both students and teachers have called for a move away from 'English-only' policies. A grassroots step toward greater flexibility and agency around the medium of education involves the legitimisation of translingual practice in classrooms. Translingual practice is recognised as 'ordinary' in multilingual contexts worldwide (Dovchin & Lee, 2019), and the Gulf context is no exception. While translanguaging is very common in the UAE, it is seldom positively endorsed in educational contexts. Negative connotations often prevail such as the mixing of languages being seen as embarrassing, "dilemma-filled" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 112), "inarticulate" (Palfreyman & Al-Bataineh, 2018, p. 8) or a pollutant (Hopkyns, 2020a). The dispelling of such negative connotations amongst students can occur through teachers promoting the benefits of translanguaging as a way to legitimately bring full linguistic repertoires into the educational domain. Canagarajah (2013) advocates for the use of students' L1 and translingual practice to appropriate different languages and recontextualise English for greater agency in EMI spaces. In Jiang and Zhang's (2019) study with Chinese EMI students, both high- and low-achieving learners were able to exercise agency in classrooms by using translation apps which involved students' L1. In the context of Kuwait, Akbar and Taqi (2020) found that translanguaging facilitated home-school links and cooperation, but its effectiveness depended on educators adopting a positive stance toward the practice. Rajendram (2021) also found in the context of Malaysia that teacher and parent support for translanguaging was necessary for it to be considered an affordance. Rather than translanguaging being positioned as transgressive or a resistant act, greater alignment with scholarly views on the benefits of translanguaging, as well as institutional support, is needed. Validating students' translingual identities would aid learning and strengthen a sense of belonging in multilingual universities.

Secondly, agency can come in the form of self-directed learning both inside and outside the classroom. Especially during the coronavirus period of emergency remote teaching and learning (ERT&L), students are required to access more materials digitally. While in face-to-face classes students may feel pressure to conduct research, read and take notes on worksheets in only English, online learning can allow greater choice and agency around language use with multilingual resources being preferable in some cases. Teachers can stress the importance

of freedom and flexibility with regard to language choices and embrace research sources in languages other than English, for example (Carroll, 2022).

Indeed, such practice would bring back expectations that researchers should be aware of and be able to read relevant literature in more than one language, as was often the case before the dominance of English.

Thirdly, inclusion of student-centred unstructured groupwork through problem-based learning (PBL) has been shown to provide greater opportunities for agency. For example, in Jiang and Zhang's (2019) study, it was found that "a higher level of English learning agency emerged in activities that required and allowed learners' autonomous English use and in activities where individual agency mediated and was mediated by collective agency of the learning community" (p. 13). Here, groupwork through PBL and "communities of practice" (van Lier, 2004, 2008; Jiang et al., 2018) allows for flexibility and negotiation serving to enhance learner agency.

Finally, raising awareness of the discourses surrounding EMI policies and paths available for "interpreting the existing frame" and "reframing" (Petrovic & Kuntz, 2013, p. 137) can promote greater agency. Such awareness may be self-discovered. In this sense, students may naturally encounter materials or circumstances which they critically engage with or question, leading them to intuitively adapt, reframe or resist aspects of the EMI experience. For example, Canagarajah (1993, 1999) found that students in Sri Lanka resisted or reframed the use of culturally biased American textbooks by writing glosses in the margins and adapting the stories to suit their interests and experiences. In Huang's (2018) study with Taiwanese university students, many students felt disappointed with EMI courses not matching their expectations, and they exercised agency by channelling their energy into self-directed study or opting to take Mandarin-medium courses as an alternative. In other cases, teachers can help raise awareness amongst stakeholders as to the benefits of translingual practice in EMI contexts. For example, Al-Bataineh and Gallagher (2018) encouraged the Emirati university students in their classes, who were majoring in Education, to embrace translanguaging by having them create translingual (English and Arabic) story books for primary school students. Although they encountered ideological resistance from some students, open discussions about language policy and education in the UAE followed, which helped raise students' awareness of the importance of agency and access around language use. A further way in which students can learn about the structural constraints of EMI includes the use of social media platforms such as Twitter. More so than Facebook, Twitter is hugely popular in the UAE and is often used as a digital forum for discussion of social issues (Al Mutawa, 2020). Although overt criticism voiced about controversial topics in public online forums may have social and employment consequences in the UAE context (Hudson, 2019), carefully worded prominent tweets and accompanying hashtags can contribute to sociopolitical discourse and potentially initiate policy changes.

The suggestions above may appear to be small agentic steps when juxtaposed with the prospect of larger-scale policy changes to MOI. However, as Ramanathan

(2004) points out, efforts made by stakeholders to bridge the vernacular–English divide empower individuals and groups, making such small steps necessary and important. If such acts are acknowledged and encouraged, "social and educational currency of local languages is expanded" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 212).

Conclusion: Toward Greater Choice and Agency Beyond the Classroom

This chapter has discussed the macro, meso and micro factors influencing the growth of EMI and the sociolinguistic implications of such growth in UAE HE. The chapter then narrowed the focus to explore the concept of agency as it applies to language in education. It was argued that there is currently very little choice or agency surrounding MOI in UAE HE for either teachers or students. Such a lack of choice regarding MOI conflicts with stakeholders' desires for a range of MOI options. From previous studies, Emirati university students have made calls for a mix of Arabic and English to be used. But most of all, they valued the freedom to choose the MOI which best suits their needs and preferences. This chapter has argued that such agency is restricted by current structural constraints of top-down EMI policies informed by wider neoliberal goals. The chapter went on to argue that there are, however, grassroots ways in which students and teachers can exercise agency within EMEMUS, including embracing translingual practice in classrooms, multilingual self-directed learning, unstructured group work in communities of practice and raising awareness of discourse surrounding EMI and paths of resistance.

Although teachers' and students' roles as classroom policy-makers can empower agency and reframe learning experiences, more substantial and larger-scale changes are necessary at the macro and meso levels if the desires of stakeholders expressed in previous studies are to be met. Especially, Emirati students have voiced concerns about the impact of EMI on the Arabic language in the form of domain loss and attrition, as well as negative effects on cultural identities and a sense of belonging. Larger changes to be made include a move away from only monolingual (English) assessments which act as academic gatekeepers for students whose English proficiency may not be as strong as their knowledge of subject matter (see also Zoghbor, Chapter 6). Also, rather than English being an automatic and "preconditioned choice" (Macedo et al., 2003, p. 127), pathways should be provided which allow university degrees to be earned in both languages. Current issues of plagiarism in L2 writing, which partly relate to language struggles (Khan, 2010; Pecorari, 2015), together with feelings of resentment and powerlessness amongst students with lower English proficiency, may be alleviated by the provision of a choice regarding MOI. As Cavanagh (2019) argues, for students who have no MOI choice, issues of fairness and lack of agency influence attitudes toward learning and belonging. To conclude, while teachers and students exercising agentic roles as bottom-up policy-makers in the classrooms is a step in the right direction, greater choice and agency need be provided at the institutional level. It is suggested that providing MOI options would challenge the current situation in which students automatically follow an EMI path they had no choice but to take.

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