

An Analysis of Organisational, Operation and Individual Issues in Classroom Communication of Content Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

In countries where English is not the main language of communication, teaching content courses in English is a challenge for lecturers. Past studies have shown that there are issues in the teaching of content subjects. Past studies have been done to investigate the challenges of teaching and learning content subjects in English. Some content lecturers may not face difficulty in understanding materials in English. However, when it comes to teaching the content subject in a language where the teachers are not familiar with, both teaching and learning become difficult. This quantitative pilot study is done to identify the needs amongst content lecturers in a tertiary setting. The instrument used is rooted from needs analysis model by McGehee and Thayer (1961) and challenges faced by content lecturers by Hung and Lan (2017). 30 lecturers participate in this study. Results of this study provide pedagogical implications in the teaching and learning of content subjects.

Keywords: Communication, Content courses, Challenges, Needs, Tertiary.

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Highlights of this paper

- In countries where English is not as the main language of communication, teaching content courses in English is a challenge for both students and lecturers.
- This quantitative pilot study is done to identify the needs amongst content lecturers in a tertiary setting.
- On the basis of results of this study provide pedagogical implications in the teaching and learning of content subjects.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

The introduction of education 4.0 has exposed the learning ecosystem to a globalized environment. Such an environment requires the audience to be competent in English. Institutions of higher learning are making changes on their teaching-learning to cater to English needs of teaching resources, instructors as well as students. However, the implementation of EMI (English Medium Instruction) has brought about challenges in teaching and learning. These challenges have caused pedagogical implications.

1.2. Statement of Problem and Objective

Hung and Lan (2017) conducted a study in Vietnam on content lecturers in EMI programs in a public university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The study revealed that lecturers are challenged by students' language competence, preparation time for lectures, engaging the class discussion in English and their own language ability.

In addition to that, Chang *et al.* (2012) studied the training needs assessment (TNA) using the dimensions of strategic competence, organizational performance gap & competencies gap. The findings of the study revealed that there is "capability for intervention implementation".

The objective of this study is to investigate the challenges and training needs of EMI lecturers. Specifically, this study looks into how organizational, operational and individual factors influence EMI. This study hopes to answer the following questions;

- How do Organizational Factors Influence EMI?*
- How do Operational Factors Influence EMI?*
- How do Individual Factors Influence EMI?*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This section looks into the issues of English medium instruction in institutions, challenges instructors and learners face as well as training needs.

2.2. English Medium Instruction and Challenges Content Lecturers face

In countries whose education system does not make English as the main language of communication, teaching content courses in English is a challenge for both students and teachers.

2.2.1. Lecturers' Language Skill

According to Li and Wu (2018) teachers who are not trained in English may find it challenging teaching content courses in English. Although they may be properly equipped to teach content knowledge, they may not have the language skills to teach the course content in English. These teachers may feel less skilled to teach content

courses. This is also agreed by [Vu and Burns \(2014\)](#) who also felt that lecturers' language abilities may make the lecturers feel less skilled to teach even in their own content areas

2.2.2. Teaching Materials

The issue with teaching materials is not the availability; its familiarity of the content. [Vu and Burns \(2014\)](#) presented an interesting dilemma. Young lecturers may be familiar with teaching in English; however, may not have developed high levels of content expertise. On the other hand, senior academics who have been accustomed to teach content courses in the mother tongue, have achieved some level of expertise on the course content. However, senior academics may not be ready to teach their content in a different language. In addition to that, [Li and Wu \(2018\)](#) is concerned with the possibility that assessment practices in the English medium instruction (EMI) may be assessing students' language ability instead of content or vice versa.

2.2.3. Pedagogical Issues

The issue of EMI has also created some pedagogical issues. [Li and Wu \(2018\)](#) is concerned that the lack of language skills among lecturers may lead to fewer classroom instructions among teacher and students; students and students. Classroom interactions are needed to assess students' higher-order abilities. In addition to that [Vu and Burns \(2014\)](#) reported that pedagogical issues affected both experienced and novice lecturers, whose EMI experience ranged only from four months to three years. Lecturers may revert to code-switching when it comes to teaching and classroom interaction.

2.2.4. Students' Language

Finally, teaching content courses in English is a problem when students do not have the language skills. The study by [Li and Wu \(2018\)](#) reports that although the EMI teachers were aware of students' difficulties with English, these difficulties were not commonly taken into consideration, and accommodations (by the teachers) were seldom made. Next, [Vu and Burns \(2014\)](#) states that the diversity of students' language learning styles and personalities also challenged teaching.

2.3. Summary of Teaching EMI Challenges

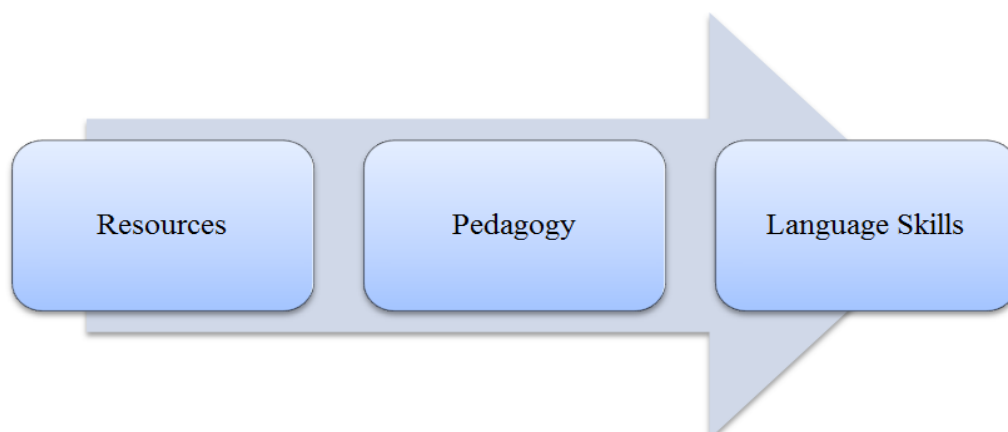


Figure-1. Summary of Teaching Challenges.

Source: [Hung and Lan \(2017\)](#).

Figure 1 summarises the teaching challenges EMI lecturers face. First of all, there is the issue of resources when it comes to teaching content courses in English. When the institutions' main language is not English, the issue is not really finding teaching materials. However, there may be challenges in designing appropriate assessment materials in the mother tongue. Teaching resources need to be changed from one language to another to suit the needs of students. Next, there will be pedagogical issues. The language of teaching the content courses will need to be changed from mother tongue to the target language and vice versa. Finally, there will also be the issue of language skills; the lecturers' teaching and also students learning.

2.4. Training Needs

McGehee and Thayer (1961) introduced a Three-Level Analysis and this model provides a systematic means of conducting a TNA at three levels: organisational, operational (or task), and individual (or person).

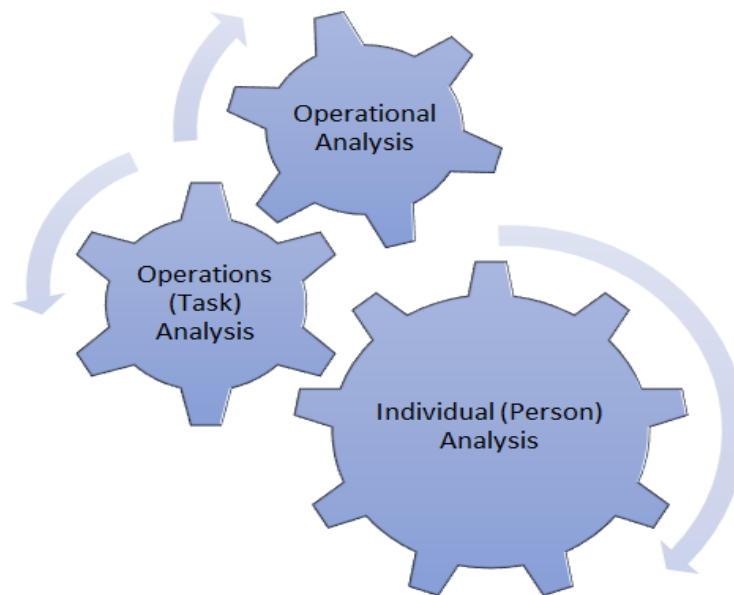


Figure-2. Training Needs Analysis (TNA).

Source: McGehee and Thayer (1961).

This main themes in the models Figure 3 are; operational analysis, operations analysis and also individual analysis. This model is from McGehee and Thayer (1961). Operation analysis refers to the analysis on the running of the programme. Next, operations analysis refers to the analysis of the task carried out in the programmes. Finally, individual analysis refers to the analysis of both the instructors and students involved in the programme.

2.5. Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework Figure 3 of this study is rooted from ;

- (a) Training needs analysis (McGehee and Thayer, 1961) main themes;
 - (i) Organisational , (ii) operational, and (iii) individual
- (b) Hung and Lan (2017) Content Lecturers' Challenges in EMI Classroom;
 - (i) Teachers' Language abilities
 - (ii) Students' language abilities
 - (iii) Engaging the class discussion
 - (iv) Preparation time for lecturers
 - (v) Teaching resources

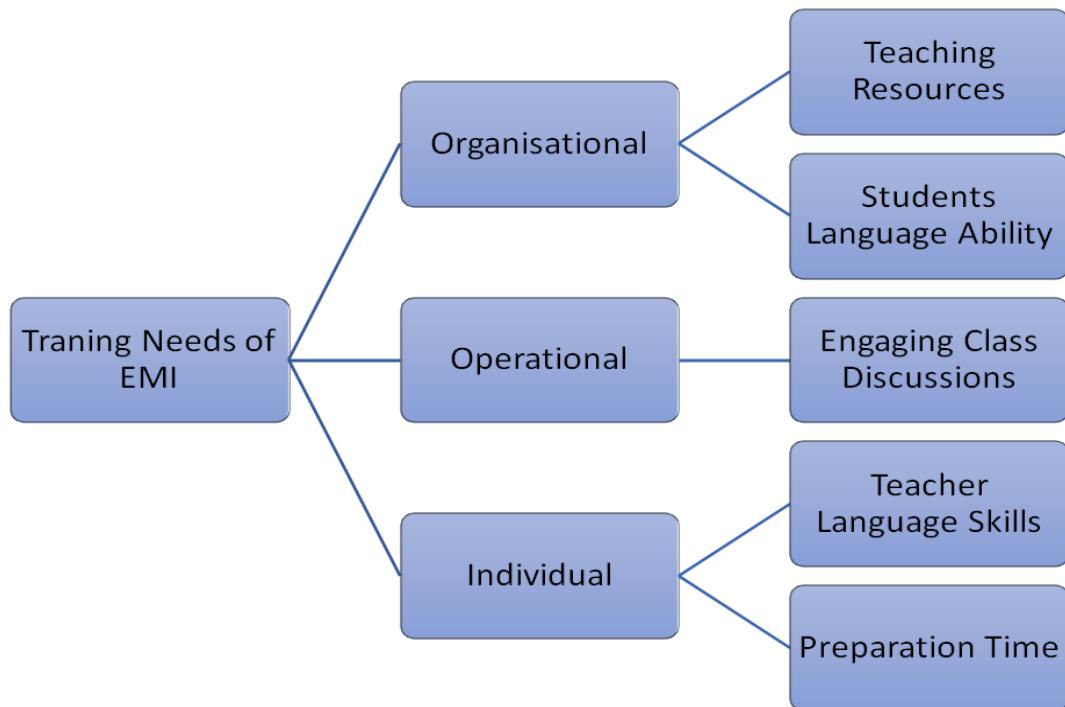


Figure-3. Training Needs of EMI Lecturers.
Source: (McGehee and Thayer, 1961; Hung and Lan, 2017)

2.6. Past Studies

A study by Banks (2018) explored English-medium instruction (EMI) at a Spanish public university. It reports on a mix-methods study into the attitudes and linguistic and pedagogical needs of EMI lecturers. The study takes a “bottom-up” approach to needs assessment in order to guarantee a course that is fit for purpose. Data was taken from university lecturers using multiple sources to provide empirical evidence with which to inform course design decisions. Data sources include a questionnaire, field notes from observations of EMI teaching practice, collaborative planning tutorials, lesson plans and lecturers’ reflections on EMI. The analysis of lecturers’ language use and pedagogical strategies suggests a number of areas for improvement that could enhance EMI teaching and learning. On the whole, the findings show a positive attitude towards EMI and training.

A mixed mode study was done by Guarda and Helm (2018). In this study, lecturers’ comments (in interview and survey) were analysed to reveal interesting findings on the concerns regarding EMI. Firstly, there were issues with teaching methodology, oral skills (including fluency, pronunciation, comprehension and interaction with students at a more informal level) , and perceived lack of vocabulary, a constant attention to standard form and grammar. Results also showed that there was problems in confidence, fluency, attention to standard form and grammar, fluency and pronunciation, and expectations of lecturers. The lecturers wanted to learn more about teaching methodology and practice. They needed improvement in their overall English skills, improve their oral skills including, in particular, speaking abilities, fluency, the ability to use “English in social situations and in interaction with students” , as well as pronunciation, and oral comprehension.

Next, Albassri (2016) research reported that there is a need for reconceptualization for English language teaching as a response to English-as-an-international language (EIL) contexts. Correspondingly this will lead to what is called “an ecological approach” that invites accommodation of language-learning instruction to the local needs within discourse communities. Albassri (2016) also investigated the English for specific purposes (ESP) needs of business students to explore how best to address their expressed needs through subsequent tutoring. This study also looked into the ecological approach along with vocabulary teaching approach.

Finally, Chang *et al.* (2012) studied the training needs assessment (TNA) using the dimensions of strategic competence, organizational performance gap & competencies gap, which is consistent with McGhee and Thayer's three-fold analysis. This study used questionnaires and exploratory factor analysis found four factors that affect TNA: (1) mastering problems and analyses, (2) mastering organizational development, (3) mastering resource applications, and (4) capability for intervention implementation. In this study, 193 HRD practitioners in charge of organizational training were regarded as the research samples to analyze the influential factors of TNA, and it was found that “mastering organizational development” was significantly related to organizational scale, and “capability for intervention implementation” was significantly related to training performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This section describes the research design, the sample, instrument, method of data collection and data analysis. This quantitative research is carried out to investigate the challenges and training needs of content lecturers to teach in English. The population for this study is from lecturers teaching content courses in English. A purposive sample of 28 respondents participated in this study.

3.2. Instrument

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. A reliability test was done on the instrument and result of the test is shown below. A score of 0.948 was obtained , thus revealing high reliability Table 1.

Table-1. Cronbach Alpha.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.948	0.948	24

The survey consisted of 4 main sections; Section A looks at the demographic profile, section B looks at the organizational, (items 1-7) section C is the operation (items 8-10) while section D is the individual factors. (items 11-24)

3.3. Method of Data Collection and Data Analysis

The participants were asked to respond to the survey on a goggle form. The data is then analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the findings of the study.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This section discusses the findings of the study based on the demographic profiles and also answer to the research questions.

4.2. Findings for Demographic Profile

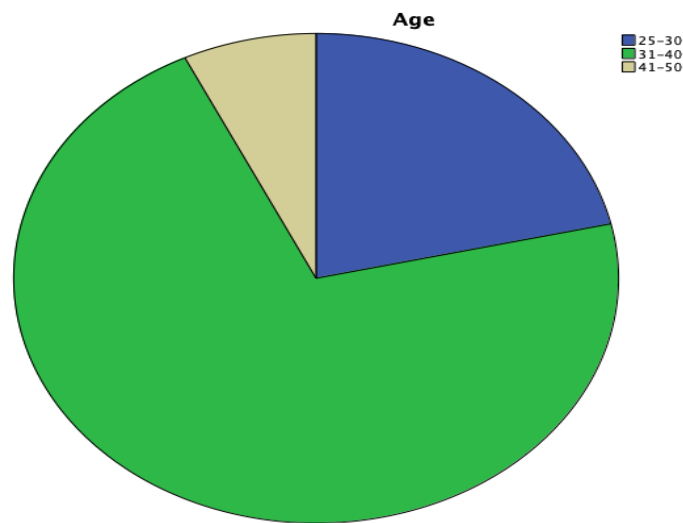


Figure-4. Pie Chart Showing Age.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of age of the respondents in percentage. 21.4% of the respondents were aged 25-30, and 7.1% were aged 41-50. The majority (71.4%) of the respondents were aged 31-40.

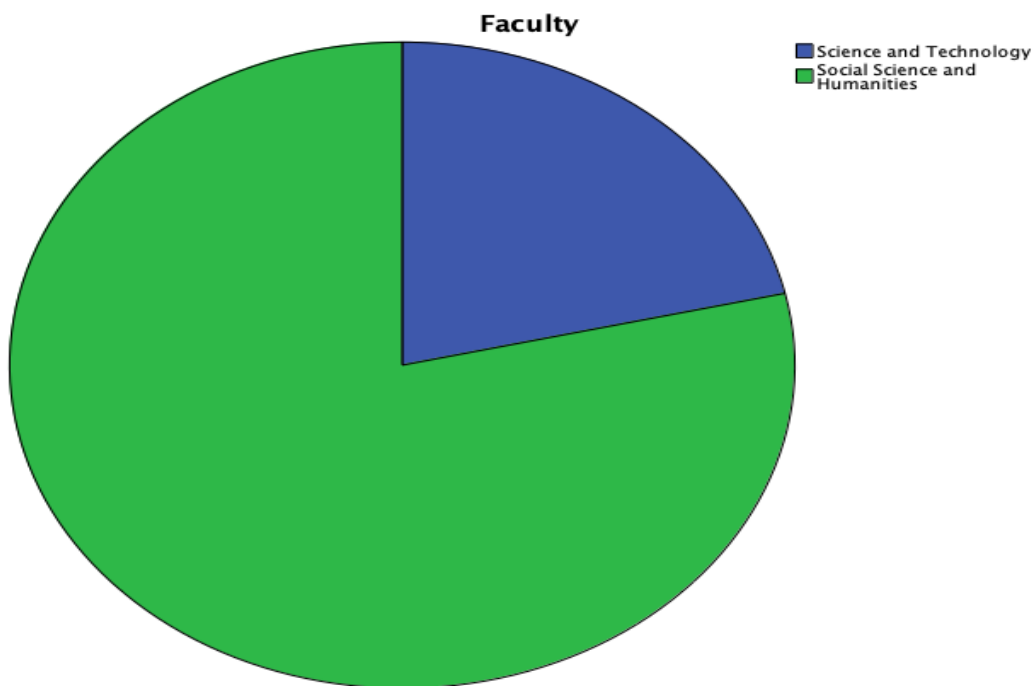


Figure-5. Faculty.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of lecturers by faculty. Most of the respondents (78.6%) were from the Social Science and Humanities faculties while 21.4 % were from Science and Technology faculties.

4.3. Answer to RQ 1: How do Organizational Factors Influence EMI?



Figure-6. Bar Chart showing Mean scores for Organisational factors.

Figure 6 presents findings for teacher resources and students' language abilities. This is presented in the organizational category of the survey. The highest mean is reported for the lecturers who said that they had difficulty using resources in English or reading purposes (3.57). The lecturers also reported that the students don't understand the content in English (3.0) and also the students did not understand instructions in English (3.07).

4.4. Answer to RQ 2: How do operational factors influence EMI?

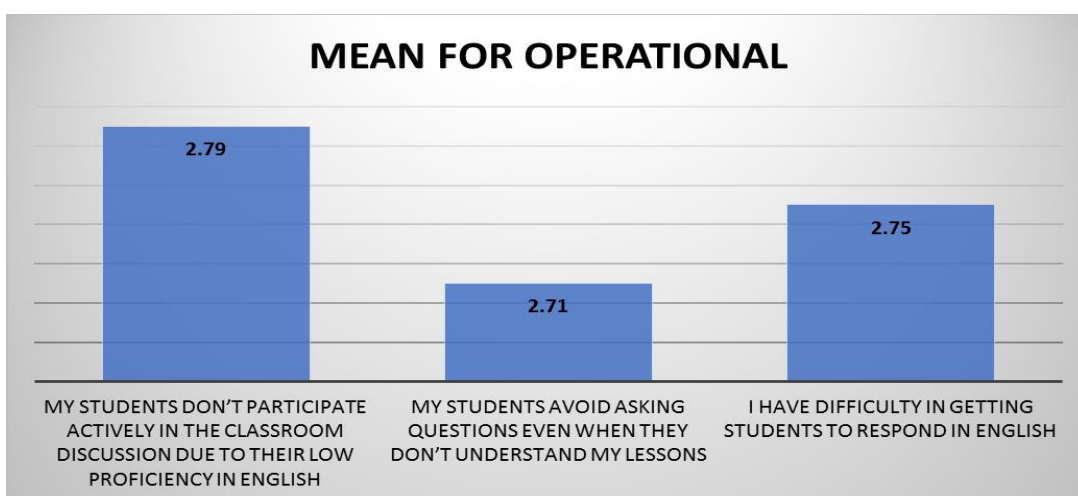


Figure-7. Bar Chart showing mean scores for Operational factors.

Operation tasks refer to perception of the lecturers on activities that engage class discussions [Figure 7](#). The highest mean showed that students did not participate (2.79) because they (the students) had low proficiency in English. As such, lecturers had difficulty getting responses from students in English (2.75).

4.5. Answer to RQ 3: How do Individual Factors Influence EMI?

Findings for individual factors is presented in two sub-sections; (a) individual-teacher language ability and (b) individual-lecturers' preparation time.

(a) Individual (Teacher Language Ability)

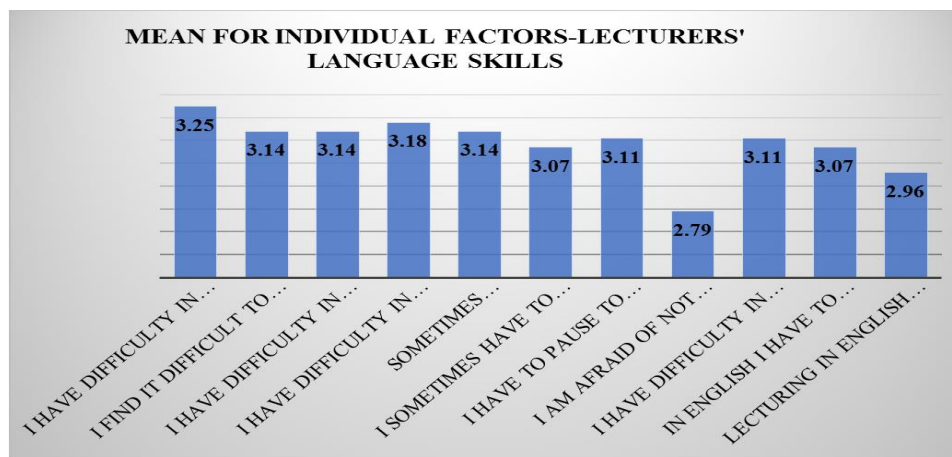


Figure-8. Bar Chart showing the mean for Individual Factors.

[Figure 8](#) presents findings for individual factors particularly lecturers' language skills. The highest mean (3.25) is that the lecturers had difficulty in presenting and organizing lessons in English. Next, the lecturers also had difficulty to express themselves (3.14), express the content (3.24) and also use terminologies and abstract concepts in English (3.14).

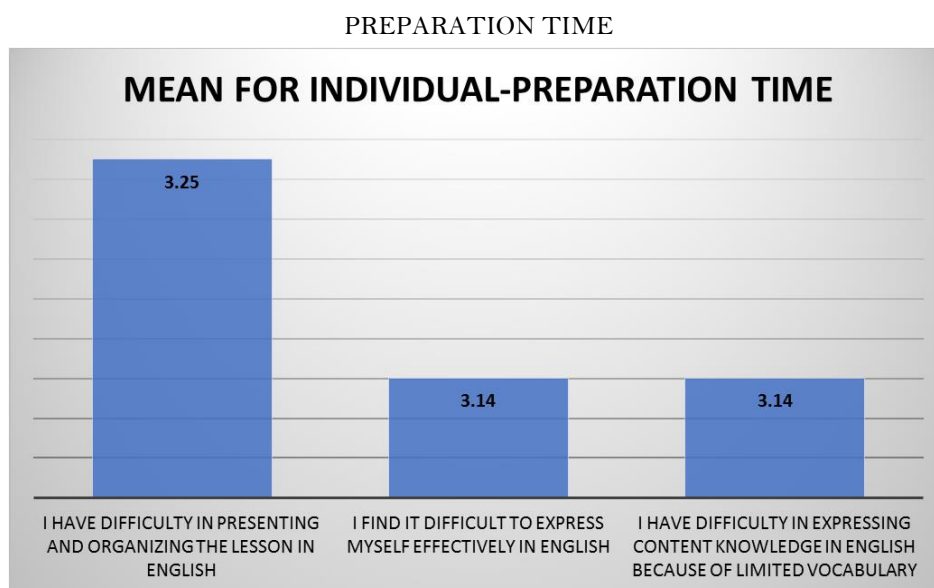


Figure-9. Bar Chart showing mean for Individual-Lecturers' Preparation Time.

Figure 9 shows the findings for lecturers' challenges in preparation time. The highest mean is that the lecturers had difficulty in presenting and organising the lesson in English (3.25). The lecturers also found it difficult to express themselves effectively in English (3.14). They also had difficulty in expressing the content knowledge in English due to limited vocabulary (3.14).

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Findings

The objective of this study is to investigate the challenges and training needs of content lecturers to teach in English. This quantitative study also examined how organisational, operational and individual factors influence EMI.

In the organisational category of the survey, it was found that lecturers have difficulty using resources in English or reading purposes. Besides that, the students have difficulty understanding content and instructions in English.

In the operational category of the survey where lecturers prepared activities that engage class discussions, demonstrated that students did not participate because they (the students) had low proficiency in English. Getting responses from students in English is not an easy task.

The individual factors category of the survey was presented in two sub-sections;

(a) Individual-Teacher Language Ability

The lecturers had difficulty in presenting and organizing lessons in English. They find it difficult to express themselves in English when teaching and also expressing the content, terminologies and abstract concepts.

(b) Individual-Lecturers' Preparation Time.

The lecturers had difficulty in presenting and organising the lesson in English. The lecturers also found that they were not able to express themselves effectively in English and had difficulty in expressing the content knowledge in English due to limited vocabulary.

5.2. Discussion

5.2.1. Organisation

Findings in this study for organisation reveal lecturers found that understanding the teaching resources and course content in English was challenging. Similarly, the study by Banks (2018) also found that EMI lecturers had issues when planning course design. The course was initially designed in the mother tongue to cater for content in target language (English).

5.2.2. Task

The results of this study revealed that the students did not want to engage, or even respond in English. Similar findings were also reported by Li and Wu (2018) and Vu and Burns (2014) who also found that students' language difficulties made it challenging for active class participation. This inactivity would further discourage the sharing of ideas. This would then hinder the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

5.2.3 Individual

The results of this study revealed lecturers found lesson preparation challenging. This is also reported by Guarda and Helm (2018) who found that lecturers had issues with teaching methodology, oral skills (including fluency, pronunciation, comprehension and interaction with students at a more informal level), and perceived lack of vocabulary, a constant attention to standard form and grammar. The lecturers wanted to learn more about teaching methodology and practice. In addition to that, Chang *et al.* (2012) reported that the EMI should take into consideration the individual lecturers' needs; especially if these needs involve language and pedagogical implications.

5.3. Pedagogical Implications

There will be pedagogical issues in using English when teaching the content courses. To teach the content areas effectively there will need to be a changed from mother tongue to the target language and vice versa. Besides that, the pedagogical skills will vary with the content and level of instruction, as those skills needed to teach students from different faculties to understand are significantly different from one faculty to the other O'Sullivan (2018). Regardless of the content, however, an effective teacher will need to present their information in ways and language that will get the students to be engaged in the material they are learning (Hughes, 2016). A teacher need to be able to tailor content to the needs of the students using the language required, as good pedagogy does not only involve in imparting knowledge but also providing opportunities to apply that information (Shirani *et al.*, 2016).

5.4. Suggestions for Future Research

Since this paper is a pilot study, this research has only limited generalizability. Nonetheless, we hope to do further research on both the needs of the students and teachers in understanding and delivering content courses in English. This paper will provide an impetus on future research in the awareness and discussion of the pedagogical problems/challenges of using English at tertiary level content courses.

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