

Attitudes towards English Medium Instruction Courses among Second Language Learners in Relation to Learning Anxiety and Learning Achievement

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to examine second language learners' attitudes towards English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses at University of Selangor (UNISEL) in Malaysia affectively, behaviorally and cognitively. This study also investigated students' learning anxiety and students' learning achievement towards EMI courses. This study employed ABC Model of Attitudes (1998) as guidelines to investigate learners' attitudes towards EMI courses. 100-degree students from Faculty of Science and Information Technology (FSIT) participated in the study by completing a questionnaire of English Medium Instruction courses. A quantitative method was employed to analyze the collected data, performing statistical procedures of descriptive statistic and Pearson correlation using SPSS. The major findings of the study were as follows: (1) most participants demonstrated positive attitudes towards English medium Instruction courses affectively, behaviorally and cognitively, (2) there was no significant relationship between students' learning anxiety and students' learning achievement towards EMI courses. It was due to the ways lecturers delivering EMI courses to the students. This situation happened when the way their lecturers conducted the lesson in English medium setting might help the students reduce their learning anxiety of the lesson. In other words, the level of their anxiousness in learning EMI courses depends on how their lecturers deliver the subject during teaching and learning process. Finally, some pedagogical implications that would help tap the students' attitudes and achievement were demonstrated.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

In a New Era of International Globalization, the need to be competent in English language among non-native speakers has become a worldwide phenomenon. According to Gibbons (2003), educationalists are experienced with the challenges of addressing the needs of the growing number of English second language students. There is crucial for these second language students to improve their competency and proficiency in English while mastering other contents and skills in other subject courses. Learning subject courses via English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is greatly required at tertiary level. It is supported by Marsh (2006), English is comprehensively taught and replacing other languages as a medium of instruction in many universities. Moreover, Graddol (1997) had argued that one of the most important educational trends worldwide is by teaching subject courses in higher educational institutions through English as a medium of instruction.

The usage of English as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning process at university level has become a worldwide phenomenon. As the attitudes of English Medium Instruction among university students have significant impact on the implementation and improvement of English Medium Instruction, this study

was carried out to examine the attitudes of the second language learners towards English Medium Instruction. Therefore, this study concentrated on undergraduate students' attitudes towards English medium instruction for subject courses at Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FCSIT) in University of Selangor (UNISEL) Kuala Selangor, Malaysia.

The problem addressed in this study is students' attitudes towards the usage of English medium instruction for subject courses in private university and how it influences to learners' academic achievement. The learners' attitudes are also associated with learning anxiety and learning achievement towards English medium instruction. It allows the students to be successful or not in their academic achievement while learning subject courses in English.

1.2 Research Objective

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To investigate the attitudes of UNISEL students towards English Medium Instruction courses affectively, behaviorally and cognitively
2. To determine the level of learning anxiety among UNISEL students
3. To examine whether students' learning anxiety in English Medium Instruction courses is significantly correlated with students' learning achievement

1.3 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives, the following questions were formulated for this study:

1. What are the attitudes of UNISEL students towards English Medium Instruction courses in terms of affective, behavioral and cognitive domains?
2. What is the level of learning anxiety among UNISEL students?
3. Is students' learning anxiety in English Medium Instruction courses significantly correlated with students' learning achievement?

1.4 Literature Review

This study employed The ABC Model of Attitudes by Eagly & Chaiken (1998) as research framework to examine UNISEL students' attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses for academic purposes. This selected model emphasizes three different approaches that are appropriate to use as guidelines in conducting this research. Learning subject courses through English Medium Instruction is also associated with students' English learning anxiety. Previous research conducted by Chan and Wu (2004), revealed that the factors such as students' own academic achievement, teacher-students communications in classroom, colleagues' attitude, teachers' attitude and evaluation, and parents' expectation are the common sources of students' second language anxiety.

In terms of students' learning achievement, the usage of English as a medium instruction for subject courses has given positive outcomes to the second language learners. Researchers (Hou, Morse, Chiang, & Chen, 2013; Jensen & Johannesson, 1995; and Manakul, 2007) have examined English Medium Instruction implemented in various Asian universities, where English is a major aspect for educational and societal achievement. A positive effect was found towards students' self-confidence in reading and writing English, which improved extensively while studying the subject courses in English. Investigating students' attitudes towards English Medium Instruction will aid lecturers and students during teaching and learning process in classroom setting.

Nonetheless, research on attitudes towards English Medium of Instruction at Malaysian tertiary education from students' perspective is rather limited. Therefore, it is essential to conduct this study as little research has conducted this issue particularly in Malaysian context. As an illustration, Masita Misdi et. al (2008) has conducted a study investigating the implementation of English as the medium of instruction at university level. There were 140 future teachers involved from Faculty of Technical Education in University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). Results revealed that the respondents provide positive attitudes towards English Medium of Instruction for content subjects at university level. For that reason, that is why this paper intends to fill this research gap and deepen this area of language and educational research.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used questionnaires to obtain data from diploma students of UNISEL. One hundred and twenty (120) set of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to provide data to answer the first research question. This section consisted of thirty (30) questions regarding students' attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction courses. This section involved three components. "A" represented Affective attitudes (10 questions), "B" determined Behavioral attitudes (10

questions) and “C” symbolized Cognitive attitudes (10 questions). The questionnaire used a Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree = 5”, “Agree = 4”, “Neither Agree or Disagree = 3”, “Disagree = 2” and “Strongly Disagree = 1”. The second part of the questionnaire was designed to provide data to answer the second and third research questions. The purpose of this questionnaire was to determine the level of learning anxiety among UNISEL students and to analyze whether students’ learning anxiety in English Medium Instruction courses is significantly correlated with students’ learning achievement. This section consisted of ten questions (10) pertaining students’ learning anxiety of English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. This section also used a Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree = 5”, “Agree = 4”, “Neither Agree or Disagree = 3”, “Disagree = 2” and “Strongly Disagree = 1”. The third part of the questionnaire consisted of ten questions (10) pertaining students’ learning achievement of English Medium Instruction (EMI) courses. This section also used a Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree = 5”, “Agree = 4”, “Neither Agree or Disagree = 3”, “Disagree = 2” and “Strongly Disagree = 1”. Out of these 120 questionnaires, 114 came back which represented a response rate of 95%. Out of the 114 received questionnaires, 14 were disregarded due to incomplete answers. This brought the total number of usable forms to 100 questionnaires or 13.8 % of students’ population (712) at Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FCSIT) in UNISEL. The questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS Software analysis and percentages.

3. RESULTS

Table 1. Students’ Affective Attitudes towards English Medium Instruction Courses

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel confident to speak in English	100	3.7000	.73168
I feel learning subjects through English medium is necessary for me	100	4.1400	.76568
I feel confident to learn the subjects in English	100	4.1000	.68902
I feel that my academic performance increase when the medium of instruction is conducted in English	100	3.9500	.75712
I am sure my English is grammatically correct	100	3.2900	.67112
I am sure I am using English words correctly	100	3.3900	.64971
I find learning subjects through English is useful	100	4.1200	.64008
I feel enthusiastic to learn the subjects in English.	100	3.8100	.72048
I feel motivated to learn the subjects in English.	100	3.9900	.64346
I am sure that learning subjects through English will increase my personal development	100	4.2300	.64909
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of students’ affective attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses. It revealed that the highest mean score for students’ affective attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses was 4.24 with standard deviation .65 that indicated the statement “*I am sure that learning subjects through English will increase my personal development*”.

Table 2. Students' Behavioral Attitudes towards English Medium Instruction Courses

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am willing to accept a full-English instruction setting	100	3.9000	.70353
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I can do my assignments in English	100	3.9800	.56818
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I can answer test or exam questions conducted in English	100	4.0500	.53889
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to use English to chat with my lecturers	100	3.9400	.64854
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to use English to chat with my friends	100	3.9000	.71774
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting ,I am willing to request my friends to use English in class	100	3.7900	.71485
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to use English to chat with faculty staff and administrators	100	3.6600	.80679
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to chat with my lecturers when having appointment with them	100	3.7400	.76038
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to use computer system to be operated in English	100	4.1800	.65721
In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to participate in the faculty activities for the purpose of helping myself to improve my English ability.	100	3.9400	.74968
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics of students' behavioral attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses. It showed that the highest mean score for students' behavioral attitudes towards English Medium Instruction was 4.18 with standard deviation .66. The statement indicated '*In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to use computer system to be operated in English*'.

Table 3. Students' Cognitive Attitudes towards English Medium Instruction Courses

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I believe by learning subjects through English medium in university level, can facilitate students' improvement in English	100	4.2900	.57375
I believe that learning subjects through English medium is necessary at tertiary education level (university)	100	4.2300	.64909
I believe that English is an international language as it provides a medium for learners to use the language in other subjects	100	4.1900	.66203
I believe that learning subjects through English medium enables students to learn about the culture of the target language	100	4.0400	.66545
I believe that the usage of English as a Medium of Instruction will improve my thinking development processes	100	4.1100	.70918
I believe that if lecturers that teach the particular subjects have perfect competence in English, students' learning of the subject matter will be facilitated	100	4.0400	.63437
I believe that English Medium Instruction is an effective method to learn a foreign language	100	4.0700	.63968
I believe that because English has become an international language, English Medium Instruction does not result in cultural corruption	100	3.8400	.77486
I believe that in universities where the conditions are favorable, the medium of the study for content subjects must remain English	100	4.0500	.65713
In general I find it is appropriate that all the subjects should be conducted in English	100	3.9400	.77616
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table 3 depicts the descriptive statistics for students' cognitive attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses. Based on the table given, the statement "*I believe by learning subjects through English medium in university level, can facilitate students' improvement in English*" obtained the highest mean score 4.29 with standard deviation .57.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Level of Learning Anxiety among UNISEL students

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The minor difficulty I encounter in learning subjects through English medium is my high English proficiency	100	2.7100	.98775
High English proficiency does not hinder my learning of professional knowledge in learning subjects through English medium.	100	2.7600	.92245
I don't feel anxious when I cannot understand what lecturers say in an English Medium Instruction class.	100	2.2800	.92201
The good performance of my classmates in English Medium Instruction class (s) does not make me anxious.	100	2.4500	.98857
The way that the lecturer conducts the English Medium Instruction class (s) helps reduce my learning anxiety	100	4.0300	3.13808
The increase of the interaction with my classmates in English helps reduce my learning anxiety.	100	3.8100	.77453
Learning anxiety reduces my motivation to take the English Medium Instruction class (s).	100	3.6500	.78335
I ask lecturers for help when I encounter difficulty in English Medium Instruction class (s).	100	3.7600	.81798
I ask classmates for help when I encounter difficulty in English Medium Instruction class (s).	100	3.9800	.69602
I am not afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the English language in English Medium Instruction class (s).	100	3.0700	1.19134
Valid N (listwise)	100		

According to Table 4, it illustrates the descriptive statistics of the level of learning anxiety among UNISEL students. It revealed that the highest mean score was 4.03 with standard deviation 3.14. The statement was about “*The way that the lecturer conducts the English Medium Instruction class (s) helps reduce my learning anxiety*”. Out of ten statements given, the respondents experienced higher learning anxiety towards this statement.

		Learning Anxiety	Learning Achievement	Table 5. The Correlation between Students' Learning Anxiety and Students' Learning Achievement in English Medium Instruction
Learning Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.054	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.592	
	N	100	100	
Learning Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.054	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.592		
	N	100	100	

Pearson's correlations were conducted to determine the association between two variables: students' learning anxiety and students' learning achievement towards English Medium Instruction courses among UNISEL students. To verify the strength of correlation between these two variables, the correlation index was used as follow:

Table 6. The correlation index 1

If $r = +.70$ or higher	Very strong positive relationship
+.40 to +.69	Strong positive relationship
+.30 to +.39	Moderate positive relationship
+.20 to +.29	weak positive relationship
+.01 to +.19	No or negligible relationship
-.01 to -.19	No or negligible relationship
-.20 to -.29	weak negative relationship
-.30 to -.39	Moderate negative relationship
-.40 to -.69	Strong negative relationship
-.70 or higher	Very strong negative relationship

Source: Pearson's r Correlation- A Rule of Thumb <http://faculty.quinnipiac.edu/libarts/polsci/Statistics.html>

It was determined that there is no statistically significant relationship between UNISEL students' learning anxiety and their academic achievements towards English Medium Instruction ($r = .054$, p -value = .592). The Pearson's r was close to 0.

4. Discussions

Firstly, in terms of affective attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses, the respondents reported that they were sure that learning subjects through English have increased their personal development. It is supported by the findings which revealed that the highest mean score for students' affective attitudes towards English Medium Instruction was 4.24 with standard deviation .65 that indicated the statement "*I am sure that learning subjects through English will increase my personal development*". The findings showed that by learning EMI courses, UNISEL students' personal development have increased.

It is supported by a research conducted by the British Council and the University of Oxford's

Department of Education (2014), which declared that English Medium Instruction courses was a personal challenge to the students and it is one of the ways to improve students' personal development in their professions. Learning the subject courses in English is universal because the universities have enrolled many foreign students from different countries. Hence, it improves the exchange of ideas and thought, and encourages better relations among the students (British Council and the University of Oxford's Department of Education, 2014). It is congruent with the findings of this study where the respondents also reported that their personal developments have improved because they have opportunities to use English while conversing with foreign students who are studying at UNISEL. It was also proven that learning English Medium Instruction courses have developed their confidence level. In other words, English Medium Instruction courses also enlightened the students to be confident in speaking English language. In future, the students feel more confident to speak in English with foreigners especially in the working world. This is because they have learnt the subjects in the university which is fully delivered in English as a medium of instruction.

In terms of behavioral attitudes, the respondents reported that they were willing to use computer to be operated in English language. The finding of this research showed that the highest mean score for students' behavioral attitudes towards English Medium Instruction was 4.18 with standard deviation .66. The statement indicated '*In pursuit of the fulfillment of English Medium Instruction setting, I am willing to use computer system to be operated in English*'. It was reasonably true because this research was conducted among degree students from FCSIT, UNISEL where the language of instruction is English. These respondents learnt the subject courses in English and that is why they preferred to use computer systems to be operated in English. During the present era of globalization, all computer systems are operated in English and it will give benefits for second language learners to learn the IT subjects in English. Therefore, that is why they were willing to use computer systems to be operated in English instead of their mother tongue.

For cognitive attitudes, the respondents reported that by learning subject courses through English in university, it could facilitate them to improve English proficiency. The results revealed that the highest mean score for students' cognitive attitudes towards English Medium Instruction was 4.29 with standard deviation .57. The statement indicated "*I believe by learning subjects through English medium at the university level, can facilitate students' improvement in English*". It is supported by Park (2007)'s study on students attitudes towards English Medium Instruction where the students understood the lesson better and they have improved their speaking, listening and reading skills. This is also consistent with Wu's (2006) study that English Medium Instruction courses helped the students to improve their English proficiency skills in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Secondly, it was revealed that the respondents declared their level of their learning anxiety depends on how their lecturers or instructors conduct the lesson in English medium instruction. The highest mean score was 4.03 with standard deviation 3.14. The statement was about "*The way that the lecturer conducts the English Medium Instruction class (s) helps reduce my learning anxiety*". This situation happened when the way their lecturers conducted the lesson in English medium setting might help the students reducing their learning anxiety of the lesson. In other words, the level of their anxiousness in learning EMI courses depends on how their lecturers deliver the subject during teaching and learning process. Thirdly, it was revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between UNISEL students' learning anxiety and their academic achievements towards English Medium Instruction ($r = .054$, $p\text{-value} = .592$). The Pearson' r was close to 0. It means that UNISEL students' learning achievement did not tend to increase or decrease as their learning anxiety increases or decreases. This happened because the ways their lecturers from Faculty of Science and Information Technology (FSIT) conducted the English Medium Instruction lesson have reduced their learning anxiety to understand the subject courses. This finding proved that students' level of anxiousness depends on how the lecturers conduct the lesson.

It is reliable with Zhang Baoyan's (1996) study in Taiwan where the result revealed that there was no statistical significant relationship between students' learning anxiety and students' learning achievement in English Medium Instruction courses. Subsequently, from these studies it can be said that the relationship between learning anxiety and learning achievement is possibly not a simple linear one. It could be influenced by another cause such as learners' proficiency. It is also supported by Chastain's (1975) and Kleinmann'

(1977) studies where these researchers found that there was no relationship between students' learning anxiety and students' learning achievement in English Medium Instruction courses.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated undergraduate students' attitudes from Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FCSIT), UNISEL towards English Medium Instruction courses. The purpose of implementing English as a sole medium of instruction in the teaching and learning of technical courses is principally to facilitate students to keep up with the recent technological development which is generally accessible in the English language. It is also to enable second language learners to survive in the competitive world. In this study, the students learnt the subject courses which are Information Technology courses in English as part of learning strategies to boost up students' English proficiency. Moreover, it was also proven that The ABC Model of Attitudes proposed by Eagly & Chaiken (1998) is a great framework and guideline to examine students' attitudes affectively, behaviorally and cognitively towards English Medium Instruction courses. The respondents demonstrated positive attitudes towards English Medium Instruction courses particularly in learning Informational Technology subjects at University of Selangor.

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