



Attitudes Towards English as a Medium of Instruction and The Perceived Effect of English Proficiency on Employability in Kuwait¹

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of Kuwaiti university students towards English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and the perceived impact of English proficiency on their employability. As English continues to gain prominence globally, understanding local attitudes towards its use in education is crucial, particularly in Kuwait, where English serves as a lingua franca despite Arabic being the national language. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research examines various social factors—such as age, gender, major, and employment status—that may influence these attitudes. Through a comprehensive questionnaire administered to 96 students at the Arab Open University, the study assesses the correlation between English proficiency and students' perceptions of its importance in the job market. Results indicate a generally positive attitude towards EMI, with students recognizing its relevance for career advancement. However, concerns regarding comprehension and the potential erosion of Arabic language skills are evident. The findings highlight the need for tailored curricula that address students' linguistic and cultural identities, ultimately fostering better alignment between educational outcomes and labor market demands. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse on language attitudes but also offers valuable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to enhance the educational experience and employability of students in Kuwait.

Keywords: English, medium, instruction, employability, University students, Kuwait

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Introduction

It is estimated that there are about 1.5 billion speakers of English around the world (Crystal, 2000, p.3). Kachru's Model (1988) of World Englishes gave a general idea of the role that English plays in different locations around the world. English is increasingly being used in all walks of life such as politics, broadcasting, economics, education, travel, etc. (Crystal 2012, p.157; Al Nawrasy (2013). Thus, attitudes towards English language have raised interest amongst many linguists in various contexts (Al-Qahtani and Al-Zumor 2015; Jensen and Thogersen 2011; Young 2006, etc.). McKenzie (2010, p.37) believes that language attitudes have a significant effect on languages and that positive attitudes towards English may have actually contributed to its prevalence around the world. Moreover, Schmied (1991, pp.164-165) argues that attitudes towards a language 'may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, the degree of importance or status it has in the community or even the importance of the people who use it as a first or second language'.

According to Giles and Billings (2004, p.188) language attitudes have been studied since the 1930s when the BBC radio asked its listeners about their attitudes towards a variety of British dialects (Pear 1931, p.1). Since then, linguists such as Lambert *et al.* (1960); Webster and Ernest (1968); Silverman (1969) have undertaken studies investigating attitudes towards language and in so doing, techniques such as the Matched Guise Technique and the Verbal Guise Technique have been introduced.

Kuwait is one of the countries that lie in Kachru's (1988, p.5) 'expanding' circle whereby English is mainly used as a lingua franca, i.e. a language 'used as a medium of communication by people who do not speak the same first language' (Kirkpatrick 2007, p.155). Although the national language in Kuwait is Arabic, English is the medium of instruction in its universities for all majors except non-language humanistic majors. Nevertheless, Arabic may sometimes be used by professors to assist in explanation (Wafteh 2014, p.32). Some studies have suggested that the increasing use of English may be negatively affecting Arabic (International Council of the Arabic Language 2012); Wafteh (2014, p.12). This has encouraged the initiation of this particular study; one of its aims is to investigate the attitudes of Kuwaiti university students towards the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at university level in Kuwait. A better understanding of university

students' attitudes towards the use of EMI will contribute to making university students' learning experience more effective and resolving any related concerns to using EMI such as those related to comprehension and identity. This awareness on the part of curricula designers may contribute positively in creating English language curricula that meet the needs of students entering the field of employment in Kuwait.

According to Baker (1992, pp.9-12), the study of language attitudes contributes to the success of language policies especially those related to educational atmospheres. From a pedagogical perspective, attitudes have an input and output. For example, a positive attitude (input) towards a language may encourage learning it amongst students. Likewise, scoring high grades on a language test may initiate positive attitudes (output) towards learning that language. Moreover, language attitudes may contribute to 'language restoration and preservation', as well as language spread or even decay McKenzie (2010, p.37).

Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study is threefold:

- (a) To quantitatively investigate the participants' attitudes towards the use of EMI in the Arab Open University (AOU) - Kuwait.
- (b) To investigate the correlations between the participants' attitudes and social factors such as age, gender, major, employment status, English language instruction, schools attended and English language proficiency.
- (c) To investigate to what extent the participants' proficiency in English language affects their employability.

The following two overarching questions were formed to facilitate the investigation of the above-mentioned objectives:

- 1) To what extent do Kuwaiti university students believe their English proficiency (spoken and written) affects their employability in Kuwait?
- 2) What attitudes do Kuwaiti university students have towards EMI?

Significance and Rationale of the Study

This study aims at investigating the attitudes of Kuwaiti university students towards EMI and the perceived effect of English proficiency on their employability. The study holds significant implications across educational and socio-economic dimensions. Regarding the educational implications, it will have an impact on policy development, curriculum design and teacher training. Regarding the socio-economic implications, it will have an impact on employability and workforce development and labor market trends.

Overall, such a study can serve as a vital resource for multiple stakeholders in Kuwait, helping to bridge the gap between education and employment, and fostering a more inclusive and competitive society.

Language Attitudes

Studies Around the World

The phrase 'language attitude' has been described as an 'umbrella term' due to the vast number of concepts that may be covered within it such as attitudes towards learning a language, using a language, speakers of the language, varieties, dialects, and accents of the language Baker (1992, p. 29). Carranza (1982, p. 63) believes that language attitudes may result in sound changes, defining speech communities, and may even contribute to understanding educators' perceptions towards their students' abilities. It is common practice for languages or language varieties that are spoken by the lower class to be considered less desirable or less prestigious, which may influence employment opportunities Carranza (1982, p. 63); (McKenzie 2010, p. 37). Attitudes in relation to the use of EMI have been investigated in several contexts such as the European and Asian contexts. Thus, a discussion of significant studies of attitudes towards EMI and the effect of English proficiency on employment around the world will follow.

A study carried out in Denmark by the means of questionnaires investigated *Danish University Lecturers' Attitudes Towards English as the Medium of Instruction* in which results showed that lecturers expressed their concerns towards the use of EMI such as poor comprehension amongst students; meanwhile, some expressed positive attitudes towards the 'internationalisation' of the university by the means of EMI Jensen &

Thogersen (2011, pp. 23-24; 29-30). Furthermore, younger instructors seemed to be more welcoming to EMI than their elder counterparts and were less concerned with the possible ramifications of teaching in a foreign language. Although, Denmark is far from the Arabian Gulf context, English in both Denmark and Kuwait is considered a foreign language.

A similar study conducted by Young (2006, p. 483-489) investigated university students' attitudes towards the use of English in Macao, post - 1999. Young used a 22-item questionnaire based on the direct approach to do so. Results showed that although some students felt uneasy when they spoke English, they acknowledged the 'social values of English' and that it was important for Macao's future development.

Another study conducted in Croatia investigated Croatian University lecturers' attitudes towards the introduction of EMI, as well as their perceived English competence and the perceived challenges Margic and Krstanovic (2013). A questionnaire answered by 73 lecturers revealed that although only 52 % of the lecturers believed they were competent, the vast majority encouraged the introduction of EMI at post-graduate level. They mentioned a few challenges including, but not limited to, comprehension difficulty amongst students, which may result in lack of interest, lectures taking longer time to prepare, and some believed it may jeopardise the development of Croatia and question Croatian's prestige.

Likewise, a study in Turkey looked at instructors' attitudes towards the use of EMI revealed that most instructors supported the use of Turkish because they believed it increased students' interaction and aided learning. However, they raised some concerns regarding the availability of teaching resources in Turkish KilicKaya (2006, p.6). Throughout these studies there seems to be some consensus amongst Jensen and Thogersen's (2011), Margic and Krstanovic's (2013), and KilicKaya's (2006) results regarding lecturers' concern about reduced comprehension amongst students. Whether or not students share the same concern is unknown.

There seems to be a dearth of studies covering the effect of English on employability in the expanding circle Kachru (1988, p.5) context. In their study, Roshid and Chowdhury (2013, p.68 - 75) used interviews to investigate how English proficiency could affect the employment of Bangladeshis in the Australian job market. Results revealed that participants believed that English proficiency played a 'vital' role in

employment. Moreover, participants believed that although English proficiency is important to get a job in Australia, the candidates' skills and characteristics are also necessary to maintain it. Khan and Chaudhury (2012) studied the employers' perspectives towards English in the Bangladeshi Employment Sector. Although, this study was based in Bangladesh, a country in which English is not a national language, results were congruent to those of Roshid and Chowdhury (2013). Results revealed that employers believed that English was essential in the field of employment; however, most employees show very poor English proficiency when they enter the field of employment in Bangladesh.

Studies Conducted in the Arabian Gulf Context

Although there have been language attitude studies investigating attitudes towards issues such as code-switching in the Arabian Gulf context Akbar (2007), only a few studies investigated attitudes towards EMI, and to the best of the researchers' knowledge few have discussed the perceived effect of English proficiency on employability. A few studies point out that there is a positive attitude among learners in the Arab world towards learning English. For example, Al-Rashidi (2012) found out that in Kuwait, English was viewed favorably, particularly among younger people who associated it with technological advancement and modernity. Bachman and Plamer (1996) found that students in the UAE had positive attitude toward learning English, seeing it as a key to better job opportunities and global communication.

Omar Al Nawrasy (2013) conducted a study on 196 students at the UAE Applied Technology High School (ATHS). The study outlines the results of a survey that was carried out to identify the (ATHS) students' attitudes toward learning English. The findings of the study showed that the vast majority of the subjects had positive attitude towards learning this language.

Al-Qahtani & Al- Zumor (2015) investigated parents' attitudes towards the use of EMI in private primary schools in Saudi Arabia. They used questionnaires with open and closed questions, as well as Likert scale items. The results showed that many parents advocated the use of English because

they believed it was beneficial for their children's future; meanwhile, they expressed their concern for their children's Arabic language competence.

Al- Kahtany & Al-Zumor (2016) investigated EMI in higher education at a Saudi Arabian university (particularly scientific fields such as medicine). The study was conducted with a 25-element Likert scale questionnaire, completed by 162 educators and 702 students. The results revealed that students felt that EMI was imposed on them, and that EMI was not necessary for these fields. On the other hand, these educators believed EMI was very important and essential for the disciplines being taught.

Methodology

This qualitative and quantitative study will investigate both attitudes towards EMI at the university level in Kuwait and the perceived effect of English proficiency on employability. The IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - 24.0 statistics processor) was used to quantitatively analyse the data collected. Meanwhile, participants' replies to open questions addressed to answering research question (1) were analysed using the societal treatment approach.

McKenzie (2010, p.52) suggests that using more than one approach can contribute to more reliable conclusions. Thus, this study adopted a mixed methodological approach utilizing both the direct and societal treatment approach.

Population of the Study

A total of 96 Arab Open University (AOU) students participated in this study. The AOU offers classes from 9am - 9pm for 6 days a week which makes it a host to students from a variety of ages, statuses, and professions. This may give a general idea of the attitudes of diverse and representative variety of AOU students and similar university students in Kuwait. Since many AOU students are employed, this university was chosen to give better insights of the perceived effect of English language proficiency on the employment market.

Data Collection

Dornyei's (2007, p.98) '*Snowball Sampling*' technique was used to recruit participants. A major questionnaire (Appendix A) was used to ask

participants about their attitudes towards EMI and their concerns, if they have any. Likewise, participants were asked if they feel disadvantaged if they lack competence in spoken and written English as employees, or as students. Moreover, participants were asked if they feel that the English Teaching Market welcomes or shies away from them. Tutors of multiple courses were contacted by the researchers and kindly requested to explain the study to their students and encourage them to earnestly answer the questionnaire. Participants were requested to contact the researchers for any clarification. They were requested to follow the link to the questionnaire for completion. The data collection period extended for a whole month from May 13th, 2024 until June 13th, 2024.

Main Questionnaire (Appendix A) with verbatim translation into Arabic)

Dornyei (2007, pp.101-102) argues that questionnaires aid researchers in gathering large amounts of data in a short period of time, which was suitable for the short timespan allotted for this study. A paper and online copies of the questionnaire were created; this gave the participants the chance to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. The majority of participants (95.8%) chose to complete the online copy. Only 4.1% of the participants chose to complete the hard copy. A total of 96 participants (49 males and 47 females) took part in the questionnaire. The Arabic copy was completed by 58.3% of participants meanwhile; the English copy was completed by 41.6% of participants.

Table 1. Main Questionnaire Outline

Item	Question Type	Description	Topics Covered
1-9	Multiple Choice and one open ended	Background information	1) Gender 2) Age 3) Major 4) Employment status 5) Languages 6) First exposure to English language instruction (ELI) 7) Type of school you attended as a high school student 8) Spoken English ability 9) Written English ability

10-13	Multiple choice and open ended	The perceived effect of English proficiency on employability	1) Advantages of knowing how to speak and write English in Kuwait (no.10) 2) Whether or not poor spoken and written English would negatively affect employability (no.11,12) 3) Would you employ candidates who are proficient in Arabic but did not speak English (no.13)
14-34	Likert Scale (5-point scale)	Attitudes towards EMI in higher education	1) EMI in relation to your learning experience (no.14,15,16,24,25,& 30) 2) EMI in relation to Arabic as a mother tongue and national language (no.18 & 20) 3) Bilingual medium of instruction (no.26) or choice between EMI or Arabic as a medium of instruction (no.19, 27, & 26) 4) EMI in relation to identity and feelings of insecurity (no.22,23,&33) 5) The effect of EMI on Arabic competence (no. 21 & 29) 6) Advocating EMI (no.17,28, 31, 32 & 34)

This main questionnaire contained a total of 34 items as shown above. Items 1 to 9 requested respondents' background information. Items 10 to 13 addressed the first research question concerning the extent to which Kuwaiti university students believe their English proficiency affects their employability. Yes/no, multiple-choice and open-ended questions were used. Open-ended questions allow the respondents to express themselves freely in contrast to the confining nature of closed questions. Based on Buschfeld's (2013, pp. 222-223) study in Cyprus, statements such as 'English offers advantages in seeking good job opportunities' were adopted and slightly adjusted to fit the Kuwaiti context.

Finally, items 14-34 consisted of 21, 5-point Likert scale items which addressed the second research question concerning attitudes towards the use of English at the university level in Kuwait. The scale ranged from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Likert scales were chosen to help reveal the intensity of the respondents' attitude (Oppenheim 1992, p.176). In attempt to measure all components of attitude, items 14 - 34 addressed the cognitive (example 'a' below), behavioral (example 'b'), or the affective components of attitude (example 'c').

Example a:

EMI prepares students for employment and the corporate world.

Example b:

If lectures at universities were taught in Arabic, I would participate more often.

Example c:

It is a problem when students cannot express in Arabic what they have learnt in English.

Results & Discussions

Table (2) below shows quantitative analyses of the effect of English proficiency on employability in Kuwait. After running multiple ANOVA analyses on social variables such as age, gender, and school type proved insignificant and therefore disregarded.

Table 2. Quantitative: The Effect of English Proficiency on Employability- (no. of responses 96)

Number	Item (as numbered on questionnaire)	Yes		No	
		Responses	%	Responses	%
1	10) Do you believe that good reading and writing skills in English have advantages in the job market in Kuwait?	92/96	95.8%	4/96	4.2%
2	11) Do you think that poor spoken English would negatively affect your employability?	91/96	94.8%	5/96	5.2%
3	12) Do you think that poor written English would negatively affect your employability?	81/96	84.4%	15/96	15.6%
4	13) If you were an employer in Kuwait, would you employ people who are proficient in Arabic – speaking, reading and writing, but do not speak English?	44/96	45.8%	52/96	54.2%

Table (2) reveals that 95.8% of the participants believe that having the ability to speak and write English has advantages in Kuwait; meanwhile, only 4.2% thought otherwise. The participants were then asked whether they thought poor *spoken* English would negatively affect their employability. The majority of the participants (94.8%) agreed that poor spoken English would have a negative effect on their employability. When asked whether they believe poor *written* English would affect their employability the majority of respondents replied that they thought it would. However, there was about a 10% decrease in the number of participants who believed poor *written* English would affect their employability in comparison to poor *spoken* English. The greatest discrepancy amongst the replies to these items lied in item (13) whereby participants were asked if they would employ people who were proficient in Arabic (i.e. speaking, reading and writing) but could not speak English. Results showed that 44% of the participants did not mind employing such candidates. Whilst 52% of the participants replied that they would not employ such candidates.

Schmied (1991, p.168) analysed attitudes towards English into five categories. These were: personal, communicative, cognitive, national, and educational arguments. Communicative arguments are those which are 'related to the sociolinguistic environment', which can be depicted by arguments explaining the advantages of English proficiency in Kuwait (example (a) below). Meanwhile, national arguments tend to be related to nationalistic views. These arguments stress the importance of mother tongue preservation (example (b)). Furthermore, educational arguments are related to the educational field (example (c)). In addition, cognitive arguments are usually beliefs which may not be supported by evidence (example (d)). Participants' arguments which did not fall in any of the categories were considered personal (example (e)).

Example (a). *'To communicate with foreigners and non-Arabs living in Kuwait or abroad'* (communicative)

Example (b). *'Arabic is our mother tongue; therefore we must be proud of it and preserve it'* (national)

Example (c). *‘Opportunities to pursue postgraduate education and study abroad’* (educational)

Example (d). *‘English is the language of business’* (cognitive)

Example (e). *‘To earn a better salary’* (personal)

Respondents’ answers to the open-ended questions (items 10 - 13) were classified into categories shown in Tables 3 – 7 below. *Some respondents provided more than one reason/argument therefore the numbers shown in the table refer to the number of times this argument was mentioned not to the number of participants.*

Table (3) below shows a summary of respondents’ elaboration on the positive responses (95.8%) to item (10) in which respondents were asked whether or not they believed knowing how to speak and write English had advantages in Kuwait.

Table 3. Replies to item (10) – ‘Yes’.

Category	Respondents’ Responses	Number of Occurrences
Cognitive	English has become the language of the era and is widely used	4
	It is a global language	3
	Knowing English makes working easier	2
	It is the language of business	2
	There are a number of things you will be able to understand better if you know English	1
Educational	You need English for education especially during university level because all courses are taught in English	9
	Opportunities to pursue postgraduate education and study abroad	4
	Most research is carried out in English these days	4

Communicative	To communicate with foreigners and non-Arabs living in Kuwait or abroad	29
	Communicate with foreign companies, institutions and organizations	6
	To ease communication	4
	The ability to communicate with a larger variety of people	4
	English has become a necessity for communication because the number of foreigners in Kuwait is proportionally large	3
	Communication via social media	3
	In a country like Kuwait with so many different cultures and nationalities, English is the best option as lingua franca.	2
	English has gained a very important role in our society along with Arabic; therefore we need it to communicate at work, with children's schools in addition to other areas where English is needed	1
	English is the fallback language when one does not speak Arabic.	1
	Personal	Knowing English can assist you in getting a good job
Better employment opportunities		15
Earn a better salary		11
Billboards, signs, advertisements, shops and hotels use English in Kuwait		8
Opportunities to work with foreign companies		6
English is useful when making an order at restaurants and cafes		5
English is helpful in hospitals		3
Online shopping		3
You use it frequently		2
To make more friends	1	
Total number of occurrences	160	

As shown in Table (3), under the cognitive category, participants noted several advantages. In the educational category, a noteworthy number of respondents reported that English proficiency was important since it was the medium of instruction in universities. Participants also mentioned the importance of English for better opportunities to pursue postgraduate education and to study abroad, as well as access to research since a significant amount of it is carried out in English.

Additionally, the communicative category proved to be quite significant by participants. Advantages in this category included the ability to speak with foreigners both in Kuwait and abroad, facilitating communication, contacting 'their' children's schools, communicating with foreign companies, institutions and organizations. In addition, English was viewed as a necessity due to the large number of foreigners in Kuwait and a means of communication on social media. Communicating with foreigners seemed to be the most famous argument presented by the participants with (29) counts. English has also been seen as a language that brings people together and a fallback language for interlocutors who do not speak Arabic.

Moreover, personal arguments were mainly concerned with the role of English in employment. Advantages here ranged from the importance of English in hospitals to its importance when making orders at restaurants and cafes. Online shopping, frequent use and even making more friends were also arguments presented by respondents. Respondents (4 counts) who reported that knowing English did not have many advantages reported that Arabic was the main language in Kuwait, and that almost everyone knew at least some Arabic, therefore English's role was limited.

In item (11) participants were asked whether or not they believed poor *spoken* English would negatively affect their employability. Table (3) shows that 94.8% of the participants believed it really did. The five respondents, who reported otherwise stated that most interactions in Kuwait are carried out in Arabic. On the other hand, the reasons participants gave for their agreement are summarized in Table (4) below.

Table 4. Replies to item 11- 'Yes'.

Category	Respondents' Responses	Number of Occurrences
Cognitive	English is used very much in employment and is used in most aspects of the employment world	8
	English is the language of business and corporations, and it is a global language	6
	If you cannot speak English, you will get a job, but with lower salary	5
	English is essential for our time	4
	English has become an international language, and its need has grown over time	3
	In this era being multilingual is important especially knowing English	2
	It is the primary language in the world. Kuwait is open to international trade and most investors speak English; therefore it is a big advantage to be proficient in English	2
	It is part of globalization	1
	'Not knowing English can cause you to feel ashamed and ignorant'	1
	Communicative	Without English you will not be able to communicate with international clients
To be able to communicate with international companies		10
The number of non-Arabic speaking people makes speaking English important for better communication		9
Both Arabic and English are important for communication.		2
To communicate more effectively		1
Personal	Employers require candidates to have the ability to speak English	35
	We need to be able to speak good English for presentations	3
	'As I'm looking for a good position with good salary, I will get this only in English schools or bilingual schools, so I have to speak and write English.'	1
	'I plan to teach English once I graduate; thus, speaking English will be imperative'	1
Total number of occurrences		124

In the cognitive category, respondents reported that English played an important role in employment, some respondents explained that poor **spoken** English could negatively affect their salaries. Others explained that English was a global language, a language of business, the corporate world,

and trade. One respondent explained that not knowing English could cause them to feel ashamed. Some respondents reported that poor **spoken** English could affect their employability because it was the ‘international language, language of business and corporations, global language, primary language’ and that it was essential for their time. The inability to communicate with foreigners, international companies, and clients seemed to be the most important to participants. Respondents also stated that the large number of nationalities who do not speak Arabic makes English important for sound communication. Respondents acknowledged the importance of being multilingual and stressed the importance of English being one of the languages you spoke.

As for the personal category, there seemed to be consensus on the requirement of English by employers, which seemed to be clear by the number of respondents who have mentioned it. Three participants also mentioned the importance of English for work related presentations. One respondent reported that she was planning to teach English, therefore poor **spoken** English would negatively affect her employability.

As for responses to item (12) whereby respondents were asked whether or not they believed poor **written** English negatively affected their employability. Table (2) above showed that 84.4% of respondents reported positively. Table (5) below shows a summary of the respondents who agreed that poor **written** English would negatively affect employability.

Table 5. Replies to item 12 – ‘Yes’.

Category	Respondents’ Responses	Number of Occurrences
Cognitive	The inability to write in English may be an obstacle and prevent the employee from serving foreigners	6
	It is the language of business	6
	English is essential for our time	5
	Employers will think you are inexperienced if you cannot write English	3
	It is a global language	2

Communicative	Communicating via emails	36
	Knowing how to write English is important for international communication	12
	Communicating with colleagues via email and text messages	3
Personal	Many employers require you to have the ability to write in English	25
	You are sometimes asked to write reports in English, therefore knowing how to write proper English is essential	10
	'I am planning to become a teacher; hence written English is very important'	2
Total number of occurrences		110

Table (5) reveals that some respondents reported that poor ability to write English could be an obstacle to serving foreign clients. Moreover, English being a global language and the language of business was once more a reoccurring statement. Participants reported that **written** English was important for writing emails, text messages, and as a requirement by employers for international communications. Two participants reported wanting to become teachers which in part made proficiency in **written** English a must. Three respondents explained that the inability to write English will give the impression that they are inefficient and/or inexperienced in the field of employment.

On the other hand, participants who believed that poor **written** English did not affect their employability (only 15) mentioned that **written** English was not as important as **spoken** English in Kuwait; few jobs required capabilities in written English and that most jobs required **spoken** not **written** English.

Coming to the final item concerning university students' perceived effect of English proficiency on employability in Kuwait. Table (2) above revealed that 45.8% of participants reported that they would employ such candidates; meanwhile, 54.2% reported that they would not. Table (6) below shows a summary of the arguments made by respondents who reported that they would employ someone who could not speak English.

Table (7), however, shows a summary of respondents who said they would refuse to employ candidates who did not speak English.

Table 6. Replies for 'Yes' to item (13) - (44 participants)

Category	Respondents' Responses	Number of Occurrences
Cognitive	Many jobs only require Arabic	14
	Arabic is more prominent than English in Kuwait	12
	Arabic is our mother tongue therefore we must be proud of it and preserve it	6
	They may have valuable experience to share	5
	They can use Google translate if they need to	2
	It would be unfair to reject this candidate- It would not be right to force people to learn a foreign language to get a job if they speak the national language of the country	2
	Not all jobs should require English in an Arab country. What makes the world unique and beautiful is the differences in languages, dress codes, and civilizations; we should not lose this diversity	1
	This may be their first step to learning English	1
	When people have a great foundation in their mother tongue, English language can be learned with ease	1
National	We live in Kuwait and Arabic, not English, is the national language	9
	Arabic is part of our culture and foreigners could adapt	1
Communicative	Most people in Kuwait speak Arabic	4
Personal	'The most important aspect according to me is precision and being committed to their job'	3
Total number of occurrences		61

Table 7 Replies for ‘No’ to item (13) - (52 participants)

Category	Respondents’ Responses	Number of Occurrences
Cognitive	English has become a necessity	14
	English is a global language	9
	In order to be successful in the corporate world you have to be able to serve as many people as possible and knowing English helps reach a larger section of people	5
	They will be unproductive – They will not be good at their job	5
	They are obligated to know some English	4
	English is a Lingua Franca	3
Communicative	This employee can only benefit and communicate with Arabic speakers they will not be able to serve foreign clients and customers	22
	This person will not be able to communicate with international companies	7
	It would be difficult for him/her to communicate	3
	It is easier to communicate with someone who knows English	2
Personal	‘They do not meet my requirements’	3
	‘I prefer multilingual employers to develop my company.’	3
Total number of occurrences		80

In table (7), participants explain why they would employ someone who does not know English. Cognitive responses explained that not all jobs require English, and that Arabic was the dominant language in Kuwait. Some participants explained that they should be proud of Arabic as their mother tongue. Furthermore, some participants believed it would be unfair to reject someone just because they did not speak English. In addition, participants also explained that these people could use Google translate or would quickly develop communicative skills in English. Participants suggested that foreigners could adapt; they explained that most people in Kuwait can speak some Arabic. Three participants explained that English would be of little importance to them so long as the candidate is committed. Moreover, Table (7) showed a summary of arguments provided by respondents who refused to employ non-English speaking candidates. Informants’ cognitive arguments stress the importance of English as lingua

franca, global language, a necessity and even an obligation. Some participants also explain that English is a means to reach and serve a larger number of people in the corporate world.

Furthermore, under the communicative category, participants explained that an employee who is incapable of speaking English cannot benefit foreigners and cannot communicate with international companies. Some participants believed that it would be difficult for people who did not speak English to communicate, and that English assisted in reaching out to a larger spectrum of people. If such candidates did not meet the requirements, a multilingual employee would be an option.

Participants' responses to items 10 -13 in Table (2) above reveal that, on average, university students in Kuwait believe that English proficiency has a prominent effect on their employability. The vast majority (95.8%) of the students agreed that knowing how to speak and write English has plenty of advantages. Participants supported their response by cognitive, educational, personal, and communicative arguments. A prime reason was that proficiency in English could provide better employment opportunities, and better salaries. Most of the participants also agreed that deficiency in both **spoken** (94.8%) and **written** (84.4%) English could negatively affect their employability. Albeit fewer respondents agreed that poor **written** English could negatively affect employability in comparison to poor **spoken** English; e-communication with both local and international colleagues and companies was one of the most prevalent arguments made by the participants. Participants seemed to be aware of the commercial, and 'social values' of English proficiency, which appears to have influenced their responses (Young 2006, p.489), Al Riyami, T. K. (2021), Mark Wyatt and Glenda El Gamal (2023). These findings correspond to the findings of Roshid and Chowdhury's (2013) study which revealed that English proficiency was a very important factor in employment.

Moreover, responses to item (13) above revealed that 45.8% of participants reported that they would employ someone who could not speak English in what seemed to be a clash between their cognitive (aware of the benefits of English) and behavioral components. This may have resulted from what one participant termed 'unfair' or feeling of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992, p. 35). Participants explain that not all jobs required **spoken** English proficiency. On the other hand, those who reported

otherwise (54.2%) explained that English is a means of communication with both international companies and clients. Generally, participants are aware of the benefits proficiency in English can provide in the corporate world: a notion Roshid and Chowdhury (2013, p.78) describe as English 'linguistic capital'.

On average items 9 – 14 in the main questionnaire showed that participants seemed to carry negative attitudes towards EMI in relation to their learning experience. The majority of the students believe that lectures would progress faster and would be easier to comprehend if they were taught in Arabic. In addition, participants seemed to believe that they would participate more often if Arabic was the language of instruction. However, they do not seem to believe that Arabic alone would result in better academic progress amongst students. Respondents seemed to have shown disagreement with both statements which suggest that Arabic should be the medium of instruction in universities because it is a mother tongue and because it is the national language. On average, the majority of participants seemed to advocate a bilingual medium of instruction.

Meanwhile the majority of participants disagreed with the statements concerning English being a threat to their identity, promoting the spread of a foreign culture and making them feel like foreigners in their own country. They seemed to believe English has a negative effect on Arabic competence amongst the new generation. They also seemed to consider students' inability to express in Arabic what they have learnt in English a significant issue.

A notable number of participants agree that because textbooks are in English, English should be used to teach. Moreover, participants seemed to agree that English is important for Kuwait's development, as well as employment and better opportunities to pursue postgraduate education. It seemed, however, that students do believe they need extra support in English upon admission to higher education.

Overall respondents seemed to feel that EMI has affected their learning experience. Participants seemed to be aware of the advantages EMI can provide them, which is evident in their responses to items 28, 31 & 32 whereby respondents showed positive attitudes towards EMI and seemed to believe EMI can contribute positively to pursuing postgraduate studies, employment and Kuwait's development. Alternatively, a quick glance at

participants' responses to items (14,15,16 & 24) related to their learning experience reveals that students also feel that if Arabic was a medium of instruction, they would participate more often and find lectures easier to comprehend. In addition, students seemed to feel that EMI is somewhat affecting Arabic competence amongst new generations. However, most participants do not seem to agree that Arabic should be the medium of instruction despite the fact that it is both their mother tongue and the national language of Kuwait. This ambiguity in participants' attitude may be explained by the incompatibility of the cognitive and affective components of the participants' attitudes. Although participants are aware of the benefits of EMI from a cognitive perspective, their affective component, driven by their weakness in English and concern for Arabic seemed to be influencing their responses. Nevertheless, participants do not perceive EMI as a threat to their identity which is apparent by their responses to items 22, 23, and 33. There seemed to be general agreement amongst participants regarding courses and exams being offered bilingually. These findings are consistent with those of Al-Kahtany, Faruk, and Al-Zumor (2016, p.53) who revealed that students believed that English was essential and therefore, were willing to accept it in 'easy' courses in their major but not the 'hard' ones.

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

Romaine (1995, P.317) suggests that discrepancies between how people think they behave and how they actually behave is quite common. This paper mainly focused on the affective and cognitive components of attitudes. Although, some items in the questionnaire did address the behavioral component (commitment measures), the inability to observe participants' behavior firsthand shaped a limitation.

In addition, the sampling data was collected from AOU students - Kuwait. Other universities in Kuwait were not considered due to the tight timing of the study. Therefore, it is possible that students from other universities in Kuwait may have different attitudes towards EMI, and perceptions towards the effect of English proficiency on employability. However, the flexible schedule offered at the AOU, and the variety of students did somehow offer a reasonable idea about the general attitudes.

Results have shown that students have relatively positive attitudes towards EMI although they have made it clear that they have linguistic and comprehension related concerns. These findings correspond with the findings of a number of studies carried out in the Arabian Gulf and elsewhere (Airey, J. (2020); Mark Wyatt and Glenda El Gamal (2023); Jensen & Thogersen 2011; Margic & Krstanovic 2013; Al-Kahtany, Faruk, & Al-Zumor 2016; Omar Al Noursi (2013); Al Riyami, T.K. (2021), as well as the initial hypothesis. As shown earlier participants did show their willingness to engage in bilingual education which may relieve their concerns for Arabic competence and comprehension issues. Further studies investigating the likelihood of implementing bilingual education would provide a better understanding.

Regarding the effect of English proficiency, it seemed that there is general consensus on the influential effect of English proficiency on employability in Kuwait, which was also made clear in respondents' responses to the Likert scale items addressed to EMI. Respondents view it as a vital factor for improving their employability, development and readiness by equipping them with essential communication skills needed in various professional sectors. They seemed to be fully aware of the 'public' and 'educational' roles English is used for in Kuwait.

Further studies investigating employers' perceived effect of English on employability might contribute to a better understanding of what candidates need to fulfil in order to meet the needs of the employment and corporate world.

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Appendix A

1) Gender

Male

Female

2) Age 18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65

3) Major

English Language and Literature

Information Technology & Computer Track (ITC)

Business Studies

English Language and Linguistics with Business Studies

4) Employment Status

Employed

Self-employed

Unemployed

5) Please identify the languages you speak.

6)

a) When were you first exposed to English language instruction?

Elementary school

Middle School

High School (Secondary)

University

Other

b) Please explain if you have chosen 'other'.

7) What type of school did you attend during your high school/ secondary school years?

Government –Public

Arabic – Private

English – Private

Bilingual

Other

8) Which best describes your linguistic ability in spoken English?

I can speak English fluently.

I can speak English with very little difficulty.

I can speak English with some difficulty.

I can barely speak any English.

9) Which best describes your linguistic ability in written English?

I can write English with no difficulty.

I can write English with very little difficulty.

I can write English with some difficulty.

I cannot write intelligible English.

10)

a) Do you believe that knowing how to speak and write English has advantages in Kuwait?

Yes

No

b) If 'yes', please mention a few of these advantages.

c) If 'no', please explain.

11)

a) Do you think that poor spoken English would negatively affect your employability?

Yes

No

b) Why?

12) a) Do you think that poor written English would negatively affect your employability?

Yes

No

b) Why?

13)

a) If you were an employer (in Kuwait) would you employ people who are proficient (i.e. understand, speak, read, and write) in Arabic (both classical and dialectal) but do not speak English?

Yes

No

b) Why or why not?

To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please tick the appropriate box accordingly.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
If lectures at universities were taught in Arabic (both classical and dialectal) they would be easier to comprehend.					
If lectures at universities were taught in Arabic (both classical and dialectal) they (the lectures) would progress faster.					
If lectures at universities were taught in Arabic (both classical and dialectal) I would participate more often.					
English should be the medium of instruction in universities since our textbooks are in English.					
Lectures in universities should be taught in Arabic (both classical and dialectal) because Arabic is our mother tongue.					
Students should be given the choice to attend the same courses in either Arabic (both classical and dialectal) or English at Kuwaiti universities.					
Since Arabic is Kuwait's national language, all non-language subjects should be taught in Arabic (both classical and dialectal) at Kuwaiti universities.					
EMI (teaching in English) in universities <u>negatively</u> affects spoken Arabic proficiency amongst new generations.					

EMI (teaching in English) in universities shapes a threat to my identity.					
EMI (teaching in English) in universities promotes the spread of a foreign culture in Kuwait (i.e. American, British, Canadian, etc.).					
Students would be less likely to succeed if the medium of instruction (teaching) in universities was Arabic (both classical and dialectal).					
If the medium of instruction (teaching) in universities was in Arabic (both classical and dialectal), students would experience difficulty in learning the English language.					
The medium of instruction (teaching) in universities should be bilingual - using both Arabic (classical and dialectal) and English.					
Exams should be offered in both Arabic and English for all non-language subjects.					
EMI (teaching in English) in Kuwaiti universities is important for Kuwait's development.					
It is a problem when students cannot express in Arabic what they have learnt in English.					
Students would show better academic progress if Arabic (both classical and dialectal) was a medium of instruction (used to teach) in Kuwaiti universities.					
EMI (teaching in English) prepares students for employment and the corporate world.					
EMI (teaching in English) in universities gives students a better opportunity to pursue postgraduate studies.					
EMI (teaching in English) in Kuwaiti universities makes me feel like a foreigner in my own country.					
English should be the medium of instruction in universities; however students should be provided additional linguistic support upon admission to Kuwaiti universities.					

Appendix A – Arabic Version

الجنس

 ذكر أنثى18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 (2) العمر

(3) التخصص

 اللغة الإنجليزية و آدابها حاسوب إدارة أعمال اللغة الإنجليزية و إدارة الأعمال

(4) الحالة الوظيفية

 موظف لدي مشروع خاص بي غير موظف

(5) أَرَجُوا ذُكْرَ أَسْمَاءِ اللُّغَاتِ الَّتِي تَتَكَلَّمُهَا .

(6)

(أ) فِي أَيِّ مَرَحَلَةٍ بَدَأْتَ مَشْوَارَ تَعَلُّمِ اللُّغَةِ الْإِنْجِلِيزِيَّةِ؟

 ابتدائي متوسط ثانوي جامعة غير ذلك

(ب) أَرَجُوا التَّوْضِيحَ فِي حَالِ اخْتِزَاتِ "عَيْرِ ذَلِكَ".

(7) مَا نَوْعِ الْمَدْرَسَةِ الَّتِي انْتَحَقْتَ بِهَا خِلَالَ سَنَوَاتِ الثَّانَوِيَّةِ؟

 حكومي خاص عربي خاص إنجليزي ثنائية اللغة غير ذلك

(8) أَيُّ مِنْ هَذِهِ تُصَفِّ قُدْرَتَكَ عَلَى التَّكَلُّمِ بِاللُّغَةِ الْإِنْجِلِيزِيَّةِ؟

 أستطيع تكلم الإنجليزية بطلاقة. أستطيع تكلم الإنجليزية بصعوبة قليلة. أستطيع تكلم اللغة الإنجليزية بصعوبة كثيرة. بالكاد أستطيع التكلم باللغة الإنجليزية.

(9) أَيُّ مِنْ هَذِهِ تُصَفِّ قُدْرَتَكَ عَلَى الْكِتَابَةِ فِي اللُّغَةِ الْإِنْجِلِيزِيَّةِ؟

 أستطيع الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية بلا أي صعوبة. أستطيع كتابة اللغة الإنجليزية بصعوبة قليلة جدا. أستطيع كتابة اللغة الإنجليزية ولكنني أواجه صعوبة كبيرة.

□ لا أستطيع كتابة اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة مفهومة.

- (10)
أ) هل تعتقد أن القدرة على التكلّم والكتابة باللّغة الإنجليزيّة لها فوائد إذا كنت تسكن / تعمل في الكويت؟
□ نعم
□ لا
ب) إذا أجبت بـ "نعم" فأذكر بعضاً منها.

ج) إذا أجبت بـ "لا" أرجو التوضيح.

- (11)
أ) هل تعتقد أن ضعف القدرة على التكلّم باللّغة الإنجليزيّة يمكن أن يؤثر سلباً على فرص توظيفك؟

□ نعم
□ لا

ب) لماذا؟

- (12)
أ) هل تعتقد أن ضعف القدرة على الكتابة باللّغة الإنجليزيّة يمكن أن يؤثر سلباً على فرص توظيفك؟

□ نعم
□ لا

ب) لماذا؟

- (13)
أ) لو كنت تملك مصلحة هل كنت ستوافق على توظيف أحد يجيد اللّغة العربيّة بطلاقة (العاميّة والفصحى) فهما وقرأتا وكتابتا وتحدثتا) ولكن لا يتكلم اللّغة الإنجليزيّة؟

□ نعم
□ لا

ب) لماذا؟ أرجو التوضيح.

إلى أيّ درجة تتفق أو تختلف مع العبارات الآتية؟ أرجو وضع علامة إزاء ذلك.
(✓)

العبارة	اتفق و بشدة	اتفق	حيادي	لا أتفق	لا أتفق إطلاقاً
14) لو أن المحاضرات الجامعية تدرس باللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) لكان فهمها أسهل.					
15) لو كانت المحاضرات الجامعية تدرس باللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) لكانت تدار بطريقة أسلس وأسرع.					
16) لو كانت المحاضرات الجامعية تدرس باللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) لكانت شاركت أكثر.					
17) يجب أن يكون التدريس في الجامعات بالإنجليزية لأن الكتب الدراسية بالإنجليزية.					
18) يجب أن تدرس المحاضرات الجامعية باللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) لأنها هي لغتنا الأم.					
19) يجب أن يُخبر الطلبة على أن يحضروا نفس المحاضرة إما بالعربية (الفصحى والعامية) أو بالإنجليزية.					
20) لأن العربية تعتبر اللغة المعترف بها في الكويت كان من الأجدر أن تدرس جميع المحاضرات ما عدى تلك اللغوية منها كالإنجليزية وغيرها باللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) في جامعات الكويت.					
21) التدريس باللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات يؤثر سلباً على القدرة البلاغية في اللغة العربية لدى الأجيال القادمة.					
22) التدريس باللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة يشكّل تهديداً على هويتنا.					
23) التدريس باللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعات يحفز على نشر ثقافة أجنبية في الكويت كالثقافة الأمريكية والبريطانية والكنديّة الخ.					
24) احتمالية نجاح الطلبة كانت ستكون أقل لو كانت اللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) تستخدم للتدريس في الجامعات.					
25) لو كان التدريس باللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) في الجامعات لكان الطلاب يواجهون صعوبة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.					
26) يجب أن يكون التدريس في الجامعات بكلتا اللغتين العربية (الفصحى والعامية) والإنجليزية.					
27) يجب أن تكون الامتحانات مطروحة بكلتا اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية لجميع المواد ما عدى تلك اللغوية منها.					
28) استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في التدريس بالجامعات ضرورياً لتقدم الكويت.					
29) أن لا يستطيع الطلبة التعبير باللغة العربية عما تعلموه باللغة الإنجليزية يمكن اعتباره مشكلة.					
30) لو كانت اللغة العربية (الفصحى والعامية) تستخدم للتدريس لكان أداء الطلبة الأكاديمي أفضل في الجامعات الكويتية.					
31) التدريس باللغة الإنجليزية يهيئ الطلبة للعمل والتجارة.					
32) استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في التدريس بالجامعات يعطي الطلبة فرصة أقوى لإكمال الدراسات العليا.					
33) استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في التدريس بالجامعات الكويتية يشعرنني بأني غريب في بلادي.					
34) يجب أن تكون اللغة الإنجليزية هي اللغة التي تستخدم للتدريس في الجامعات ولكن يجب أن يتم إسعاف الطلاب بمزيد من المساعدة اللغوية فور قبولهم بالجامعات الكويتية.					