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EFL Learners' Belief in English Only Instruction: A promising or ineffective approach at the tertiary level in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Learning English has increased its popularity exponentially thanks to global needs in numerous fields. Accordingly, various means of instruction have been adopted to master English. English-only instruction, the alternative to code-switching, is one of them that urges educators and learners to communicate through English. Although many studies have examined the effectiveness of English-only instruction, a gap has been observed in the literature regarding students' opinions at a tertiary level in the Iraq context. To this aim, 50 students who studied at TISHK International University's Language Preparatory School in the 2022–2023 Academic Year were chosen via snowball sampling. Participants evaluated English-only instruction in terms of the overall program, instructors, and administration. The primary instrument used to collect data was a survey. Collected data, analyzed by SPSS 26 and NVivo, respectively, unearthed that English-only instruction received favorable feedback in terms of holistic English mastery, creativity, motivation, and time management. However, some communication barriers, thereby having low learning rates were cited by a few students as weaknesses of chosen instruction. Likewise, the instructors' efforts to teach English through Web 2.0 tools, practice exams, real-life examples, and principles of student centered approach were appreciated without leaving any room for hesitation. Similarly, the administrators' initiatives to guide, form, monitor, examine and take appropriate action to promote the quality of education with an English-only policy received positive feedback. The findings of this study may have certain implications for stakeholders who are interested in the implementation of English-only instruction at their institutions on a global scale.

Keywords: English mastery; English-only instruction; University students' perceptions; Web 2.0 tools

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1. Introduction

Acquiring linguistic competence is of greatest importance in the globalized world where physical distances are no longer a boundary thanks to means of communication and transportation. German was the dominant language in the 1900s. However, it lost its lion's share of other languages after World War II (Tran, 2022). Among others, English stands out as a lingua franca through which the nationals of different countries can communicate with each other. In other words, having a different mother tongue does not pose a communication barrier for speakers who are able to express their ideas in English as a common language (Rao, 2019). There are some compelling reasons to adopt English as a lingua franca. To name a few, 86 countries have used English as the official or second language (Dyvik, 2024). Likewise, more than 1.6 billion people can express their ideas in English, and the trend has been on the rise globally. In addition, 65% of the websites are run in English, indicating its centrality in fields such as tourism, aviation, education, international trade, media, sport, etc. Additionally, a growing number of scientific publications have been released in English, amounting to 90%. Considering the positive reflections of English, the individuals take the initiative to learn English, thereby being ahead of others in the competitive job market and having some other obvious benefits.

The medium of instruction to teach English has different modes: exclusively English or hybrid. The former refers to using the target language, English, without resorting to the mother tongue, while the latter means using the mother tongue and English harmoniously (Abubakr Abdulrahman et al., 2022; Celik and Kara, 2022; Uys et al., 2007). Each mode of instruction has some advantages and disadvantages. To illustrate, adopting exclusively English-only instruction can encourage the students to think from the perspective of the target language. Additionally, the learners can have more opportunities to become familiar with the culture as they research more in the target language. Likewise, they may be exposed to more comprehensible input, so their linguistic competence is enhanced in terms of macro-skills

and micro-skills. In addition, their chance to master English increases as they join the lessons in only English-speaking zones. Subsequently, they may seek other opportunities such as chatting with native speakers of English, reading novels, and watching movies in English. Moreover, they may subscribe to some channels and download some language learning applications, available on Google Play, Amazon App Store, or the App Store. Similarly, the learners may grab other opportunities to visit countries where they can communicate with people in English. After that, learners who receive English-only instruction can be admitted to other educational institutions in many countries if a need arises. Thus, their self-confidence can rise accordingly as they are instructed in a setting where only English is allowed to express their ideas. Adopting an exclusively English medium instruction may have some drawbacks. To illustrate, some students can be demotivated to go further if they cannot figure out essential points in the target language. Similarly, learners' scores in the exams can reduce dramatically if they cannot catch the fundamental points in the target language. Additionally, their motivation towards their mother tongue fades gradually if they only receive education in the target language (Celik, 2023; Yucedal and Kara, 2023). Moreover, their enthusiasm for other subjects that will be taught in their native language in the following years reduces if they need to take them in their native language compulsorily.

The other category, which is hybrid instruction, offers several benefits and hindrances. For instance, students may feel more comfortable because they have the chance to be clarified if some topics are beyond their understanding in the target language (Carson and Kashihara, 2012; Kucuk, 2023). In addition, students' self-confidence increases when they are clarified and learn better in an atmosphere where code-switching is allowed. Subsequently, peer learning is activated in their free time, so they learn from each other by taking advantage of their mother tongue to figure out the basics of the target language. On the other hand, employing hybrid instruction can pose some risks for educators and students. To name

a few, teachers may struggle to encourage the students to use the target language more frequently. In addition, the learning rate of the students may reduce dramatically if they cannot keep a balance between their mother tongue and their target language. Consequently, students can create grammatically incorrect sentences when they try to apply the rules of their mother tongue to the target language (Muysken, 2020). Furthermore, mastering English takes much longer when they do not force themselves to think, compose, and produce their ideas in English (Pae, 2019; Yucedal et al., 2022). Thus, their motivation to research more in the target language may be reduced substantially. It can be stated that being flexible in teaching English in the mother tongue has some positive and negative implications.

Research aim and research questions

The current study has multiple significance. To name a few, there has been an ongoing dilemma on the percentage of English instruction in ELL settings. Accordingly, various perspectives are available about adopting an English-only or code-switched instruction. This study has been implemented to contribute to the literature in the Iraq context. The students, whose lessons have been presented completely in English at a private university in Iraq, were the participants. Their opinions were gathered to evaluate the instructor, overall system, and administration. Correspondingly, the following research questions were formed:

RQ1: What are the genuine opinions of students on English-only instruction?

RQ2: What is the role of English-only instruction in sharpening students' macro and micro-skills?

2. Literature review

The rise of English, after the decline of German in the post-World War II period, as the most common language to communicate has marked important changes in the world. Since then, English has expanded its role in all fields, particularly in education, technology, science, and medicine (Garg

and Gautam, 2015; Shen, 2024). Accordingly, the necessity to acquire English precisely has increased, so English-only instruction (EOI hereafter) has arisen to meet the needs of the learners. The theoretical foundation of EOI can be found in Stephen Krashen's, American Linguist, theory of second language acquisition. He postulates that learners should be exposed to comprehensible input in an interactive and stress-free environment, thereby gaining a better understanding of the target language (Krashen, 1992). Similarly, designing lessons to foster English communication can yield better results because learners can adapt to the environment and respond accordingly.

A growing number of institutions have been adopting an EOI to reap the benefits of it and offer ample opportunity for the students in their academic, social, and professional lives. Some scholars (Bonyadi et al., 2021; Criado and González-Romero, 2023; Kustati, 2014) argue that EOI is the most feasible system to teach English successfully, while others (Abdulrahman and Kara, 2023; Dayan and Yildiz, 2022; Kucuk, 2024; Myers-Scotton, 2017; Muysken, 2020; Simasiku et al., 2015) contend that code-switching is more reasonable for increasing learners' learning rates. To illustrate, Lin et al. (2021) assert that EOI offers a fruitful and sustainable learning platform when designed pedagogically. They also elucidate that the English proficiency of the learners is enhanced when they are exposed to instruction through which the target language is used without switching to the native language. Likewise, Huang (2015) states that EOI closes the gap between students whose mother tongues are different, so learners can communicate with each other physically or virtually by taking advantage of the advanced technology in this globalized world. Similarly, Yildiz (2015) and Kara (2023) postulate a positive correlation between students' academic achievement and EOI because learners expand their knowledge periodically and increase their chances of achieving higher marks in the exams in Iraq at the tertiary level. Additionally, Kuteeva (2014) attests that EOI increases students' enthusiasm for learning English

because it enhances international cooperation and mobility to seek better life opportunities or receive further education abroad based on the century's necessities. Furthermore, Atlı and Özal (2017) posit that learners may compose inaccurate sentences if they think in their native language and then translate them into target language. They also assert that they save time when they learn how to create sentences in the target language because they do not lose time to switch languages. On the other hand, Hellekjaer (2010) postulates that EOI fails to meet the needs of learners when they have difficulty in understanding certain concepts, particularly at higher levels. Evans and Morrison (2011) point out that teaching some tips in terms of macro-skills and micro-skills in the native language can pave the way for showing progress more rapidly. Once instruction is in English, students cannot be equipped with the necessary skills to learn time-saving tips in their language learning journey. They conclude that switching languages can affect the process positively.

The same controversy can also be observed in published studies with varying conclusions. For instance, Yildiz (2015) conducted a study in Iraq at a tertiary level on 44 language preparatory school students who received all courses in English. The study revealed that taking all lessons in English and reading books as an extra-curricular activity significantly increased students' reading scores. Another notable study was conducted about the effectiveness of EOI in Iraq at the tertiary level by Ahmet et al. (2021) who pointed out that the duration of the course and percentage of speaking English have far-fetching positive effects on increasing students' satisfaction rates in EOI classes. Their study also suggests that minimizing EOI and maximizing bilingual education may reduce students' enthusiasm to English gradually because students' willingness towards the target language declines as they are exposed to English less than expected. A complementary study was conducted by Mpatheni et al. (2024) in Iraq where they found that inquiry-based English language learning fosters not only students' receptive but also productive skills when English is solely used without

switching to the native language. In the same vein, Karagöl and Başbay (2018) carried out a comprehensive study on 518 university students who received their education completely in English in Turkey. The study uncovered that EOI reduced students' anxiety and enhanced their performance in speaking more confidently. In the same vein, Tran (2022) conducted a study on 31 university students at a university in Vietnam, revealing that students' listening scores increased substantially after exposure to EOI. Subsequently, Arnbjörnsdóttir and Prinz (2017) conducted a study in Iceland on 91 university students which showed that EOI yielded positive results in terms of developing learners' writing skills gradually.

Some scholars have highlighted some drawbacks of EOI. To name a few, Phuong and Nguyen (2019) conducted a study on 136 students studying at a university in Vietnam. The study revealed that the acceptance rate of EOI decreases once the topics become more challenging. They state that switching to a mother tongue can be of greatest importance to easily figuring out challenging topics. In addition, Kustati (2014) carried out a study in Indonesia on 33 students and 10 lecturers which uncovered that code-switching can have far-fetching effects on students' success, motivation, and overall attitude towards learning English. Additionally, Abdulwahid's (2024) study found that code-switching is essential in English classes where students' background information is not sufficient to adapt to English-only lessons. Subsequently, Ibrahim (2023) completed a comprehensive study on gauging students' learning rates in classes where code-switching is allowed at the tertiary level in Iraq. The study revealed that code-switching helps learners to grasp certain notions in English, so they continue learning English more confidently. Afterward, Bonyadi et al. (2021) received teachers' opinions on code-switching in the Iranian context, which revealed that code-switching was beneficial to lay the background in terms of grammar in the initial stage. They reiterated that reducing the amount of time spent on code-switching can be helpful in the subsequent phases.

3. Materials and methods

3.1 The study

A mixed methods research design was employed in this study, which urged the researcher to collect data via a survey and an interview. McKim (2017) asserts that a mixed methods research design strengthens the study's quality by combining qualitative and quantitative instruments, thus it has been widely preferred in social science studies. In other words, conceptual analysis can be complemented analytically when a mixed methods research design has been adopted. Once data were collected, they were analyzed by SPSS 26 or NVivo. The survey was analyzed by employing certain tests: Cronbach Alpha, Shapiro Wilkinon, and Mann Whitney U test. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine whether the items were reliable enough to proceed. On the other hand, Shapiro Wilkinon was used to measure whether data deviated from normal distribution, while Mann Whitney U-test was adopted to figure out whether data differed significantly in terms of age and gender. Upon completing of survey analysis, the interviews were transcribed and classified by NVivo under thematic classifications, thereby gaining more accurate perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of EOI. When both instruments were analyzed separately, they were cross-checked whether they complied with each other.

3.2 Sample selection

This study was conducted at TISHK International University (hereafter TIU) in Erbil, Iraq, where, as of the 2022-2023 Academic Year, approximately 5,000 students received a superior education in their majors. Snowball sampling method was employed to narrow the population. To illustrate, 100 TIU Language Preparatory School (LPS hereafter) students who encompassed the population were given a specific number. Next, an application, Random Number Picker, was used to choose 10 participants randomly. In the subsequent phase, they invited 4 of their friends to finalize the participants with 50 students.

The number of female students was 28, whereas it was 22 in the next category of the gender. Also, their ages were between 18 and 23. The underlying rationale for selecting TIU as the location for this research is that it offers all courses in English and encourages academics to take advantage of the latest language learning and teaching trends.

LPS students are admitted to university on the condition that they improve their English by receiving 24 hours of instruction every week and presenting a weekly summary of a short narrative in the instructor's office. Readers, poems, or novels can grade the narrative to break the monotony and enrich their learning with various reading materials. Additionally, students completed three main course books, three vocabulary books, two grammar books, and one listening and speaking book as classroom materials. The academic year begins in December and ends in October, making it quite possible for students to enhance their four professional skills. In addition to regular classroom activities, students participate in entertaining and educative activities via Kahoot, Google Form, or Padlet. In addition, they are encouraged to take sides in a debate, research thoroughly in advance, and shoot their ideas confidently so they figure out how to defend their ideas and persuade others, which are key factors to becoming a successful public speaker. Students' oral and written performance in those activities have been closely monitored by the responsible instructors and administration, and necessary actions have been taken to ensure a rising trend in their overall marks.

3.3 Instrument and procedures

The data collection process lasted 6 weeks in this study. In the initial stage, permissions were taken from the TIU Research Centre which governs the publication process in accordance with ethical and professional considerations. After that, consent forms were handed out and signed by the participants. Some students did not want to join the study, so they were replaced with new participants. Additionally, some workshops were held to illustrate the data collection process precisely. Later, surveys were

conducted to be analysed. In the final phase, interviews were held one-on-one to unleash students' sincere opinions about English-only instruction, which they are exposed to during the year. Collected data were analysed by pre-defined instruments and some more remarkable points were highlighted in relevant sections.

3.4 Trustworthiness and ethics

The university's research committee invited the researcher to underline essential points of the study so that ethical and scientific concerns could be taken into consideration and possible problems were addressed with logical solutions. Having been granted permission, participants were determined. All phases of the study were introduced with a thorough workshop which allowed them to ask any questions in their minds. They were also informed that collected data would be fetched and analyzed in a confidential mode. Next, they put their signatures on the consent forms to join the study with their own will. Thus, privacy and transparency were guaranteed to earn the participants' trust.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire items were cross-checked by a committee of experts in testing and evaluation; therefore, the researcher examined whether the questionnaire's constructs were relevant and simple to understand. In this way, content validity was ensured by updating the queries based on the opinions of experts. Subsequently, Cronbach Alpha was activated to check internal consistency, the results of which was illustrated in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Reliability statistics of the piloting phase.

| Reliability | Statistics |
|------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
| 0.84 | 5 |

Cronbach Alpha index, 0.84, revealed that internal consistency criteria were met successfully according to McKim's (2017) guideline which attests that internal consistency is acceptable if it 0.70 and above.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Descriptive results

A questionnaire and an interview comprised the backbone of this study. The questionnaire was integrated into the study to reveal participants' genuine opinions on receiving exclusively English instruction, while the interview was embedded into the study to get in-depth perspectives of the participants. Two types of questions were included which were checkbox and Likert scale in the survey. The details of the survey are illustrated starkly below in **Table 2**:

Table 2. Benefits and drawbacks of EOI.

| Items | Options | N | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|----|------------|
| Positive Aspects of EOI | Improves Communicative Competence | 42 | 84 % |
| | Saves Time | 45 | 92 % |
| | Fosters Creativity | 48 | 96 % |
| | Increasing Motivation | 39 | 78 % |
| | Forging Real Life Connections | 41 | 82 % |
| | Being more creative | 43 | 86 % |
| | Gaining Mastery Earlier | 39 | 78 % |
| Mean | 86 % | | |
| Negative Aspects of EOI | Barriers in communication | 6 | 12 % |
| | Low learning rate | 7 | 14 % |
| | Demotivation | 3 | 6 % |
| | Isolation | 5 | 10 % |
| | Quitting the program | 2 | 4 % |
| Mean | 9 % | | |

As shown in **Table 2**, participants revealed their ideas on the positive and negative effects of EOI. According to the figures, fostering creativity (96%), saving time (90%), and being more creative (86%) were leading as the strengths. In the same vein, low learning rate (14%), barriers in communication (12%), and isolation (10%) were leading factors to be mentioned as weaknesses. Accordingly, there was a huge gap in terms of mean scores in each group. While the mean score was 86% on the positive side, it reduced sharply to 9% while depicting weaknesses. Considering this table, it can be concluded that the advantages of EOI outweigh the disadvantages.

Table 3 shows that participants favored EOI be-

cause it improved their macro-skills and micro-skills. While improvements were evident across all aspects, speaking and writing improvement was more noticeable than others in terms of macro-skills. The mean score of the former one was 4.84, whereas the mean score of the latter one was 4.90. Similarly, participants appreciated the conduct of the study in terms of micro-skills. To visualise, the difference in grammar and pronunciation was more significant than vocabulary. The mean grammar score was 4.86, while it was 4.84 in pronunciation. Afterwards, they highlighted that their motivation rose considerably, with a mean score of 4.42. Afterwards, the mean score, 4.76, was quite high regarding feeling regretful about not having joined such a study earlier. It can be stated that EOI enhanced students' performance in all skills and helped them have positive attitudes towards the language learning process.

According to **Table 4**, it was noticed that participants were satisfied with the endeavors of the instructors. The mean scores were between 4.56 and 4.94, which were quite significant. For example, the

mean score for having engaging lessons was 4.86. Furthermore, they appreciated the integration of Web 2.0 tools in education, with a mean score of 4.76. Afterwards, they asserted that revising topics to learn well was another positive aspect, with a mean score of 4.88. After that, they were satisfied with mock exams which received a 4.70 mean score. Additionally, receiving constructive feedback got the highest mean score, which was 4.94. Moreover, they had positive views on being guided to improve their English out of class, with a mean score of 4.64. Furthermore, they appreciated having office hours to expand their learning and get clarification individually, with a mean score of 4.66. Subsequently, they complimented the instructor on organizing time management workshops which had a 4.56 mean score. Additionally, they were satisfied with the allotted time for macro and micro skills. The last item in this questionnaire was having a student-centred approach with a mean score of 4.92. It can be concluded that participants had mostly positive views on professional conduct and sacrifices of the instructors.

Table 3. Students' overall satisfaction rates regarding EOI.

| Item | Min. | Max. | Mean | SD | Variance |
|--|------|------|------|------|----------|
| 1. EOI helped me scan, skim, and comprehend reading texts without having any difficulty. | 2 | 5 | 4.64 | 0.85 | 0.725 |
| 2. EOI motivated me to answer listening questions more accurately. | 1 | 5 | 4.68 | 0.81 | 0.671 |
| 3. EOI encouraged me to speak more fluently. | 2 | 5 | 4.84 | 0.65 | 0.423 |
| 4. EOI inspired me to write more creatively. | 3 | 5 | 4.9 | 0.5 | 0.255 |
| 5. EOI helped me to increase my grammatical accuracy. | 1 | 5 | 4.86 | 0.58 | 0.341 |
| 6. EOI helped me develop my pronunciation. | 2 | 5 | 4.84 | 0.54 | 0.3 |
| 7. EOI helped me expand my vocabulary knowledge. | 1 | 5 | 4.82 | 0.56 | 0.314 |
| 8. EOI increased my motivation to research more about my major. | 3 | 5 | 4.42 | 1.1 | 1.228 |
| 9. I wish I could have received EOI earlier. | 4 | 5 | 4.76 | 0.74 | 0.553 |

Table 4. Evaluation of the instructor.

| Item | Min. | Max. | Mean | SD | Variance |
|--|------|------|------|------|----------|
| Our instructors engagingly covered the lessons. | 2 | 5 | 4.86 | 0.49 | 0.245 |
| Our instructors integrated Web 2.0 tools. | 1 | 5 | 4.76 | 0.84 | 0.717 |
| Our instructors revised topics several times to teach well. | 1 | 5 | 4.88 | 0.7 | 0.49 |
| Our instructors offered mock exams. | 1 | 5 | 4.7 | 0.88 | 0.786 |
| Our instructors offered feedback about our mistakes individually. | 4 | 5 | 4.94 | 0.23 | 0.058 |
| Our instructors guided us to keep learning English outside of class. | 2 | 5 | 4.64 | 0.85 | 0.725 |
| Our instructors welcomed us in their offices to teach one-on-one. | 1 | 5 | 4.66 | 1.04 | 1.086 |
| Our instructors offered workshops on managing time wisely in exams. | 1 | 5 | 4.56 | 1.12 | 1.272 |
| Our instructors reserved enough time to improve all skills. | 1 | 5 | 4.7 | 0.93 | 0.867 |
| Our instructors adopted a student-centred approach in classes. | 3 | 5 | 4.92 | 0.34 | 0.116 |

As shown in **Table 5**, participants' satisfaction regarding administration is significant, with mean scores ranging from 4.62 to 4.94. Once item 1 was elaborated, the administration was quite successful in designing a welcoming classroom atmosphere where they could learn in a stress-free way. Similarly, participants were complimented about being informed on the academic year thoroughly with a mean score of 4.78 in item 2. In addition, they highlighted that a written form of handbook was given to them, so they could learn all regulations, revise and use them as a reference during the year. Additionally, they appreciated being valued with their constructive comments which had a 4.66 mean score. Moreover, they were satisfied with the announcements, includ-

ing exam dates and results, which had a 4.68 mean score. After that, the initiatives of the administration to leave room for relaxation through various trips were also favored by participants with a mean score of 4.62. Subsequently, the actions of the administration to fix technical problems received positive feedback from the participants with a mean score of 4.68. Afterwards, the encouragement provided by the administration to join some clubs was appreciated by participants with a mean score of 4.84. Additionally, managing the process of re-check some exam papers was found to be professional with a mean score of 4.94. Coupled with the evidence provided in **Table 5**, it can be argued that participants met the administration's conduct with positive comments.

Table 5. Evaluation of the administration.

| Item | Min. | Max. | Mean | SD | Variance |
|--|------|------|------|------|----------|
| The administration welcomed us in a positive atmosphere | 1 | 5 | 4.76 | 0.77 | 0.594 |
| The administration paid a visit to elaborate on the academic year precisely. | 1 | 5 | 4.78 | 0.73 | 0.549 |
| The administration provided a well-established handbook to highlight our rights, responsibilities, and official regulations. | 2 | 5 | 4.88 | 0.59 | 0.353 |
| The administration valued our ideas for the betterment of education. | 1 | 5 | 4.66 | 0.91 | 0.841 |
| The administration announced the exam dates and results periodically. | 1 | 5 | 4.68 | 1.09 | 1.202 |
| The administration organised events to relax. | 2 | 5 | 4.62 | 1.15 | 1.342 |
| The administration took quick action to solve technical problems. | 1 | 5 | 4.68 | 1.09 | 1.202 |
| The administration encouraged us to join some clubs. | 1 | 5 | 4.56 | 1.12 | 1.272 |
| The administration managed petitions professionally | 4 | 5 | 4.94 | 0.23 | 0.058 |

As illustrated clearly in **Table 6**, participants' overall satisfaction differs slightly, although all figures have 4.50 or more mean scores. To illustrate, the mean scores were 4.76, 4.86, and 4.94, respectively. It is safe to conclude that participants reaped the benefits of EOI thanks to the harmony between the instructors and the administration. It seems that they developed their relationship gradually and worked harmoniously.

Table 6. The analysis of 3 main categories.

| Construct | Min | SD | Variance |
|----------------|------|------|----------|
| EOI | 4.76 | 0.38 | 0.147 |
| Instructors | 4.86 | 0.25 | 0.066 |
| Administration | 4.94 | 0.12 | 0.017 |

A normality test was run to test whether the data were distributed normally or strayed from the line

in a noticeable way in **Table 7**. If the data were distributed normally, t test would be required. In other scenarios, Mann Whitney U-test would be required to measure whether data differ significantly in terms of age and gender. After observing the p-values of the Shapiro-Wilk test, they were measured as .000, less than 0.05. Thus, p-values indicated that the distribution deviated significantly from the normal distribution, so the Mann-Whitney U-test was required to proceed and measure the differences regarding age and gender.

Table 7. Normality test of questionnaire items.

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | | | Shapiro-Wilkinson | | |
|----------------|--------------------|----|-------|-------------------|------|-------|
| | St | df | Sig. | St | df | Sig. |
| EOI | 0.307 | 50 | 0.000 | 0.676 | 0.50 | 0.000 |
| Instructors | 0.315 | 50 | 0.000 | 0.691 | 0.50 | 0.000 |
| Administration | 0.268 | 50 | 0.000 | 0.759 | 0.50 | 0.000 |

The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between participants in terms of age and gender after a general analysis of their responses in **Table 8**. Once age-based p-values were analysed, it was determined that there were no statistically significant differences between participants, with the exception of the instructor category. P-value, .000, was less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in the evaluation of the instructor category; however, other p-values, 0.029 and 0.051, were greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference in age. It can be argued that participants aged 21 to 23 were more satisfied with the instructor’s contribution to the language learning process than those aged 18 to 20.

Table 8. The analysis of mann whitney U-Test in terms of age.

| EOI | Instructor | Administration | |
|------------------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| Mann-Whitney U | 185.000 | 122.500 | 191.500 |
| Wilcoxon W | 746.000 | 683.500 | 752.500 |
| Z | -2.181 | -3.611 | -1.951 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.029 | 0.000 | 0.051 |

When the Mann-Whitney U-test result was analyzed to measure whether there was a noticeable difference between participants in terms of gender in **Table 9**, no significant difference was found which had 0.786, 0.768, and 0.874 p-values. It can be concluded that participants had common inclinations regardless of gender while choosing their sides in the questionnaire.

Table 9. The analysis of mann whitney U-Test in terms of gender.

| EOI | Instructor | Administration | |
|------------------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| Mann-Whitney U | 251.000 | 250.000 | 255.500 |
| Wilcoxon W | 881.000 | 370.000 | 885.500 |
| Z | -2.272 | -2.295 | -.159 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.786 | 0.768 | 0.874 |

4.2. Qualitative findings

Interview

Once transcripts of the interviews were examined, several points were highlighted by the students. To

name a few, composing ideas in the target language without switching to the mother tongue helped students save time and increase fluency in speaking “*I realized that learning English in this way was more effective because I did not waste time thinking in my native language and transferring into English. Additionally, I was not confused about the rules of my mother tongue and English. I used to make many chronic mistakes when I applied the rules of my mother tongue to English. As of now, I can compose my ideas in English and express them in a more confident way*” (St18). Subsequently, enriching lessons with e-learning materials uncovered students’ potential to use the target language with up-to-date and meaningful tasks. “*We had so much fun while learning through online activities such as e-books, e-quizzes, and e-games. Also, we received constructive feedback on our performance in order not to repeat the same mistakes in the upcoming exams. Additionally, we watched some educative videos and took relevant quizzes. Later, we summarised the videos or discussed common themes in the videos. These activities enhanced our performance substantially. All in all, it was a period to multiply my communicative competence in a short time*” (St27).

Another theme that emerged was about devising novel strategies to overcome language learning anxiety. “*English-only instruction helped me overcome language learning anxiety with well-planned activities. To illustrate, workshops, debates, peer-learning endeavours, game-based activities, field trips, and constructive feedback, and office hours relieved our stress and encouraged us to learn more ambitiously in a stress-free atmosphere* (St35). Another significant theme that was uncovered was the organization of courses “*Our lessons were varied to develop our macro and micro skills in harmony, so we did not get bored. Learning English by allotting equal time for each skill sharpened my English dramatically*” (St41). In addition, another noteworthy point to be highlighted was about the degree of difficulty, raised gradually “*We started learning English with basic knowledge, so we progressed in a graded way which increased our ambition to learn English continuous-*

ly” (St43). On the other hand, some students verbalised some drawbacks of the program: “The orientation period was troublesome for me because I could not adapt to speaking completely English, *which is a foreign language for me. Subsequently, I had difficulty grasping the definition of some essential words when I tried to learn from a monolingual dictionary. However, I handled such issues with the help of my classmates and lecturers as weeks passed*” (St49).

5. Discussion

The use of English as the single medium of instruction was thoroughly sought in this study by the perspectives of EFL learners at the tertiary level through various instruments: a questionnaire and an interview. Considering the findings in each instrument, some essential points were highlighted based on the research questions. To begin with, some various positive aspects and a few negative aspects of EOI were emphasized. For instance, the quantitative findings evidenced that communicative competence, which encompasses linguistic, discourse, socio-linguistic, and strategic ones, was fostered dramatically. It is consistent with Kang’s (2012) study which hints that English-only instruction encourages learners to improve their skills in various dimensions. In addition, saving time to think and compose ideas in the target language was another significant finding of the study which dovetails with Arnbjörnsdóttir and Prinz’s (2017) study. He asserts that learning how to think in the target language ensures automaticity for learners, thereby reducing time to embark on conversations. Subsequently, participants asserted that they became more creative upon having been exposed to English-only instruction. This finding is supported by Lin et al. (2021) who postulate that receiving education in the target language allows learners to comprehend language learning and teaching items more accurately, so they are likely to be more creative in the days to come. Additionally, participants were motivated as they noticed more real-life connections in various activities. They asserted that they transferred theoretical knowledge they learned in classes into practice by visiting some places where they could

practice English in their social lives. In this regard, Yildiz (2015) contends that various trips to practice English in daily life can motivate learners to study more diligently in their English-only classes because both support each other on the way to becoming more proficient. On the other hand, communication barriers, low learning rates, isolation, and dropping out of the university were given as some drawbacks of English-only instruction by a small margin of students. Bonyadi (2021) states that using exclusively English in classes can have some disadvantages such as suffering from speaking anxiety, earning low marks, feeling alienated from others and seeking ways to stop studying at educational institutions, so code-switching can yield better results to resolve such problems in EFL classes instead of trusting EOI as the sole learning and teaching approach.

Apart from the advantages and disadvantages of English-only instruction, the program, instructor, and administration were evaluated separately. To name a few, the findings showed that the language preparatory school program was beneficial to developing their macro skills and micro-skills, respectively. They argued that balancing the duration for developing each skill was set professionally, and required arrangements were made for the betterment of the education after receiving feedback from the instructors and students. It was consistent with Tran’s (2022) study which hints that English-only instruction offers numerous advantages for the learners to develop their skills, so they can express their ideas verbally and in a written format. After that, participants postulated that instructors’ efforts to cover lessons engagingly were appreciated. They expressed that Web 2.0 tools, mock exams, and regular feedback increased their learning because they took advantage of technology tools, realized their mistakes before real exams, and shaped their learning based on the feedback. In this respect, Kara and Kucuk (2023) elucidate that Web 2.0 tools can have far-fetched effects in classes if the activities and feedback policy are balanced in professional conduct. Afterward, participants pointed out that gaining more autonomy in classes with the guidance of the instructors increased students’ motivation

to speak more confidently. Similarly, Al-Raimi et al. (2024) point out that reaping the fruits of technology in English classes not only engage students but also boost their overall performance thereby changing students' attitude towards learning English positively. In the same vein, Soori et al. (2023) support the previous remarks by adding that hybrid modes transform the education in general because students are digital natives who are ambitious to get feedback, quizzes and mock exams online as well as face to face format., so taking their interests into consideration should not be underestimated for the sake of increasing success in English lessons.

Secondly, qualitative findings through the semi-structured interview documented that EOI paid off in numerous ways. First, technology-enhanced education was appreciated by students. They reiterated that educational games, e-quizzes, e-worksheets and e-illustrations and videos captured their attention to grasp details clearly and be more self-confident in the language learning and teaching journey. This finding is consistent with Rao's (2019) study which pinpointed a positive link between digitalization of learning materials and the improvement of students' academic performance. Subsequently, field trips organized to foster students' speaking skills in real life settings were supported by the majority of the students as they were seen as the bridge the close the gap between theory and practice. This finding is in line with Abdulrahman and Kara's (2023) study which culminated in a direct link between organizing well-established field trips and sharpening learners' linguistic skills substantially. Finally, over three-quarters of the students elucidated that adopting a student centered approach in communicative acts was more effective because breaking the monotony and passing on the responsibility to command the activities in cooperation under the guidance of the teacher were cited as motivational factors. In this regard, Kara (2023) and Tran (2022) attest that communicative language teaching plays integral roles in expanding students' knowledge and increasing their capabilities because well-planned lesson designs foster creativity and critical thinking, respectively.

Considering aforementioned opinions of students, it is safe to state that the advantages of EOI outweigh the disadvantages.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of English-only instruction on EFL learners at a tertiary level under three common themes which were an overall program, evaluation of the academics, and administrative units. The findings, gathered according to principles of a mixed methods research design, revealed that English-only instruction increased students' productivity, creativity, and satisfaction rates thereby ensuring success in terms of progress on macro and micro-skills in general. In addition, instructors' professional conduct to teach English professionally and adamantly with the help of technology tools yielded positive outcomes. In the same vein, offering continuous feedback and a welcoming atmosphere to express their ideas were reported as other means to increase students' diligence in an English-only classroom atmosphere. Additionally, overall planning and management of the administrative units were appreciated as factors to boost students' performance. Subsequently, setting aside a certain amount of time for each skill and revising meticulously helped participants to plan their learning in a balanced way. Similarly, organising some trips to relax or practice English through field trips received numerous compliments from the participants. Moreover, assigning some topics to be discussed as debates unearthed that students' creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills were enhanced dramatically.

Based on the findings of the study, some pedagogical implications are suggested. First, authorized bodies should seriously consider the implementation of EOI in their educational institutions seriously to reap the benefits in many ways such as increased enthusiasm, overall improvement linguistically, boosted motivation and more dynamic classroom atmosphere. Additionally, head of English departments should train their colleagues to put EOI into practice professionally with crystal-clear examples. Moreover, parents and students should be well-informed

about the effectiveness of EOI, so their hesitations can be removed in advance. Furthermore, bountiful means of materials on the web should be carefully balanced to improve students' English through hybrid learning tools thanks to the collaboration of stakeholders in education, including teachers, administrators, policy makers and representatives of ministry of education. Last but not least, EOI paves the way for unlocking the massive potential of communicative language teaching approach which should be echoed several times in workshops, seminars and conferences for the sake of elevating students' levels.

Concerning the limitations imposed on the study, various constructive recommendations for further research are proposed. For instance, this study reflected 50 language preparatory school students' opinions at a private university in Erbil, Iraq. Further studies can be carried out to expand the sampling with other stages at the university, such as sophomore, junior, and senior ones. Additionally, other universities which adopt English-only or hybrid instruction can be included. Subsequently, only surveys and interviews were employed, which can be extended with exam scores to get a clearer image. In addition, code-switching versus English-only instruction can be examined thoroughly in future studies so that fairer interpretations can be made about the strengths and weaknesses of each mode of instruction.

Author Contributions

The author, Hur Mustafa Yucedal, has undertaken the whole responsibility to get prior permissions from relevant committees about sticking to ethical and scientific principles, obtain signed student consent forms, collect data, analyze and publish the work in the final phase.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The author confirms that the data supporting the

findings in this article are available within the article. Raw data that support the findings are also available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

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Publication Ethics

The author confirms that the study has completed the procedures to obtain permission from the Scientific Committee which verifies that scientific methods and ethical considerations are followed adamantly. The committee members examined the study periodically to figure out whether the researcher adhered to scientific and ethical principles. The approval date: 12/1/2024.

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