

English Language Teaching and English-Medium Instruction in Lebanese Higher Education: A Critical Integrative Review of Challenges, Best Practices, and Policy Implications

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Abstract

This paper explores English Language Teaching (ELT) in Lebanese universities within the expanding context of English-Medium Instruction (EMI). In Lebanon, English functions both as a subject of study and as a primary medium of instruction across disciplines, creating complex pedagogical and institutional demands at the tertiary level. This study utilizes a qualitative, interpretive, integrative literature review of academic research papers, educational policies, conference proceedings, dissertations, and professional documents related to English language teaching and learning in higher education in Lebanon. The review synthesizes evidence around five interconnected themes: The relationship between ELT and EMI, institutional and pedagogical challenges, multilingual classroom practices, effective implementation strategies, and policy implications for Lebanese higher education. In addition, the review examines challenges faced by English language instructors, including students' uneven linguistic preparedness, misalignment between secondary and tertiary education, heterogeneous classrooms, limited instructional time, and assessment constraints. It further addresses EMI-related pressures, including unclear language policies, insufficient linguistic support for content courses, limited professional development opportunities, and the increasing precariousness of academic labor. These challenges are situated within Lebanon's ongoing economic and sociopolitical crises, which have significantly affected teaching conditions, student engagement, and learning outcomes. By contextualizing ELT and EMI within these intersecting realities, the study argues that many instructional difficulties are systemic rather than individual. It concludes by highlighting the need for context-responsive EMI policies, integrated language support structures, and sustained institutional investment in instructor development.

Keywords: ELT, EMI, Challenges, Higher Education, Language Policy, Best Practices, Advantages, Universities, Lebanon

1. Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education has undergone profound transformation over the past three decades, driven by globalization, internationalization, cross-border academic mobility, and the growing dominance of English as the principal language of science, research, and professional communication (Nicolas & Annous, 2021). One of the most significant manifestations of this transformation has been the rapid expansion of English-Medium Instruction (EMI), defined as the teaching of academic subjects through English in contexts where English is not the first language of the majority of the population (Dearden, 2014; Macaro, 2018; Macaro et al., 2018). Earlier conceptualizations emphasized EMI primarily as a language of instruction (Taguchi, 2014, p. 89), whereas more recent definitions increasingly recognize its dual educational purpose. Curle, Rose, and Yuksel (2024) define EMI as "the teaching of academic content via the medium of English in contexts where other mediums of instruction have been the status quo" (p. 2), while McKinley (2025) further argues that "EMI inherently aims, explicitly or implicitly, to develop learners' academic English alongside disciplinary knowledge" (p. 2). This conceptual evolution reflects a broader shift from viewing EMI simply as a language policy toward understanding it as an integrated pedagogical

and institutional strategy.

The remarkable growth of EMI has generated substantial scholarly debate. On one hand, universities increasingly adopt EMI to strengthen international competitiveness, expand global partnerships, improve graduate employability, and enhance research visibility (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018). On the other hand, researchers question whether rapid EMI expansion has been accompanied by adequate pedagogical preparation, equitable access, and coherent language planning (Phillipson, 2018; Alhamami, 2024; Curle et al., 2024). Rather than debating whether EMI should exist, contemporary scholarship increasingly focuses on the conditions under which it can support both disciplinary learning and language development. Across diverse educational contexts, evidence consistently suggests that successful EMI depends not only on students' English proficiency but also on institutional language policies, faculty preparedness, curriculum alignment, and sustained integration between ELT and disciplinary instruction.

Despite this growing international literature (Soruc & Griffiths, 2018, p. 39), important contextual differences remain. European universities have generally implemented EMI within well-developed institutional support systems. In contrast, many countries in Asia and the Middle East continue to experience tensions between internationalization goals and educational capacity. These differences suggest that EMI cannot be understood through universal models alone; rather, its effectiveness is shaped by each country's linguistic ecology, educational traditions, and policy environment. Consequently, scholars increasingly advocate context-sensitive analyses that examine how local sociolinguistic conditions influence the implementation and outcomes of EMI (Sah & Li, 2018; Phillipson, 2018; Alhamami, 2024; Curle, Rose, & Yuksel, 2024).

These international developments provide an important backdrop, yet they offer only partial insight into multilingual systems such as Lebanon, where English functions simultaneously as a subject of instruction and as the principal medium for disciplinary learning. Lebanon provides an especially compelling context for such analysis. Historically multilingual, the Lebanese educational system has long integrated Arabic, French, and English within both school and university education (Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). At the tertiary level, English has gradually become the dominant language of instruction in many private universities, particularly in medicine, engineering, business, technology, and other professionally oriented disciplines (Shaaban, 2017; Nicolas & Annous, 2021; Hejase et al., 2023). Unlike in countries where EMI represents a relatively recent policy innovation, English in Lebanon serves a dual educational function: it is taught as an academic subject through English Language Teaching (ELT) programs while also serving as the principal medium through which disciplinary knowledge is constructed and communicated (Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2019). This dual role creates a unique educational environment in which language learning and content learning are expected to occur concurrently rather than sequentially.

However, the effectiveness of this model remains uncertain. Lebanese universities operate within a higher education sector characterized by considerable linguistic diversity but also substantial educational inequality. Students arrive with widely varying levels of English proficiency that reflect disparities in school sectors, socioeconomic backgrounds, and previous language exposure (Gaith and Diab, 2008; Shaaban, 2017; Chehimi, 2021b; Chehimi and Alameddine, 2022). These differences challenge the assumption that students possess sufficient linguistic competence to engage effectively with English-medium curricula and place considerable pressure on both ELT programs and disciplinary instructors. As a result, the relationship between ELT and EMI has become increasingly interdependent, yet institutional structures often continue to treat them as separate academic responsibilities.

These long-standing educational challenges have been intensified by Lebanon's ongoing economic and political crises. Persistent financial instability, institutional resource constraints, faculty migration, and declining public investment have fundamentally altered the operating conditions of higher education (Rkein, A. et al., 2022; Rkein, H. I. et al., 2022; Akar, 2023). At the same time, universities continue to confront structural issues including uneven student preparedness, significant disparities between public and private schooling, and the absence of a coherent national language policy governing multilingual higher education (Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). These interacting pressures raise important questions regarding the sustainability of EMI and the capacity of existing ELT programs to support increasingly diverse student populations.

1.1 Addressing the Research Gap

Although a growing body of scholarship has examined ELT and EMI in Lebanon (e.g., Shaaban, 2017; Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2019; Nicolas & Annous, 2021; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024), the literature remains fragmented in several important respects. First, most studies investigate ELT and EMI as separate educational domains rather than examining their interdependence within multilingual higher education. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how language instruction and disciplinary teaching collectively influence students' academic success in English-medium programs.

Second, existing Lebanese research has primarily focused on isolated issues, such as students' English proficiency, classroom language practices, translanguaging, or instructors' perceptions, often within single institutions or specific disciplines. Comparatively little research has synthesized these findings to identify recurring institutional challenges, common patterns of practice, or systemic policy implications across the higher education sector. As a result, the literature provides valuable local evidence but offers limited guidance for institutional leaders and policymakers seeking to develop coherent language policies that integrate ELT and EMI.

Third, much of the international literature on EMI has been informed by experiences in Europe and East Asia, where institutional resources, language ecologies, and higher education policies differ substantially from those in Lebanon. Although these studies provide important pedagogical insights, their recommendations cannot be assumed to transfer directly to Lebanon's multilingual, socio-politically complex, and economically constrained educational environment. This contextual gap underscores the need for a comprehensive synthesis that critically examines international evidence through the lens of Lebanese higher education.

Accordingly, this review contributes to the literature by integrating international, regional, and Lebanese scholarship to examine ELT and EMI as interconnected components of the same educational ecosystem. Rather than reviewing language teaching and English-medium instruction independently, the paper identifies areas of convergence and divergence across existing research, evaluates emerging best practices, and develops context-sensitive policy implications for strengthening multilingual higher education in Lebanon. In doing so, the review contributes a more holistic conceptual framework that links language education, disciplinary instruction, institutional governance, and language policy.

1.2 Review Objectives and Scope

This review seeks to provide a comprehensive and critical synthesis of the literature on ELT and EMI in Lebanese higher education. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Critically examine the conceptual relationship between ELT and EMI within multilingual higher education;
- Synthesize international, regional, and Lebanese research to identify major pedagogical, institutional, and linguistic challenges associated with EMI implementation;
- Identify evidence-based best practices that support effective integration of language development and disciplinary learning;
- Evaluate the extent to which international experiences can inform the Lebanese higher education context; and
- Propose policy recommendations that strengthen institutional language planning, faculty development, and student academic success in Lebanese universities.

1.3 Research Questions

This review is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1. How has the relationship between English Language Teaching (ELT) and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) been conceptualized in international and regional higher education literature?
- RQ2. What pedagogical, linguistic, institutional, and policy challenges are consistently reported in the implementation of EMI, particularly within multilingual higher education systems?
- RQ3. What evidence-based best practices have been identified for integrating language development with disciplinary instruction?
- RQ4. To what extent are international EMI practices applicable to the Lebanese higher education context?
- RQ5. What policy implications emerge from the literature for strengthening ELT and EMI implementation in Lebanese universities?

1.4 Justification of the Study

Lebanon represents a distinctive multilingual context in which Arabic, English, and French coexist, and English serves both as a subject of instruction and as the principal medium for teaching many university disciplines (Shaaban, 2017; Nicolas & Annous, 2021; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Despite this long-standing educational model, Lebanese higher education continues to face challenges, including uneven student preparedness, limited coordination between ELT and disciplinary teaching, and the absence of comprehensive language policies. These issues have become more pronounced amid the country's ongoing economic and institutional crises (Akar, 2023).

This review is therefore justified by the need to critically synthesize existing international and Lebanese scholarship, identify common challenges and effective practices, and provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening language education and English-medium instruction in Lebanese universities.

1.5 Research Merit and Contribution to Knowledge

By integrating international, regional, and Lebanese scholarship, this review develops a context-sensitive analytical framework through which ELT and EMI can be understood as interdependent components of multilingual higher education. This synthesis contributes to scholarship on Lebanon and broadens debates on EMI implementation in linguistically diverse, resource-constrained settings.

The study also contributes by synthesizing international, regional, and Lebanese research to identify recurring pedagogical, institutional, and policy issues affecting EMI implementation. Through a qualitative thematic synthesis, it highlights areas of consensus and disagreement across the literature while evaluating the applicability of international best practices to the Lebanese context.

From a practical perspective, the review offers evidence-informed recommendations for university leaders, curriculum developers, faculty members, and policymakers seeking to improve language support, institutional coordination, and English-medium teaching. By linking language policy, instructional practice, and institutional governance, the study provides a context-sensitive framework for enhancing the quality and sustainability of multilingual higher education in Lebanon. Its findings may also inform other multilingual countries facing similar educational and policy challenges (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Snyder, 2019).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing ELT and EMI in Higher Education

English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education has traditionally focused on developing students' linguistic competence, academic literacy, and communicative abilities necessary for successful university study. English-Medium Instruction (EMI), by contrast, refers to teaching disciplinary subjects through English in contexts where English is not the first language of most students (Macaro et al., 2018). Although conceptually distinct, recent scholarship increasingly argues that ELT and EMI should be viewed as mutually dependent rather than separate educational domains. Student success in EMI is consistently linked to sustained language development before and throughout university study, suggesting that language proficiency cannot simply be treated as a prerequisite for disciplinary learning (Kir, 2025).

Despite broad agreement regarding the growing importance of EMI, scholars disagree about its primary purpose. Kirkpatrick (2014) conceptualizes EMI principally as a consequence of higher education internationalization, whereas Zheng and Choi (2024) argue that EMI should instead be understood as a comprehensive educational policy requiring coordinated curriculum design, faculty development, and language planning. This distinction is significant because institutions that adopt EMI solely as an internationalization strategy often prioritize institutional competitiveness over educational quality.

Evidence from European and Asian contexts suggests that successful EMI implementation depends less on the language of instruction itself than on the institutional ecosystems supporting it. While Dearden and Macaro (2016) emphasize enhanced graduate employability and institutional prestige as major outcomes of EMI adoption, Phillipson (2009) cautions that these benefits may come at the expense of linguistic equity, educational inclusion, and the sustainability of local languages. These competing perspectives reveal an enduring tension between global competitiveness and educational justice, particularly relevant for multilingual countries such as Lebanon, where English coexists with Arabic and French, and where language policy intersects with questions of identity, access, and educational equity.

2.2 Western Contexts: Best Practices and Critiques

Over the past two decades, EMI has become a defining feature of higher education internationalization, particularly throughout Europe following increased academic integration after the Cold War (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). According to the British Council and Studyportals (2026), “half of all English-Taught Programs (ETPs) offered outside the traditional English-speaking countries are now located within the European Higher Education Area, demonstrating the scale of EMI expansion” (para 5).

Although European universities are frequently presented as successful EMI models, the literature reveals a more nuanced picture. Across countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden, and Germany, researchers consistently identify several institutional characteristics associated with effective EMI implementation, including explicit language

policies, systematic language support for students, and sustained professional development for faculty (Wilkinson, 2013; Airey et al., 2017). Similarly, scholars broadly agree that integrating English for Academic Purposes (EAP) into disciplinary curricula improves students' academic literacy more effectively than generic language instruction. Hyland (2012, 2022a) argues that academic communication is discipline-specific, requiring students to master the rhetorical conventions, genres, and discourse practices unique to their professional fields rather than general English proficiency alone.

However, consensus weakens regarding the effectiveness of collaborative teaching models. While Dafouz and Smit (2016, 2023) and Lohan and Dafouz (2024) report that partnerships between language specialists and content lecturers improve both language and disciplinary learning, other researchers note that these models demand substantial institutional investment and are therefore difficult to sustain beyond well-resourced universities. This implies that pedagogical innovations cannot be separated from institutional capacity.

Perhaps the strongest convergence in the Western literature concerns the unintended consequences of EMI expansion. Even institutions with mature EMI systems continue to report challenges including reduced classroom interaction, lower cognitive engagement when students struggle linguistically, and unequal learning opportunities for students with weaker English proficiency (Hultgren, 2014; Yuksel, Hultgren, & Shrestha, 2026). Likewise, Macaro (2020) and Tsui and Cheng (2022) demonstrate that faculty language anxiety and resistance remain persistent despite extensive institutional support. These results conjointly challenge the assumption that EMI success naturally follows increased English proficiency or institutional internationalization. Instead, they suggest that effective EMI requires continuous pedagogical adaptation, faculty support, and language-sensitive teaching practices. Such lessons are particularly pertinent for Lebanese universities, where institutional resources and faculty preparation often vary considerably across institutions.

2.3 EMI in the MENA Region

Although EMI has expanded rapidly throughout the MENA region, the motivations for its adoption differ from those observed in Europe. Rather than being driven primarily by international student recruitment, EMI is commonly associated with modernization, participation in global knowledge economies, and improved employment prospects (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; Touahmia & Bakar, 2024). Student demand also reflects the widespread perception that English proficiency enhances career opportunities and international mobility (Alotaibi, 2026).

Nevertheless, the literature consistently demonstrates that these aspirations are not always matched by institutional readiness. Across multiple MENA countries, researchers identify recurring structural barriers, including inadequate English preparation in secondary education, insufficient academic language support at university, and pedagogical traditions that emphasize memorization rather than critical engagement (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Al-Issa, 2017). These findings are remarkably consistent despite substantial variation in national educational systems, suggesting that many EMI challenges originate before students enter university.

Yet important regional differences also emerge. Research from Gulf countries, where EMI is often institution-wide, focuses predominantly on concerns about the displacement of Arabic, linguistic identity, and unequal epistemic access (Findlow, 2006; Aljehani & Modiano, 2025). In contrast, studies conducted in Levantine countries, including Lebanon and Jordan, emphasize multilingual educational realities rather than language replacement. Habdulh (n.d.), Chehimi and Hejase (2024), and Alomoush and Simms (2025) argue that students routinely navigate Arabic, English, and, in many cases, French within the same educational trajectories. Consequently, the principal challenge is less the dominance of English than the absence of coherent multilingual policies governing language use across educational levels (Abdel Latif & Alhamad, 2023; Marcjanik, 2023).

These contrasting findings imply that policy solutions cannot simply be transferred across regional contexts. While Gulf countries increasingly debate protecting Arabic within predominantly English-medium systems, Lebanon faces a different policy challenge: coordinating multiple languages within a historically multilingual educational landscape while reducing inequalities in access to high-quality English education.

2.4 ELT and EMI in Lebanon

Research on ELT and EMI in Lebanon consistently portrays higher education as operating within one of the region's most linguistically diverse yet educationally unequal environments (Nicolas & Annous, 2021). Although English enjoys significant social and economic prestige, students enter university with highly unequal levels of proficiency shaped by differences in school sectors, socioeconomic status, regional disparities, and opportunities for English exposure beyond formal schooling (Zakharia, 2010; Shaaban, 2017; Abouzeid, 2021; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Across these studies, there is broad agreement that English proficiency gaps represent a major obstacle to equitable

participation in EMI programs.

Researchers also converge on the importance of multilingual pedagogies, although opinions differ regarding implementation. García et al. (2017) conceptualize translanguaging as a pedagogical resource that enables multilingual learners to construct knowledge across languages, while Nassar (2024) argues that carefully managed code-switching can reduce cognitive overload and improve classroom participation in Lebanese higher education. These perspectives challenge traditional English-only instructional models by suggesting that strategic use of students' full linguistic repertoires may enhance rather than hinder disciplinary learning.

Another recurring theme concerns the disconnect between secondary and tertiary education. Studies consistently report that Lebanese secondary schools continue to prioritize grammar-based, examination-oriented English instruction, whereas universities expect students to demonstrate academic writing, critical reading, independent learning, and disciplinary literacy from the beginning of their programs (Aljaafil & Beyhan, 2023). Rather than representing isolated curricular differences, these findings indicate a systemic misalignment that transfers responsibility for language development from schools to universities.

Perhaps the most significant area of agreement concerns institutional fragmentation. Galloway and Rose (2021, 2022) observe that content lecturers frequently regard language development as the responsibility of English departments, whereas ELT instructors report limited collaboration with disciplinary faculties. Similar patterns emerge in Lebanese institutions, where English support often operates as a remedial service rather than an integrated component of disciplinary education. This separation reinforces the false dichotomy between language learning and content learning despite growing international evidence that successful EMI depends on their integration.

The Lebanese evidence extends these debates by suggesting that the country's principal challenge is not simply adopting EMI but developing institution-wide language policies that integrate ELT and disciplinary teaching within a coherent multilingual framework. Compared with Western universities, where institutional support structures are relatively well established, Lebanese universities continue to struggle with fragmented governance, uneven resource allocation, and inconsistent collaboration across academic departments. These findings indicate that future policy reforms should move beyond expanding English-medium provision to strengthen coordination among language education, disciplinary instruction, and national multilingual education policy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative interpretive integrative literature review to critically examine the relationship between English Language Teaching (ELT) and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Lebanese higher education. Unlike systematic reviews that primarily aggregate empirical findings to answer narrowly defined questions, integrative reviews accommodate diverse forms of evidence, including empirical studies, conceptual papers, policy analyses, and theoretical literature, to develop broader interpretations of complex educational phenomena (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Snyder, 2019).

A qualitative interpretive approach (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013; Goñi, 2026) was selected because the study sought not only to summarize previous research but also to compare competing perspectives, identify recurring themes, examine contextual differences across educational settings, and derive policy implications applicable to Lebanon. Such an approach is particularly appropriate for multilingual higher education research, where institutional practices are shaped by sociocultural, historical, political, and linguistic factors that cannot be fully understood through quantitative synthesis alone (Torraco, 2005; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The review was therefore guided by principles of qualitative thematic synthesis, emphasizing interpretation rather than statistical aggregation. Consistent with recommendations for high-quality review research, the analysis moved beyond descriptive reporting to identify areas of scholarly convergence, disagreement, and unresolved debate across the literature (Booth et al., 2022).

3.2 Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted between January and March 2026 using multiple academic databases to maximize coverage and reduce publication bias. The primary databases included Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Education Source (EBSCOhost), Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, SAGE Journals, and Wiley Online Library. These databases were selected because they collectively index the majority of peer-reviewed scholarship in applied linguistics, language education, higher education, educational policy, and multilingual education (Snyder, 2019).

Searches employed Boolean operators and combinations of controlled vocabulary and free-text keywords. Representative search strings are depicted in Exhibit 1, herein.

Exhibit 1: Representative search strings

"English Language Teaching" AND Higher Education
 "English-Medium Instruction" OR EMI
 ELT AND EMI; EMI AND Middle East; EMI AND MENA
 Multilingual education AND University
 English for Academic Purposes OR EAP
 Lebanon AND English language education
 Lebanon AND English-medium instruction
 Higher education language policy
 Multilingual universities; Language planning AND higher education
 Translanguaging AND Lebanon; Language policy AND Lebanon

Additional backward and forward citation tracking was conducted to identify influential studies frequently cited in the literature but not retrieved during the initial database search (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure methodological rigor and relevance, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before the literature search commenced.

3.3.1 Studies were included if they:

- * Examined ELT, EMI, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), multilingual higher education, language policy, or related topics;
- * Focused on higher education institutions;
- * Investigated pedagogical, linguistic, institutional, or policy dimensions of English-medium education;
- * Published in peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, edited volumes, or reputable institutional reports;
- * Published in English;
- * Appeared between 2005 and 2026, thereby capturing the period during which EMI expanded significantly worldwide (Macaro et al., 2018; Curle et al., 2024);
- * Provided empirical findings, theoretical analyses, or policy discussions relevant to the review objectives.

3.3.2 Studies were excluded if they:

- * Focused exclusively on primary or secondary education;
- * Examined English as a Foreign Language (EFL) without implications for higher education;
- * Lacked sufficient methodological transparency;
- * Were opinion pieces without scholarly evidence;
- * Were conference abstracts, unpublished theses, newsletters, or non-peer-reviewed documents unless they represented influential policy reports (e.g., British Council publications).

Preference was given to recent publications (2020–2026) to ensure that the review reflected current developments in EMI research while retaining seminal studies that established foundational concepts (e.g., Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2014).

3.4 Study Selection

The search initially yielded approximately 410 publications across the selected databases. After removing duplicate records, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance to the review objectives. Full-text articles were subsequently assessed against the inclusion criteria.

Following the screening process, approximately 125 publications were retained for detailed analysis. The final corpus consisted of empirical qualitative studies, quantitative investigations, mixed-methods research, theoretical

papers, policy analyses, review articles, and international reports. Particular attention was given to studies addressing Lebanon and the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region while incorporating influential international scholarship to facilitate comparative analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis and Thematic Synthesis

Data analysis followed a qualitative thematic synthesis informed by the procedures proposed by Thomas & Harden (2008) and Braun & Clarke (2022). Rather than merely summarizing individual studies, the review sought to identify conceptual relationships across the literature and develop higher-order interpretations relevant to Lebanese higher education.

3.5.1 The Analytical Process

It consisted of several iterative stages.

First, each publication was read repeatedly to identify its principal research objectives, methodological characteristics, theoretical perspectives, key findings, and recommendations.

Second, descriptive codes were assigned to recurring concepts, including language proficiency, faculty preparedness, institutional policy, academic literacy, translanguaging, disciplinary communication, internationalization, multilingualism, student preparedness, curriculum alignment, and language support.

Third, related codes were grouped into broader analytical themes representing recurring patterns across the literature. This process generated five overarching thematic categories:

- Conceptual relationships between ELT and EMI;
- Institutional and pedagogical challenges;
- Multilingual classroom practices and language support;
- Best practices for effective EMI implementation; and
- Policy implications for multilingual higher education.

Fourth, comparative analysis was conducted both within and across geographical contexts. Findings from European, East Asian, MENA, and Lebanese studies were systematically compared to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and contextual variation. Particular attention was devoted to distinguishing universally reported challenges from those specific to multilingual environments such as Lebanon.

Finally, the synthesized themes were interpreted through the lens of multilingual higher education and language policy to develop context-sensitive conclusions and recommendations. Throughout the analysis, emphasis was placed on identifying relationships among studies rather than treating individual investigations as isolated sources of evidence.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance

Several procedures enhanced the review's trustworthiness. (1) The use of multiple databases reduced database selection bias and increased coverage of relevant literature (Snyder, 2019); (2) explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria promoted consistency and transparency throughout the study selection process; (3) comparing findings across diverse methodological traditions enabled methodological triangulation, thereby strengthening confidence in recurring themes (Patton, 2015); (4) the review emphasized critical synthesis rather than narrative description by evaluating areas of agreement, disagreement, and contextual differences among studies, consistent with recommendations for integrative literature reviews (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

Although every effort was made to ensure comprehensive coverage, the review is limited to English-language publications and may not fully represent relevant scholarship published in Arabic or French. Furthermore, because educational policies and institutional practices continue to evolve rapidly, future empirical studies may provide additional evidence beyond the timeframe considered in this review.

4. Discussion

4.1 English-Medium Instruction (EMI) and English Language Teaching (ELT) in Higher Education

The global expansion of EMI has fundamentally reshaped the role of ELT in higher education. Although EMI is widely promoted as a mechanism for internationalization, graduate employability, and institutional competitiveness, evidence increasingly suggests that its educational outcomes are highly context-dependent rather than universally beneficial (Bowles & Murphy, 2020). Consequently, the effectiveness of EMI depends not only on the language of

instruction but also on the institutional, linguistic, and socio-political environments within which it is implemented.

In Western higher education systems, particularly across Europe, EMI has largely emerged as a strategic response to globalization and international student mobility (Neelam, 2025). Importantly, these institutions generally operate within educational systems characterized by relatively strong English proficiency, established language support services, and stable institutional funding. Even under these favorable conditions, however, research continues to identify challenges including reduced conceptual depth in classroom discussions, increased linguistic anxiety among instructors, and concerns regarding the gradual marginalization of national languages (Airey, 2012; Hultgren et al., 2015; Al Khalili, 2021). These findings suggest that EMI is not inherently synonymous with educational quality and that successful implementation requires continuous pedagogical and institutional support.

The relevance of these international experiences to Lebanon is therefore limited unless important contextual differences are acknowledged. Unlike many European universities where EMI supplements well-established national-language systems, Lebanese higher education operates within a historically multilingual environment where Arabic, English, and French simultaneously compete and coexist. Consequently, the challenges associated with EMI extend beyond classroom pedagogy to encompass issues of language policy, educational equity, institutional identity, and access to higher education. Simply adopting successful EMI practices from Europe without considering Lebanon's linguistic ecology risks overlooking structural factors that significantly influence educational outcomes.

Within the MENA region, EMI reflects distinct historical and educational dynamics. Rather than functioning solely as a tool for internationalization, English often carries legacies of colonial influence, globalization, and socio-economic stratification (Elyas, Atar, Curle et al., 2023). English commonly coexists with Arabic and, in several countries, French, creating linguistically layered higher education systems characterized by competing language ideologies and unequal access to linguistic resources (Diab, 2006; Esseili, 2017; Issa, 2017; Al Khalili, 2021; Aljehani & Modiano, 2024; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024; Aljehani & Modiano, 2025). Across the region, researchers consistently report tensions between expanding English-medium programs and preserving Arabic as both a cultural and academic language. More importantly, these studies demonstrate that language policy decisions often privilege economic competitiveness while underestimating their pedagogical consequences for students and instructors.

Lebanon represents one of the most complex manifestations of these regional dynamics. English functions simultaneously as a foreign language, a gatekeeping mechanism for university admission, and the principal medium of instruction in scientific, technological, medical, and business disciplines (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Esseili, 2017; CRDP, 2026). This multifunctional role significantly expands the responsibilities assigned to ELT programs. Rather than focusing exclusively on language acquisition, ELT is expected to prepare students for cognitively demanding disciplinary learning in English, facilitate academic literacy, and reduce linguistic barriers to content mastery. The literature therefore indicates that ELT in Lebanon serves as the foundation upon which EMI success largely depends.

However, this expectation reveals a significant structural mismatch. While universities increasingly rely on EMI to support internationalization and graduate employability, language preparation programs frequently remain constrained by limited instructional hours, heterogeneous student proficiency levels, inconsistent curriculum alignment, and varying institutional resources (Al Khalili, 2021). As a result, many students enter EMI programs without the academic English proficiency necessary to engage confidently with discipline-specific concepts. This gap shifts a considerable instructional burden onto both language instructors, who are expected to prepare students for specialized academic discourse, and content lecturers, who frequently compensate for language deficiencies while attempting to achieve disciplinary learning outcomes. The consequence is not merely reduced language proficiency but also diminished content learning, increased student anxiety, and inconsistent academic performance.

Collectively, the literature reviewed suggests that the central challenge facing Lebanese higher education is not whether EMI should be adopted, but how ELT and EMI can be systematically integrated within a coherent institutional framework. International evidence demonstrates that effective EMI requires coordinated language policies, sustained faculty development, and curriculum alignment rather than isolated language courses. For Lebanon, these findings underscore the importance of examining EMI beyond its perceived economic and international benefits by considering its implications for educational quality, equity, and institutional sustainability. This analytical perspective directly supports the objectives of the present review by highlighting the need to evaluate how ELT and EMI interact within Lebanese universities and by identifying the policy and pedagogical conditions necessary for more effective implementation.

4.2 Challenges of ELT within EMI Contexts in Lebanese Universities

4.2.1 Uneven Linguistic Preparedness of Students

One of the most consistently reported challenges in Lebanese higher education is the considerable variation in students' English proficiency upon university entry (Dagher, 2017). This variation reflects long-standing inequalities within the national education system, where graduates from Arabic-medium public schools, English-medium private schools, and French-medium institutions possess markedly different levels of academic English competence (Bhuiyan, 2019; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024; Baddour & BouJaoude, 2025). Consequently, first-year English classes frequently include students whose proficiency ranges from near-native fluency to limited academic literacy (Personal communication with Dr. Sarah Eid, Coordinator of English Language, Al Maaref University, Beirut, Lebanon, April 10, 2026).

Although this diversity is widely documented, the literature differs in how it interprets its educational implications. Some studies emphasize its effect on classroom management, lesson pacing, and assessment practices (Svensson, 2017; Bernard et al., 2019), whereas more recent research argues that linguistic heterogeneity fundamentally influences students' access to disciplinary knowledge within EMI environments (Goyibova et al., 2025). This distinction is important because it shifts the discussion from language deficiency toward educational equity. In EMI settings, differences in English proficiency become differences in opportunities to participate, comprehend complex concepts, and demonstrate disciplinary competence.

For Lebanon, these findings suggest that language diversity should not be viewed solely as an individual learner problem but as an institutional planning issue. Treating heterogeneous classrooms through remedial language courses alone is unlikely to reduce educational inequalities if universities continue to assume uniform linguistic readiness. Instead, differentiated language support, diagnostic placement procedures, and closer collaboration between ELT specialists and disciplinary instructors may offer more sustainable responses. This interpretation reinforces the review's broader argument that successful EMI depends upon institutional coordination rather than language instruction in isolation.

4.2.2 Misalignment between Secondary and Tertiary Education

A second recurring challenge concerns the lack of alignment between secondary education and university expectations for English-medium learning. Curriculum coherence requires educational stages to function as interconnected components of a continuous learning pathway (El Hassan, 2021). However, evidence from Lebanon indicates that secondary education, particularly within the public sector, continues to prioritize examination-oriented language instruction, whereas universities increasingly expect students to demonstrate critical reading, academic writing, independent inquiry, and discipline-specific communication from the outset of their studies (Abouzeid, 2021; Kaloun, 2024; Bull, 2025).

The literature consistently identifies this transition gap, yet interpretations differ regarding its underlying causes. Some researchers attribute the problem primarily to curricular deficiencies within secondary education, while others emphasize the lack of coordination between school curricula and university language expectations. Abouzeid, Learjet, and Khachan (2025) further demonstrate that university instructors compensate for these gaps through instructional adaptations such as rephrasing, translanguaging, repetition, and modified speech, with students generally perceiving these strategies as beneficial when used strategically.

Taken together, these findings indicate that university ELT programs have gradually assumed responsibilities extending well beyond conventional language instruction. Rather than focusing exclusively on developing advanced academic literacy, they increasingly function as transitional mechanisms that compensate for systemic shortcomings elsewhere in the education system. While such adaptation enables many students to succeed, it also risks institutionalizing remediation as a permanent feature of higher education.

For the Lebanese context, this suggests that improving EMI outcomes requires interventions extending beyond universities themselves. Stronger curricular alignment between secondary and tertiary education, nationally articulated English language benchmarks, and coordinated language policy across educational sectors would likely reduce the burden currently placed on university ELT programs. These observations also reinforce one of the central conclusions of this review: the effectiveness of EMI is shaped not only by classroom pedagogy but by the coherence of the wider educational system within which it operates.

4.2.3 Structural Constraints Affecting Student Transition into EMI

The literature consistently indicates that the transition into EMI is shaped not only by students' language proficiency

but also by institutional capacity to provide sustained academic support. While universities in many Western countries have responded to transition challenges through structured bridging programs, diagnostic language assessments, and integrated academic support services (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Hyland, 2012; Hyland, 2022a), comparable support mechanisms remain unevenly developed across Lebanese higher education institutions. Several interrelated structural factors help explain this disparity.

i. Resource Constraints and Institutional Capacity

One important factor concerns institutional resources. The prolonged economic and financial crises in Lebanon have substantially constrained higher education funding, reducing universities' ability to invest in academic support services, language centers, and comprehensive student transition programs (Rkein, A. et al., 2022; Rkein, H. I. et al., 2022; Akar, 2023). Recent reports further indicate that many institutions have experienced budget reductions, infrastructure deterioration, and increasing financial pressure on students, all of which limit investment in resource-intensive initiatives such as diagnostic language testing and extended foundation programs (Life Lebanon, 2024). International research consistently demonstrates that successful EMI implementation requires sustained institutional investment rather than isolated classroom interventions (Macaro et al., 2018; Curle et al., 2024). Consequently, the limited availability of structured transition programs in Lebanon appears to reflect broader institutional constraints rather than a lack of pedagogical awareness.

ii. Curricular Fragmentation and Educational Diversity

A second challenge relates to the fragmented nature of students' educational backgrounds. Lebanon's multilingual education system combines Arabic-, English-, and French-medium schooling across public and private sectors, producing cohorts with markedly different linguistic and academic experiences (Shaaban, 2017; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). El Hassan (2021) argues that effective educational systems require curriculum coherence across educational levels; however, this coherence remains limited within the Lebanese context. As a result, universities receive students with highly heterogeneous academic literacy skills, making standardized placement procedures and uniform language support less effective. Similar observations have been reported in multilingual higher education systems elsewhere, where student diversity necessitates differentiated language support rather than uniform instructional approaches (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Galloway & Rose, 2021).

iii. Faculty Capacity and Institutional Support

The literature also emphasizes the central role of faculty capacity in supporting student transition into EMI. Studies conducted in Europe consistently show that bridging programs are most effective when language specialists, disciplinary instructors, writing centers, and academic support services collaborate through institution-wide initiatives (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Dafouz & Smit, 2016, 2023). In contrast, research on Lebanese higher education suggests that faculty members frequently work under substantial teaching loads while institutions continue to struggle to retain qualified academic staff due to ongoing economic instability (Akar, 2023; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Although empirical studies specifically examining faculty workload within Lebanese EMI programs remain limited, available evidence suggests that these institutional conditions reduce opportunities for sustained interdisciplinary collaboration and comprehensive student support. This represents an important area requiring further empirical investigation.

iv. Fragmented Transition Practices

Existing evidence further suggests that student transition initiatives in Lebanese universities are often implemented at the institutional rather than the national level. While some universities provide placement examinations, introductory English courses, foundation programs, or orientation activities, these initiatives vary considerably in scope, duration, and integration into the curriculum (Nicolas & Annous, 2021; Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2019). Unlike the comprehensive diagnostic pathways described in Western EMI literature (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Hyland, 2022b), many Lebanese interventions remain localized and institution-specific, limiting consistency across the higher education sector. Importantly, systematic comparative research documenting the prevalence and effectiveness of these initiatives across Lebanese universities remains scarce, underscoring another gap in the literature.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the transition challenges observed in Lebanese EMI programs cannot be explained solely by students' English proficiency. Rather, they emerge from the interaction of institutional funding limitations, fragmented educational pathways, uneven language preparation, and variable academic support structures. While international research consistently demonstrates that bridging programs and diagnostic assessment improve students' transition into EMI (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Hyland, 2022b), their effectiveness depends on sustained institutional investment and a coherent language policy. Accordingly, strengthening EMI in Lebanon

requires systemic reforms that extend beyond individual classroom practices to include curriculum alignment, faculty development, institutional support services, and national language planning.

4.2.4 Limited Instructional Time and Credit Allocation

Another structural challenge identified in the literature concerns the limited formal English-language instruction provided to students after they enter English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programs. Although English is the principal language of instruction in many Lebanese universities, English-language courses are often concentrated in the first year of study and are allocated relatively few credit hours. International scholarship suggests that this institutional arrangement often reflects an implicit assumption that students can acquire sufficient academic English during the early stages of university before engaging independently with increasingly complex disciplinary discourse (Macaro et al., 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2021).

i. The Limitations of Language Immersion Alone

One explanation proposed in the EMI literature is that some institutions implicitly adopt what has been described as an "immersion" or "sink-or-swim" approach, whereby sustained exposure to English-medium content is expected to facilitate language development without continuous linguistic support. However, evidence synthesized by Macaro et al. (2018) indicates that content exposure alone does not consistently produce the advanced academic language proficiency required for successful disciplinary learning. Similarly, Galloway and Rose (2021) argue that effective EMI requires explicit integration of language development and content instruction rather than assuming that language acquisition occurs automatically through classroom exposure. These findings suggest that immersion, while valuable, is insufficient when implemented without complementary language support mechanisms.

ii. The Progressive Nature of Academic Literacy

A second explanation emerging from the literature concerns the developmental nature of academic literacy. Introductory English courses typically emphasize English for Academic Purposes (EAP), focusing on general academic communication, reading strategies, and foundational writing skills (Hyland, 2022b). However, numerous scholars argue that academic literacy evolves throughout students' university studies as disciplinary discourse becomes increasingly specialized (Briguglio & Watson, 2014; Hyland, 2022b). The communicative demands placed upon engineering, medicine, business, and law students differ substantially from those encountered during the first year, requiring progressively sophisticated disciplinary genres, technical vocabulary, and critical argumentation. Consequently, limiting formal language instruction to the beginning of undergraduate education may create a disconnect between students' developing disciplinary needs and the institutional support available to meet them.

iii. Institutional Priorities and EMI Expansion

The literature further suggests that institutional motivations for adopting EMI may influence the level of language support provided. Dearden and Macaro (2016) note that universities frequently implement EMI to enhance internationalization, increase institutional visibility, strengthen graduate employability, and attract international students. While these objectives are legitimate institutional goals, several scholars caution that rapid expansion of English-medium programs is not always accompanied by proportional investment in language support services, faculty development, or curriculum redesign (Macaro et al., 2018; Curle et al., 2024). Rather than representing a universal pattern, this observation highlights a potential tension between strategic institutional objectives and the pedagogical requirements necessary for successful EMI implementation. Within the Lebanese context, where institutional resources have been further constrained by economic instability (Akar, 2023), this tension may be particularly pronounced.

iv. Implications for Faculty and Student Learning

An additional implication identified in the literature concerns the redistribution of educational responsibilities. When sustained language support is limited, content instructors frequently assume responsibility for addressing students' language-related difficulties while simultaneously delivering increasingly complex disciplinary content (Macaro et al., 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2021). Research suggests that this dual expectation may increase instructional complexity and increase faculty workload, particularly when instructors have received limited preparation in EMI pedagogy (Dafouz & Smit, 2023). At the same time, students with weaker academic English proficiency may experience greater cognitive load, reduced classroom participation, and increased language anxiety when attempting to process complex disciplinary concepts through a second language (Collini, 2018; Macaro et al., 2018). Although the extent of these challenges varies across institutional contexts, the evidence consistently indicates that language support should be viewed as a shared institutional responsibility rather than the sole responsibility of either language instructors or disciplinary faculty.

v. Toward Curriculum-Integrated Language Support

Reflecting these concerns, recent scholarship increasingly advocates embedding language development throughout the undergraduate curriculum rather than confining it to introductory English courses. Approaches such as discipline-specific English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and sustained collaboration between language specialists and content lecturers have demonstrated promising outcomes for student learning (Briguglio & Watson, 2014; Livingston et al., 2022; Hyland, 2022b; Li, 2025). These approaches recognize that academic language proficiency develops progressively through continued engagement with disciplinary discourse rather than through isolated foundation courses.

Taken together, the literature suggests that limiting ELT to a relatively small number of introductory credit hours may not adequately support students' long-term academic development within EMI programs. Rather than viewing language learning as a prerequisite completed before disciplinary study begins, the evidence increasingly supports conceptualizing language development as an ongoing component of disciplinary education.

For Lebanese universities, this issue is particularly significant because students entering higher education exhibit widely varying levels of English proficiency (Nicolas & Annous, 2021; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Under these conditions, restricting formal language instruction to the early stages of university education may widen achievement gaps as students encounter increasingly complex disciplinary discourse. The literature therefore suggests that extending language support beyond the first year through English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), discipline-specific communication courses, and collaboration between language specialists and content lecturers may provide more sustainable support for student success (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Hyland, 2022b; Dafouz & Smit, 2023).

Rather than indicating a deficiency in English-language programs alone, the evidence points to a broader institutional challenge: Effective EMI requires continuous integration of language development into disciplinary teaching. This interpretation aligns with one of the central arguments of the present review, that sustainable English-medium education depends on coordinated institutional language policy rather than isolated language courses.

4.3 EMI-Related Pressures on Instructors and Institutions

4.3.1 Lack of Clear Language Policies

A defining feature of EMI implementation in Lebanon is the absence of clear, coherent institutional or national language policies. Decisions about language use are often driven by market considerations rather than pedagogical planning, leading to ambiguity about proficiency thresholds, assessment standards, and instructional responsibilities (Shaaban, 2013; Davis & Phyak, 2017).

Instructors frequently report uncertainty about whether to prioritize language accuracy, content mastery, or communicative effectiveness (Han, 2023; Abouzeid, Liard é, & Khachan, 2024). This ambiguity leads to inconsistent practices across departments and undermines the credibility of assessment processes.

4.3.2 Insufficient Professional Development

Many Western universities offer structured EMI training for content instructors. For example Spain (offers EMI courses modelled on three fundamental pillars: Teacher professional development, learner-centered teaching, and lecturers' communicative competence) (Crespo-García & Llanos-Tojeiro, 2018), European Universities Alliance Arqus (offer English language proficiency of staff and students, increasing the level of institutional support for students and staff, increasing the level of collaboration between content and English language specialists, and augment students' motivation and perspectives on EMI) (Arqus-alliance, 2026). On the other hand, professional development opportunities in Lebanese institutions remain limited and uneven. Content instructors are often expected to teach in English without formal preparation in language-aware pedagogy, academic discourse, or inclusive EMI practices (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

ELT instructors, meanwhile, face limited opportunities for advancement, research funding, or pedagogical innovation. This lack of investment contributes to professional stagnation and reinforces the perception of language teaching as peripheral rather than integral to academic success.

4.3.3 Faculty Precarity and Academic Employment in Lebanese ELT and EMI Programs

The sustainability of ELT and EMI depends on curriculum design, on student preparedness, and on the stability and capacity of the academic workforce responsible for delivering these programs. International research increasingly recognizes faculty working conditions as an important determinant of instructional quality, curriculum continuity, and institutional effectiveness (Guthrie, Wyrick, & Navarrete, 2019; McCulloch & Leonard, 2024). In the Lebanese

context, available evidence suggests that ongoing economic instability has intensified existing challenges in academic employment, although comprehensive national data remain limited (Education International, 2026).

i. Growth in Contingent Academic Employment

Evidence from higher education systems worldwide indicates an increasing reliance on contingent or part-time academic staff, particularly in language education and introductory undergraduate teaching (Altbach, 2017; Guthrie et al., 2019; McCulloch & Leonard, 2024). In Lebanon, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) requires universities to maintain a minimum proportion of full-time academic staff for institutional licensing and quality assurance. According to Ghanem (2014), "Instructors having a PHD or holding the highest degree offered in their area of specialization should teach 50 percent of the credits" (para 3). Nevertheless, several studies and policy analyses suggest that many private universities continue to rely substantially on part-time instructors, particularly within language programs and high-enrolment service courses, to maintain operational flexibility and manage financial constraints (Dhaybi, 2020; Nicolas & Annous, 2021). Although systematic national statistics describing employment patterns across all Lebanese universities remain scarce, the available evidence suggests that contingent academic appointments constitute an important feature of the higher education sector.

ii. Economic Crisis and Faculty Retention

Lebanon's prolonged economic and financial crisis has substantially affected the higher education sector (Rkein, A. et al., 2022; Rkein, H. I. et al., 2022; Akar, 2023). Dhaybi (2020) similarly argues that the deterioration of academic compensation has disproportionately affected instructors employed on hourly or part-time contracts because their income is closely tied to fluctuating enrolments and institutional financial capacity. Although the magnitude of these effects differs across universities, the literature consistently identifies economic instability as an important factor influencing faculty recruitment, retention, and long-term institutional planning.

iii. Expanding Professional Responsibilities

The implementation of EMI has also altered the instructional responsibilities of university faculty. International research consistently demonstrates that content lecturers in EMI settings frequently provide language-related support alongside disciplinary instruction, while English language instructors increasingly introduce students to discipline-specific academic communication rather than general language proficiency alone (Macaro et al., 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2021; Dafouz & Smit, 2023). Lebanese studies report similar patterns, with Nicolas and Annous (2021) observing limited coordination between language departments and disciplinary faculties, leading to overlapping instructional responsibilities. Rather than representing a formal redistribution of roles, these findings suggest that EMI encourages greater pedagogical integration than is often reflected in institutional structures, potentially increasing faculty workload where collaborative support mechanisms are limited.

iv. Institutional Responses to Financial Constraints

The literature also suggests that financial pressures have influenced staffing practices within some Lebanese higher education institutions (Derbieh, 2023; Jack, 2023). As competition among private universities has increased alongside declining financial resources, institutions have sought greater operational flexibility in staffing and program delivery (Akar, 2023). While it would be difficult to characterize this development as a universal "gig economy" without broader empirical evidence, available studies indicate that financial uncertainty has encouraged greater reliance on flexible employment arrangements in some institutions. Additional national research is needed to determine the prevalence and long-term implications of these employment patterns across the Lebanese higher education sector.

v. Implications for Educational Quality

Across international contexts, faculty employment conditions are increasingly recognized as influencing educational quality. Studies from North America, Europe, and the MENA region suggest that heavy reliance on temporary or contingent academic staff may affect curriculum continuity, student mentoring, institutional engagement, and participation in long-term program development (Guthrie et al., 2019; McCulloch & Leonard, 2024). Although empirical evidence specific to Lebanon remains relatively limited, the convergence of economic instability, faculty migration, and expanding instructional responsibilities suggests that similar challenges may affect the implementation of ELT and EMI programs. Consequently, strengthening English-medium higher education in Lebanon requires not only curriculum reform and student language support but also institutional policies that promote faculty stability, professional development, and sustainable academic careers.

4.4 Advantages of EMI and ELT Integration

Despite the pedagogical and institutional challenges discussed in previous sections, the literature suggests that EMI can offer substantial educational, professional, and societal benefits when implemented within supportive institutional environments. Importantly, contemporary scholarship increasingly cautions that these benefits should not be viewed as automatic outcomes of adopting English as the language of instruction. Rather, they depend upon students' linguistic preparedness, sustained language support, faculty competence, and coherent institutional language policies (Macaro et al., 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2021; Curle et al., 2024).

One of the most consistently reported advantages of EMI is expanded access to global academic knowledge and international scholarly communities. Because much of the world's scientific literature, research dissemination, and professional communication occurs in English, students studying through EMI are better positioned to engage with current scholarship, participate in international collaborations, and pursue further education abroad (Costa & Coleman, 2013; Curle et al., 2024). Recent evidence also indicates that EMI may increase students' aspirations for international study and employment. Yang and Lin (2026), for example, found that participation in EMI programs was associated with stronger international mobility intentions, particularly among students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Likewise, Abdullah, Jan, & Alam (2025) report improvements in English proficiency, intercultural communication, and access to international academic resources among students participating in EMI programs.

However, these reported benefits should be interpreted alongside evidence presented earlier in this review. Studies consistently demonstrate that students are more likely to realize these advantages when universities provide sustained language support, discipline-specific academic literacy instruction, and opportunities to develop English proficiency throughout their degree programs (Hyland, 2022b; Macaro et al., 2018). Without such support, the cognitive demands of learning complex disciplinary content through a second language may reduce classroom participation, increase language anxiety, and widen achievement gaps between students with different linguistic backgrounds (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Curle et al., 2024). Consequently, the literature increasingly frames EMI not as a universally beneficial educational model but as one whose effectiveness depends upon the quality of its implementation.

A similar pattern emerges regarding higher-order learning outcomes. Several scholars argue that studying disciplinary content through English encourages students to engage with diverse perspectives, navigate multiple linguistic and cultural frameworks, and develop critical thinking skills (Hellekjær & Wilkinson, 2001; Hellekjær, 2010a, 2010b; Curle et al., 2020). Nevertheless, other researchers caution that these cognitive benefits may be constrained when students' language proficiency limits their ability to participate fully in discussion, interpret complex texts, or construct sophisticated academic arguments (Macaro et al., 2018). Thus, critical thinking gains appear to result less from EMI itself than from well-designed pedagogical practices that integrate language development with disciplinary inquiry.

The Lebanese context illustrates both the opportunities and the constraints associated with these findings. English proficiency continues to provide significant advantages in Lebanon's increasingly international labor market and remains highly valued by employers seeking graduates capable of operating in multilingual, globalized professional environments. The 2026 TOEIC Global English Skills Report, based on responses from more than 1,300 human resource leaders across 17 countries, indicates that 92% of employers consider English more important today than five years earlier, particularly for international collaboration and technology-enabled workplaces (ETS, 2026). These trends reinforce the strategic importance of English within Lebanese higher education.

At the same time, the review has demonstrated that many Lebanese universities continue to face structural challenges, including uneven student preparedness, limited instructional time, constrained institutional resources, fragmented language policies, and expanding faculty responsibilities that may restrict students' ability to fully realize the potential benefits of EMI. These contextual factors suggest that expanding English-medium programs alone is unlikely to produce the desired educational outcomes unless accompanied by sustained investment in language support, curriculum alignment, faculty development, and institutional collaboration.

Accordingly, the literature increasingly supports integrated models in which ELT and EMI function as complementary rather than separate educational processes. Approaches that combine discipline-specific English for Academic Purposes (EAP), collaboration between language specialists and content lecturers, scaffolded instruction, formative assessment, and continuous language development across the curriculum have demonstrated greater potential for improving both disciplinary learning and academic English proficiency (Dafouz & Smit, 2016, 2023; Hyland, 2022b; Ashrafova, 2025). Viewed collectively, these findings suggest that the principal value of EMI lies not

in the language of instruction alone but in the institutional ecosystems that enable students to succeed within multilingual higher education environments.

4.5 Best Practices in Western and MENA Contexts

Western best practices highlight the importance of institutional coherence, including explicit EMI policies (Galloway and Rose, 2021; Rouaghe, Assassi, ur Rehman, & Khan, 2026), instructor training (Crespo-García and Llanos-Tojeiro, 2018), and embedded language support across the curriculum (Briguglio and Watson, 2014; Dearden, 2014; Cummins, Hu, Markus, & Montero, 2015; Livingston, Dippenaar, Mashiyi et al., 2022). Universities that treat language as a shared responsibility report better learning outcomes and reduced instructor stress.

In MENA contexts, emerging best practices stress contextual adaptation rather than wholesale adoption of Western models. Studies from the Gulf and North Africa emphasize the value of translanguaging, flexible language policies, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Al-Issa, 2017). These approaches recognize multilingualism as a resource rather than a deficit.

4.6 Integrated Thematic Synthesis of the Literature

The qualitative thematic synthesis in this review identified five interrelated themes that collectively explain the opportunities and challenges of ELT and EMI in Lebanese higher education. Rather than representing independent findings, these themes emerged through comparison and interpretation of international, regional, and Lebanese scholarship and provide an integrated framework for understanding how language education, institutional policy, and multilingual realities intersect within higher education. Together, they suggest that the effectiveness of EMI depends not solely on the choice of instructional language but on the broader educational ecosystem in which language learning, disciplinary instruction, and institutional governance operate (Macaro et al., 2018; Dafouz & Smit, 2016, 2023; Curle et al., 2024).

4.6.1 Theme 1: Conceptual Relationships between ELT and EMI

A central insight emerging from the reviewed literature is the increasingly integrated relationship between ELT and EMI. Earlier conceptualizations frequently treated English Language Teaching as a preparatory stage preceding English-Medium Instruction. Contemporary scholarship, however, increasingly argues that the two should be viewed as mutually reinforcing educational processes rather than sequential stages (Macaro et al., 2018; Galloway & Rose, 2021; McKinley, 2025).

Across international contexts, successful EMI programs are characterized by continuous interaction between language development and disciplinary learning rather than by the assumption that students acquire sufficient English before entering content courses. Hyland (2022b) argues that academic literacy is discipline-specific and evolves throughout students' university experience, requiring sustained engagement with disciplinary discourse. Similarly, Dafouz and Smit (2016, 2023) propose that language, content, and institutional policy should be considered interconnected dimensions of multilingual higher education rather than isolated educational domains.

Within Lebanon, this conceptual relationship is particularly significant because English simultaneously functions as a foreign language, an academic language, and the principal medium of instruction across many scientific and professional disciplines (Shaaban, 2017; Nicolas & Annous, 2021; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Consequently, the literature suggests that ELT cannot be understood merely as language instruction but must be viewed as an essential component of students' academic success within EMI programs. Recognizing ELT and EMI as complementary educational processes naturally directs attention to the institutional conditions that facilitate or constrain their integration.

4.6.2 Theme 2: Institutional and Pedagogical Challenges Affecting EMI

The literature consistently shifts attention away from individual learner deficiencies toward institutional and systemic constraints affecting EMI implementation. Although studies frequently discuss student language proficiency, the literature consistently indicates that many difficulties originate from institutional structures rather than individual learner deficiencies (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Macaro et al., 2018).

Across the reviewed studies, recurring institutional issues include uneven linguistic preparedness, limited curriculum alignment between secondary and tertiary education, insufficient instructional time, fragmented language support services, expanding faculty responsibilities, and the absence of comprehensive institutional language policies (Abouzeid, 2023; Galloway & Rose, 2021; Nicolas & Annous, 2021).

The Lebanese context intensifies these challenges because educational inequalities intersect with prolonged economic instability (Rkein et al., 2022a, b), declining institutional resources, and increasing faculty insecurity (Akar,

2023; Derbieh, 2023). The literature therefore suggests that many obstacles commonly attributed to students' English proficiency are better understood as consequences of broader structural conditions in higher education. This interpretation shifts responsibility from individual learners toward institutional planning and reinforces the importance of systemic educational reform.

These structural challenges also influence the pedagogical choices available to instructors, particularly in multilingual classrooms.

4.6.3 Theme 3: Multilingual Classroom Practices and Language Support

Another important insight concerns the pedagogical value of multilingualism within EMI classrooms. Earlier EMI policies frequently promoted English-only classroom practices based on assumptions that maximal exposure would accelerate language acquisition. More recent scholarship challenges this perspective, arguing that multilingual pedagogies can enhance both language learning and disciplinary understanding (García et al., 2017; Galloway & Rose, 2021).

Particularly influential has been the growing body of research on translanguaging, which conceptualizes students' multiple languages as educational resources rather than barriers (García et al., 2017; Nassar, 2024). Within multilingual classrooms, strategic movement between Arabic, English, and French may facilitate conceptual understanding while simultaneously supporting academic English development.

These findings appear especially relevant to Lebanon, where multilingualism has historically characterized educational practice (Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Rather than viewing Arabic and French as obstacles to EMI, the reviewed scholarship increasingly suggests that multilingual instructional approaches may improve students' participation, comprehension, and confidence while preserving linguistic identity. Accordingly, effective language support should extend beyond remedial English courses to include discipline-specific literacy development, scaffolded instruction, formative assessment, writing support, and collaboration between language specialists and disciplinary faculty (Hyland, 2022b; Dafouz & Smit, 2023).

4.6.4 Theme 4: Best Practices for Effective EMI Implementation

Across educational contexts, successful EMI implementation appears to depend less on English as the language of instruction than on the institutional conditions that support it. Although practices differ across educational systems, the literature consistently identifies several common elements. These include clearly articulated institutional language policies (Wilkinson, 2013), continuous English for Academic Purposes (EAP) support integrated throughout undergraduate programs (Hyland, 2022b), systematic professional development for EMI instructors (Airey et al., 2017), collaboration between language specialists and content lecturers (Zhou & Delogu, 2026), and ongoing formative assessment of students' academic language development (Ashrafova, 2025).

Importantly, the literature indicates that these practices are most effective when implemented as components of coherent institutional strategies rather than as isolated initiatives.

For Lebanon, the synthesis suggests that the direct transfer of international models is unlikely to yield equivalent outcomes because universities operate in substantially different linguistic, financial, and institutional environments. Instead, adaptation appears more appropriate than replication. Context-sensitive implementation requires consideration of multilingual educational traditions, institutional capacity, faculty workload, and students' diverse educational backgrounds. Collectively, these findings indicate that successful EMI implementation is determined less by the adoption of English itself than by the institutional capacity to integrate language support, curriculum design, faculty development, and multilingual pedagogies into a coherent educational strategy.

4.6.5 Theme 5: Policy Implications for Multilingual Higher Education

The reviewed literature ultimately frames EMI as a matter of institutional language policy rather than merely classroom practice. Across both Western and MENA literature, researchers increasingly argue that EMI should be understood as a language policy issue as much as a pedagogical one (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Zheng & Choi, 2024).

Within Lebanon, the reviewed literature consistently identifies the absence of a comprehensive national language policy for higher education as an important factor contributing to fragmented institutional practice (Marcjanik, 2023; Abdel Latif & Alhamad, 2023). Universities frequently develop independent approaches to language placement, English support, faculty preparation, and multilingual instruction without common national guidance.

The synthesis therefore suggests that future policy development should extend beyond decisions regarding language of instruction alone. Greater attention appears warranted toward curriculum alignment across educational sectors, nationally recognized English language benchmarks, systematic faculty development, institutional investment in

language support services, and recognition of multilingualism as a strategic educational resource rather than a pedagogical challenge (Chehimi & Hejase, 2024).

Collectively, the literature indicates that sustainable EMI implementation depends upon coherent institutional ecosystems in which language policy, curriculum design, faculty development, assessment, and student support reinforce one another. Consequently, future policy reforms in Lebanon are likely to be most effective when they move beyond decisions about language of instruction and instead adopt a coordinated multilingual framework linking secondary education, higher education, institutional governance, and graduate employability.

4.6.6 Integrated Synthesis

Taken together, these five themes illustrate that the future of English-medium higher education in Lebanon is unlikely to depend solely on expanding EMI programs or increasing English-language instruction. Instead, the reviewed literature consistently points toward the importance of integrated educational systems that align language learning with disciplinary teaching, institutional governance, and multilingual educational policy. The synthesis further suggests that many of the challenges currently experienced by Lebanese universities reflect systemic issues rather than shortcomings of individual students or instructors.

Consequently, this review supports a conceptual shift from viewing ELT as a preparatory service supporting EMI toward understanding both as complementary components of multilingual higher education. Such an integrated perspective offers a more comprehensive framework for interpreting current challenges, adapting international best practices to the Lebanese context, and informing future research, institutional planning, and language policy development.

More broadly, the synthesis suggests that the Lebanese experience contributes to international EMI scholarship by illustrating how multilingual educational traditions, institutional capacity, and broader socioeconomic conditions interact to shape language policy and educational practice. Rather than representing an exceptional case, Lebanon exemplifies the complexities faced by multilingual higher education systems seeking to reconcile internationalization with educational equity. As such, the review offers a context-sensitive framework that may inform future comparative research on EMI implementation in similarly diverse and resource-constrained settings.

5. Conclusion

This review examined the evolving relationship between ELT and EMI in Lebanese higher education by synthesizing international, regional, and Lebanese scholarship. Collectively, the reviewed literature suggests that the expansion of EMI in Lebanon reflects broader processes of globalization, internationalization, labor market transformation, and changing language practices in higher education. At the same time, the literature indicates that EMI implementation occurs within a higher education system facing significant institutional, economic, and policy-related challenges.

The synthesis further suggests that many of the challenges associated with ELT and EMI in Lebanese universities are systemic rather than solely attributable to individual students or instructors. Across the reviewed studies, recurring themes include uneven student language preparedness, limited alignment between secondary and tertiary education, constrained instructional time, fragmented language support, and the absence of comprehensive institutional language policies. The literature also indicates that Lebanon's continuing economic and political crises have intensified these challenges by affecting institutional capacity, faculty stability, and the availability of educational resources.

From a pedagogical perspective, the reviewed evidence consistently challenges approaches that separate language learning from disciplinary learning. Rather, the literature increasingly supports models that integrate language development with content instruction through discipline-specific academic literacy, collaboration between language and content specialists, and ongoing linguistic support throughout students' academic programs. International studies reviewed in this paper similarly suggest that effective EMI implementation depends not only on adopting English as the language of instruction but also on institutional coordination, faculty development, and a coherent language policy.

At the same time, the review highlights that EMI should not be viewed exclusively through a deficit-oriented perspective. The literature identifies important potential benefits, including improved access to international scholarship, greater opportunities for academic mobility, enhanced intercultural communication, and stronger graduate employability. However, these advantages appear to depend on appropriate institutional support and students' opportunities to develop academic English alongside disciplinary knowledge. Within the Lebanese context, the country's longstanding multilingual educational tradition may provide a valuable foundation for context-sensitive pedagogical approaches, including translanguaging, scaffolded instruction, and collaborative teaching models.

Overall, this review suggests that strengthening EMI in Lebanon requires moving beyond fragmented, primarily market-driven approaches toward more integrated, context-responsive institutional strategies. The literature points to the importance of aligning language policy, curriculum design, faculty development, and student support within a coherent multilingual framework. Ultimately, the reviewed literature suggests that the future of English-medium higher education in Lebanon will depend not simply on expanding English-language provision but on creating coherent multilingual educational systems that integrate language development, disciplinary learning, institutional policy, and educational equity. By situating Lebanon within broader international debates while remaining attentive to its distinctive sociolinguistic and institutional realities, this review provides a context-sensitive framework to inform future research, policy, and practice.

5.1 Implications

5.1.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of academic research that views EMI as a complex phenomenon influenced by linguistic, institutional, sociopolitical, and economic factors. Utilizing a socio-ecological lens, the analysis strengthens the assertion that EMI challenges cannot be attributed solely to personal language shortcomings in either students or teachers. Rather, language acquisition and content mastery arise from interactions between policy frameworks, institutional practices, work conditions, and wider social contexts. This study thus endorses modern critiques of deficit-oriented EMI narratives and emphasizes the necessity for more contextually relevant theoretical frameworks in multilingual higher education.

5.1.2 Pedagogical Implications

The reviewed literature highlights the importance of combining ELT and EMI teaching methods rather than treating them as separate areas. Universities ought to adopt discipline-specific academic literacy frameworks that integrate language assistance within subject courses throughout the curriculum. The results indicate that translanguaging and adaptable multilingual approaches might enhance understanding, engagement, and inclusion in classrooms with diverse languages. Educators need training in both English competency and language-focused teaching methods that meet the linguistic needs of subject-specific learning.

5.1.3 Institutional Implications

The reviewed evidence suggests that higher education institutions must create clear EMI policies that outline language requirements, assessment criteria, and support obligations. Institutions that adopt EMI without proper preparation may exacerbate educational inequalities and heighten faculty stress. Consequently, universities should acknowledge language support as a collective institutional obligation rather than the sole responsibility of English departments. Funding for professional development, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and student support programs is crucial to the effective and lasting implementation of EMI.

5.1.4 Implications for Policy

At the national level, the synthesis emphasizes the critical need for comprehensive language education policies that connect secondary and higher education outcomes. Policymakers must tackle inequalities between public and private education systems and establish national guidelines for preparing students in academic language. Moreover, educational reform initiatives must recognize Lebanon's multilingual landscape by advancing balanced strategies that maintain Arabic while enhancing English skills for international interaction. Policymakers need to tackle the worsening labor conditions of university educators, as faculty instability directly impacts the quality of education and the institution's continuity.

5.1.5 Socioeconomic Implications

The study additionally carries wider socioeconomic consequences. In Lebanon's more globalized job market, English skills are strongly tied to job opportunities and global movement. Nonetheless, unequal access to quality English education threatens to strengthen social stratification. Students from disadvantaged educational settings may encounter additional challenges in EMI contexts, thereby constraining their academic and career prospects. As a result, fair EMI execution is not merely an educational issue but also a question of social equity and national progress.

5.2 Recommendations

Drawing on the thematic synthesis of the reviewed literature, the following recommendations are proposed for Lebanese universities, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), accreditation bodies, and other educational stakeholders. Although these recommendations are informed by international scholarship, they are

intentionally adapted to Lebanon's multilingual educational traditions, institutional diversity, and current socioeconomic realities.

5.2.1 Develop a National Framework for Language Policy in Higher Education

One of the clearest findings emerging from the reviewed literature is the absence of a coherent national framework defining the complementary roles of Arabic, English, and French in Lebanese higher education (Marcjanik, 2023; Abdel Latif & Alhamad, 2023; Chehimi & Hejase, 2024). Rather than allowing universities to develop isolated institutional approaches, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), in consultation with public and private universities, should establish broad national guidelines that preserve institutional autonomy while promoting greater consistency in language placement, English language support, graduate language outcomes, and multilingual educational practices.

5.2.2 Strengthen the Transition between Secondary and University Education

The review consistently indicates that many challenges encountered in EMI programs originate before students enter university. Greater collaboration between MEHE, the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP), secondary schools, and universities is therefore needed to better align English language outcomes with the academic literacy demands of higher education (Abouzeid, 2021; El Hassan, 2021). Universities should consider introducing discipline-sensitive diagnostic assessments during student admissions and offering targeted transition programs for students who require additional academic language support, particularly those entering from under-resourced public schools.

5.2.3 Differentiate Language Support According to Institutional Mission and Student Population

Lebanese universities differ substantially in terms of language of instruction, student demographics, institutional resources, and program offerings. Consequently, the review suggests that a uniform EMI support model is unlikely to be effective. Universities should design language support mechanisms that reflect their institutional context, including students' linguistic backgrounds and the communication demands of individual disciplines. Flexible English for Academic Purposes (EAP) modules, embedded writing support, and discipline-specific communication courses may be more appropriate than relying exclusively on introductory English courses (Hyland, 2022b).

5.2.4 Build Sustainable Faculty Capacity despite Economic Constraints

Recognizing the financial pressures on Lebanese higher education, professional development initiatives should prioritize sustainable, collaborative approaches rather than resource-intensive models. Universities could establish communities of practice, peer observation schemes, interdisciplinary teaching workshops, and locally developed EMI training programs that bring together language specialists and disciplinary faculty (Dafouz & Smit, 2023). Such initiatives are likely to be more feasible than relying on extensive international training programs under current economic conditions.

5.2.5 Institutionalize Collaboration between Language and Disciplinary Faculties

The review highlights persistent fragmentation between English language programs and disciplinary departments. Universities should therefore establish formal mechanisms that encourage curriculum coordination, joint course planning, shared assessment design, and regular communication between ELT instructors and content lecturers. Institutional recognition of such collaboration through workload allocation and professional evaluation may improve both language development and disciplinary learning.

5.2.6 Adopt Context-Sensitive Multilingual Pedagogies

Given Lebanon's longstanding multilingual educational tradition, universities should move beyond rigid English-only approaches and recognize multilingualism as a pedagogical resource. Where educationally appropriate, carefully planned translanguaging, strategic code-switching, and multilingual scaffolding may facilitate conceptual understanding while supporting students' continued development of academic English (García et al., 2017; Nassar, 2024). Such practices should complement rather than replace students' progression toward English-language disciplinary competence.

5.2.7 Prioritize Student Support within Existing Institutional Resources

Although financial limitations restrict large-scale investment, universities can strengthen student support through relatively low-cost initiatives such as peer tutoring, discipline-based writing groups, online academic literacy resources, structured advising, and expanded office-hour support. Where feasible, partnerships among neighboring universities could facilitate the sharing of language support expertise and digital learning resources, thereby reducing

service duplication.

5.2.8 Improve Faculty Retention and Academic Stability

The literature suggests that EMI's effectiveness depends partly on a stable, well-supported academic workforce. While broader labor market conditions remain beyond the control of individual institutions, universities should seek to improve faculty retention by implementing transparent promotion pathways, offering opportunities for professional development, recognizing EMI-related responsibilities, and integrating part-time instructors more fully into departmental academic activities. At the national level, MEHE may also consider reviewing policies on faculty employment and quality assurance to encourage longer-term academic capacity-building.

5.2.9 Encourage Evidence-Informed Institutional Decision-Making

Rather than adopting EMI primarily in response to market competition or international rankings, Lebanese universities should establish regular institutional evaluation mechanisms to assess student learning, academic language development, faculty experiences, and program effectiveness. Longitudinal institutional data can provide a stronger basis for curriculum revision and resource allocation than assumptions regarding the benefits of English-medium education alone (Macaro et al., 2018; Curle et al., 2024).

5.2.10 Promote Collaborative National Research on EMI in Lebanon

The review also identifies a shortage of large-scale empirical research examining EMI implementation across Lebanese universities. Future collaboration among universities, MEHE, CRDP, and national research organizations could generate comparative evidence regarding language preparedness, faculty experiences, multilingual classroom practices, graduate outcomes, and institutional policy implementation. Such research would provide a stronger evidence base for future educational reform while reducing reliance on findings transferred from substantially different international contexts.

5.3 Limitations

This study highlights multiple limitations that need to be recognized. First, the research employs a qualitative narrative literature review and thus relies primarily on pre-existing scholarship rather than collecting new empirical data. Although this method allows for extensive synthesis across different contexts, it restricts the capacity to generalize results to all Lebanese universities or to account for variations specific to each institution.

Second, the accessibility of EMI research focused on Lebanon remains quite restricted compared to Western settings. As a result, certain interpretations depend on regional and international analyses that might not completely capture the intricacies of the Lebanese higher education landscape.

Third, this study primarily focuses on higher education institutions where English is the primary language of instruction. The experiences of universities that use French as the medium of instruction and those of hybrid multilingual institutions might require distinct, more thorough examination.

Fourth, the swiftly shifting political and economic circumstances in Lebanon indicate that institutional conditions are constantly changing. Results regarding faculty circumstances, resource availability, and student experiences may consequently change over time.

Ultimately, the study focuses mainly on ELT and EMI from institutional and pedagogical viewpoints while paying comparatively less attention to students' personal stories, identity negotiations, and psychological experiences in EMI settings.

5.4 Future Research

Future studies should expand on this by conducting empirical research on EMI practices across various Lebanese universities, including public, private, English-medium, and multilingual institutions. Comparative analyses exploring differences in institutional policies, student results, and teaching methods would offer a deeper insight into the Lebanese EMI environment.

Longitudinal studies are essential for investigating how students' academic literacy develops in EMI programs and how their language skills affect learning in their disciplines and employment prospects. These studies might help determine the most efficient types of integrated language assistance.

Additional exploration of instructors' experiences is also crucial, especially concerning professional identity, workload challenges, teaching adjustments, and emotional health in economically unstable environments. Investigating the instability of academic work and its connection to the quality of education would also significantly shape discussions of higher education policy.

Future research should also explore the impact of translanguaging and multilingual teaching methods in Lebanese EMI classrooms. Classroom-based empirical research could assess if flexible language practices enhance student engagement, understanding, and academic achievement.

Another encouraging area is exploring students' views on EMI, including linguistic identity, social inclusion, motivation, and educational equity. Understanding how students navigate multilingual academic settings could inform the creation of more inclusive institutional policies.

Finally, future research should investigate the lasting effects of EMI on Lebanon's linguistic environment, particularly the interactions among English, Arabic, and French in higher education and the community. This research would contribute to broader discussions on globalization, language policy, and cultural sustainability in multilingual settings.

5.5 Final Reflection

This review has argued that understanding EMI in Lebanon requires moving beyond language proficiency alone toward a broader appreciation of multilingualism, institutional capacity, educational policy, and social equity. While international scholarship provides valuable guidance, the reviewed evidence demonstrates that sustainable EMI implementation depends upon context-sensitive adaptation rather than direct transfer of external models. By integrating international, regional, and Lebanese perspectives, this review contributes a comprehensive framework through which future scholarship and educational reform may better address the opportunities and challenges of multilingual higher education in Lebanon and comparable contexts.

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Author contributions

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