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Article

Addressing Language and Study Skills Challenges in Online Undergraduate EMI Courses

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Abstract: English-medium instruction (EMI) is taking hold within higher education in non-Anglophone settings, but there is insufficient research into the challenges students encounter when taking EMI courses online. This exploratory quantitative study conducted in Hong Kong examines the language and studying challenges faced by undergraduate students when in-person classes were suspended due to COVID-19. One hundred thirteen first- and second-year students completed a questionnaire, rating their perceived challenges in the areas of writing, speaking, reading, listening, and study skills. The results showed that they faced particular challenges with reading and study skills (especially self-motivation), as well as vocabulary range, which affected more than one skill. Corroborating existing research, students with less secondary school EMI experience reported greater challenges. As providing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses is a primary way to support the language skills of students in EMI settings, we offer guidance to EAP practitioners who seek to help their students overcome the challenges identified in this article. As online technology continues to deliver content in tertiary education, EAP courses must be closely aligned with the language and study skills needs of students in digital EMI environments.

Keywords: English for Academic Purposes; English-medium instruction; language; study skills; online learning; EAP; EMI

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, higher education has witnessed a surge in English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes in settings where English is not the first language of most students and teachers [1,2]. EMI refers to teaching academic subjects in English without an explicit focus on developing students' language skills [3]. However, such programmes can be demanding for students who are not accustomed to taking courses and dealing with content in English. Accordingly, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses are sometimes offered to facilitate language development and provide targeted support that will help students succeed in the EMI environment [4]. These EAP courses target students' proficiency with academic language and genres [5–7] and are often designed based on a needs analysis [8]. Previous studies (e.g., [9–11]) investigating the needs of EAP students have identified insufficient writing skills as their primary difficulty. Conversely, they have found that listening skills pose a minimal challenge [12].

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced higher education institutions worldwide to suspend in-person teaching and adopt emergency remote teaching (ERT) [13] using online learning environments (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) [14]. Though EMI courses in Hong Kong and other locations had previously utilised both synchronous and asynchronous technologies (e.g., learning management software, blogs, wikis, mobile apps, student response systems), the necessity of transferring entire courses online presented many challenges and constraints [15]. Studying in a fully online environment

was difficult for EMI students. As language and study skills are paramount to their success, this article seeks to explicate the specific subskills EMI learners found challenging during ERT. Moreover, few studies have focused on such challenges in online EMI courses. By identifying these specific needs, this article can guide future EAP curriculum design and pedagogy to facilitate academic success in digital EMI higher education settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emergency Remote Teaching

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the daily lives of teachers and students changed abruptly and ERT became necessary [16]. ERT provides higher education institutions with a way to deliver synchronous instruction remotely when in-person classes are suspended [13]. Before the pandemic, the integration of technology had become a cornerstone of successful EAP practice [17]. However, the materials, activities, and assessments that teachers used had been purposefully designed for either asynchronous or synchronous delivery, in contrast to ERT, where content needed to be assembled rapidly [18]. This new and unique environment significantly altered the ways in which EAP students learned. Traditionally, incorporating technology in the EAP classroom can take various forms, including drills to practise skills, reading or writing, and sharing images or artefacts that facilitate language acquisition while students work on authentic tasks. EAP teachers also incorporate student response systems (e.g., GoSoapBox, Mentimeter, Kahoot!) to encourage interaction, satisfaction, and a sense of community [14,19]. Despite this, the transition to ERT revealed a lack of digital competence and readiness to create fully online engaging and interactive EAP lessons among instructors [14]. Students faced many obstacles during ERT, including technical issues, low computer literacy, difficulty understanding the material, poor concentration, and low motivation [20]. Furthermore, many students accessed ERT classes via their smartphones [21] or had limited communication with their peers and instructors, making them feel isolated during the learning process [22]. These students had to conform to the institutional and disciplinary conventions of a new learning environment, a challenge that was exacerbated for students whose first language was not English.

In addition, EAP students are expected to comprehend and produce texts written in academic English, which can be difficult even in traditional classroom settings. In the online environment, this task is significantly more challenging. The replacement of face-to-face communication with written communication heightened existing language difficulties: text-based communication requires a higher level of language proficiency and can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunications due to the lack of non-verbal cues [22].

Furthermore, online learning requires a high degree of self-regulation and time management, which can pose additional challenges for EAP students [20]. They may struggle with procrastination or find it difficult to stay on top of their coursework because of the additional time they need to process and understand materials in English [20,22]. Another challenge EAP students struggle with in an online academic environment is navigating different cultural norms and expectations. For example, students from cultures where it is considered inappropriate to question or contradict their instructors and/or classmates may find it challenging to engage in critical debate and discussion online, which is often encouraged in Western academic contexts [11]. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions and instructors to provide the support and resources necessary to help these students succeed in an online learning environment.

2.2. Language Challenges

In language teaching and learning (especially EAP), an analysis of learners' needs can guide curriculum development [8] and help administrators, course developers, material writers, and instructors teach students the language skills they need for academic success [23].

The foremost challenge faced by EAP learners in Hong Kong is academic writing [9]. In particular, students lack adequate discipline-specific vocabulary [4,9] and find the way

general academic terms are used in the disciplines to be challenging [24]. First-year students, fresh from their secondary school studies, are accustomed to different writing standards than those that dominate in higher education [25]. One study found that EAP learners struggled with morphology and grammar [26]. In addition, they have difficulty employing academic citations [27]. They may need to learn more sophisticated sentence patterns and engage more deeply with the content than they did in secondary school.

Moreover, EAP learners also find it difficult to discuss academic content and speak in fluent, grammatically correct, and intelligible sentences [4]. The development of speaking skills requires instructor input, followed by learner output, and subsequent instructor feedback. However, EAP courses tend to focus on presentations [28] and neglect pronunciation [29,30]. Furthermore, EAP learners often struggle to critically select, paraphrase, and summarise information from academic journals and texts [26]. As scholars have highlighted [31–33], readings in secondary schools are generally provided by the teacher, whereas in higher education students are expected to locate and read a wide range of academic texts [9]. However, they may struggle to use library search tools to find relevant materials. Additionally, they may have difficulty guessing the meaning of unknown words [34] and understanding background information [35], preventing them from comprehending academic texts.

Listening is often reported to be the least challenging skill for EAP learners [12]. Nevertheless, weak comprehension of spoken English still impedes academic success. One study documented that many learners struggle to comprehend informal expressions and take effective notes [30]. Some students find it challenging to understand lectures [36] because they lack discipline-specific academic vocabulary knowledge [37]. This issue can be exacerbated because instructors speak English with various accents and deliver lectures in a style that students perceive as quick and unfocused [38].

2.3. Challenges with Study Skills

The challenges that students face with writing, reading, speaking, and listening are also linked to their study skills. Scholars [38,39] have pointed out that incorporating lessons on preparation strategies, such as developing background knowledge of the content that will be covered in a lecture, can facilitate listening comprehension [40]. This implies that improving these skills should be a compulsory component of EAP courses. It has been observed that learners are unable to plan and revise their writing and have difficulty managing their time, which hampers their productivity [41]. Though studies are scarce, there is some evidence suggesting that EAP students would welcome instruction on study skills. One study reported that students responded positively to the critical thinking of an EAP course [42]. Similarly, another study [43] found that embedding a study skills module in an EAP course enhanced students' coping skills, time management, and reflection.

To inform decisions regarding which (sub-)skills should be emphasized in EAP courses during ERT, this study employed a questionnaire that asked learners to rank the difficulty of each major skill and subskill. It was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Which language skills and subskills did EAP learners perceive to be the most challenging during ERT?

RQ2: Which study skills did EAP learners perceive to be the most challenging during ERT?

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and Context

The participants in this study were 113 first- and second-year students at a large English-medium institution in Hong Kong taking a compulsory EAP course entitled 'English for University Studies'. This is a 'bridging course. . . that brings students up to speed with general academic English' [43] (p. 2). It aims to facilitate academic success by focusing on four learning outcomes: the ability to (i) refer to sources in written texts and oral presentations; (ii) paraphrase and summarise materials from written and spoken sources; (iii) plan, write, and revise expository essays with reference to sources; (iv) deliver effective

oral presentations. It is a three-credit course delivered over 13 weeks, with three hours of instruction each week. At the time of the study, most students at the focal university were taught online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, though departments were permitted to deliver some smaller classes face-to-face. This EAP course was taught fully online.

The survey was sent out to 150 students enrolled in the EAP course. A total of 113 completed responses were received from 86 first-year students and 27 second-year students (60% of whom were female). They were invited to participate in the study. All spoke Chinese as their first language and English as their second language. The sample included students from a broad range of disciplines, including health, social sciences, design, construction, environmental science, engineering, and the humanities. Most participants had attended secondary schools where most subjects were taught in English, but 17 participants had attended schools where instruction in Chinese was dominant. Before being asked to sign a consent form, each participant was informed about the scope of the research, the proposed use of the collected data, and their right to withdraw at any time. The study received ethical approval from the university.

3.2. Instruments

The data collection instrument was a self-administered online questionnaire (in English) (see Appendix A) that explored students' challenges with language and study skills. To inform our decisions (as part of the overarching aim), we perceive knowledge on challenges in language skills and subskills to be a relatively objective trend. Therefore we adopt a positivist approach and use only the questionnaire to answer our research questions.

The participants completed the questionnaire between weeks 7 and 10 of the first semester. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *very challenging* to 5 = *not challenging*) to measure the level of difficulty the participants experienced related to each skill. Likert scales are advantageous when exploring complex issues, such as challenges with language and study skills, which cannot be adequately captured by simple 'yes' or 'no' responses [44]. The questionnaire items were adapted from a previous study [4,45] and the researchers' observations as EAP practitioners. The questionnaire was expert-piloted by three students (who did not participate in the study) and three teachers. They provided feedback on individual items, instructions, visual layout, and potential ambiguities related to problematic wording and complexity. We analysed and deleted or rephrased questions to eliminate these ambiguities before finalising the survey [46].

3.3. Data Analysis

Data from the study were analysed using SPSS 24.0. In the reliability analysis, the mean Cronbach's alpha for all subskills was 0.973, demonstrating that the questionnaire had high internal consistency. To rank-order the difficulty level of the subskills under each major skill, we calculated their means. The difficulty levels of the major skills were rank-ordered in the same way. A series of independent samples *t*-tests were performed to identify differences in the perceived difficulty of each major skill and subskill between students who were taught mostly in English in secondary school and those who were not. Cohen's *d* for each independent samples *t*-test was manually calculated to report the effect size.

4. Results

4.1. Skill Difficulty

In this section, we identify the main challenges students experienced with the five major skills and the corresponding subskills.

4.1.1. General Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics related to the major skills. The participants perceived reading as the most challenging skill required in their university studies, followed by study skills, speaking, writing, and listening. Interestingly, these findings diverge from

the results of previous research conducted in face-to-face settings, which identified writing as the most difficult skill.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics—five major skills.

Skill	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Writing	113	1.25	5.00	3.0631	0.76585
Speaking	113	1.00	5.00	3.0274	0.90062
Reading	113	1.17	5.00	2.9263	0.86830
Listening	113	1.83	5.00	3.6224	0.94544
Study skills	113	1.00	5.00	2.9967	0.89587

4.1.2. Specific Results

Table 2 ranks the writing subskills based on their perceived difficulty, as reported by the EAP students. The participants found that using academic or technical vocabulary was the most challenging subskill, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies [4,9,10,24]. Other notable challenges include critically evaluating ideas from sources, employing a diverse set of vocabulary words or synonyms, and expressing ideas clearly and concisely.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics—writing subskills.

Difficulty	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using academic/technical vocabulary	113	1	5	2.86	0.999
Critically evaluating ideas from sources	113	1	5	2.91	1.005
Using synonyms/a range of vocabulary	113	1	5	2.92	0.992
Expressing ideas clearly and concisely	113	1	5	2.95	0.971
Producing grammatically correct sentences	113	1	5	3.11	1.055
Using an appropriate tone/formality	113	1	5	3.12	0.992
Citing sources correctly	113	1	5	3.20	0.918
Using an appropriate essay structure	113	1	5	3.43	0.981

In contrast, the students considered that producing grammatically correct sentences, adopting an appropriate tone or level of formality, and accurately citing sources were less challenging. They found that using an appropriate essay structure was the least difficult writing subskill. Using online grammar tools may have contributed to the accuracy of the students' writing, and the clear guidelines on referencing and structure provided in the EAP subject materials might have made these aspects easier for students to implement than other aspects.

In terms of speaking subskills, the students reported experiencing significant difficulties with varying their language, engaging their audience, and speaking persuasively (see Table 3). In contrast, less challenging speaking subskills included referencing sources in presentations, employing stress and intonation, exuding confidence, and adopting a suitable speaking tone. The least difficult skills were speaking fluently, explaining themselves clearly, and pronouncing words accurately. It is plausible that online environments offer fewer speaking opportunities than face-to-face settings, along with reduced interaction and rapport-building [47]. Furthermore, many speaking assessments were conducted online during ERT, primarily through video submissions. While this format allowed students to plan and practise their presentations, the materials did not specifically focus on achieving engagement and persuasion for an online audience.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics—speaking subskills.

Difficulty	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using varied wording	113	1	5	2.71	1.107
Engaging the audience	113	1	5	2.73	1.086
Speaking persuasively	113	1	5	2.81	0.999
Referring to sources in presentations	113	1	5	3.04	0.939
Using stress and intonation	113	1	5	3.05	1.068
Speaking with confidence	113	1	5	3.12	1.310
Using a suitable spoken tone	113	1	5	3.15	1.054
Speaking fluently	113	1	5	3.18	1.128
Expressing myself clearly	113	1	5	3.19	1.048
Pronouncing words clearly and correctly	113	1	5	3.29	1.032

The students identified that the most challenging reading skill was finding suitable academic sources, followed by locating relevant information for essays. While students have access to the university's online database, they might have found the volume of literature overwhelming. Notably, library workshops—which are integrated into many language courses and guide students to use databases and search for resources—were not conducted face-to-face during this period. This could have made it difficult for facilitators to assist students who encountered issues. Paraphrasing and summarising information also presented challenges, a finding that aligns with the previous observation [26] that 'reading-to-write' is difficult even for higher-level students. Significantly, understanding academic or technical vocabulary posed problems for students, which can manifest in relation to various skills (e.g., reading, writing, listening). In contrast, skills such as scanning and skimming academic texts and comprehending their formats caused fewer difficulties, as students were able to transfer these skills from their secondary studies (see Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive statistics—reading subskills.

Difficulty	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Finding suitable academic sources	113	1	5	2.74	1.108
Finding relevant information for essays	113	1	5	2.78	1.050
Paraphrasing and summarising information	113	1	5	2.93	1.083
Understanding academic/technical vocabulary	113	1	5	2.94	1.063
Scanning and skimming academic texts	113	1	5	3.03	1.056
Understanding the format of academic texts	113	1	5	3.14	1.008

The participants indicated that listening was the least demanding skill. Lectures were conducted online and recorded, allowing students to review, pause, and replay challenging sections, which likely facilitated comprehension. However, the students found concentrating on lectures to be difficult (see Table 5). This could be attributed to the delivery style or distraction in their home environment. Students perceived understanding academic or technical vocabulary words and connecting their knowledge to the lecturer's content to be equally challenging. These difficulties have also been reported in face-to-face lectures, so they are not unique to the online environment [40]. The three least demanding listening subskills included catching up on the content of the lecture if they fell behind, keeping pace with the lecture's speed, and comprehending the lecturer's accent or pronunciation. These challenges may have been mitigated by access to recorded lectures.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics—listening subskills.

Difficulty	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Concentrating on the lecture	113	1	5	3.43	1.164
Understanding academic/technical vocabulary	113	1	5	3.49	1.036
Connecting knowledge to what the lecturer says	113	1	5	3.49	1.103
Catching up with the instructor if falling behind	113	1	5	3.57	1.117
Keeping up with the speed of a lecture	113	2	5	3.85	1.071
Understanding the lecturer's accent or pronunciation	113	2	5	3.91	1.082

This study also investigated the challenges students faced in mastering study skills. Table 6 highlights that the most significant difficulties for students were a lack of motivation to study and managing their time effectively. These issues were likely exacerbated by limited face-to-face contact with peers, both informally and in class, due to COVID-19 restrictions. A blend of online and face-to-face learning opportunities may have motivated students. The participants also experienced difficulties with conducting research, searching for sources, and selecting and synthesising information. This suggests the need to incorporate relevant interventions into online EAP courses. In contrast, they considered planning for assignments, applying critical thinking skills, acting on feedback, and editing and revising their work less challenging. Students likely utilised editing tools to help finalise their assignments.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics—study skills.

Difficulty	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivating yourself to study	113	1	5	2.77	1.118
Managing your time	113	1	5	2.85	1.087
Conducting research/searching for sources	113	1	5	2.89	1.047
Selecting and synthesizing information	113	1	5	2.94	1.020
Planning assignments	113	1	5	3.05	1.025
Using critical thinking skills	113	1	5	3.10	1.102
Acting on feedback	113	1	5	3.18	1.020
Editing and revising your work	113	1	5	3.19	0.962

Our analysis revealed no statistically significant differences due to gender or areas of study. However, we observed notable differences between students who primarily received their secondary education in English and those who did not, which are discussed in the following section.

4.2. The Effects of Previous EMI Experience

Table 7 presents the difficulties experienced by students based on their varying levels of English experience in secondary school. There were significantly fewer perceived writing difficulties among the 96 participants who were mainly taught in English ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.72$) than the 17 who were not ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.89$), $t(111) = 2.813$, $p = 0.006$, $d = 0.74$. The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.74$) exceeded the established convention [48] for a medium effect ($d = 0.5$). However, an independent samples t-test revealed no significant differences in speaking difficulties between the students who were predominantly taught in English ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.87$) and those who were not ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(111) = 1.639$, $p = 0.104$, $d = 0.431$. Likewise, no significant differences emerged in difficulties with reading, $t(111) = 1.291$, $p = 0.200$, $d = 0.340$, listening, $t(111) = 1.755$, $p = 0.082$, $d = 0.462$, or study skills, $t(111) = 1.572$, $p = 0.119$, $d = 0.414$. Nonetheless, students with prior experience studying in English consistently had higher scores (i.e., less difficulty) than those without this experience. These findings are generally consistent with those of similar studies in face-to-face settings [35,44]. They show that it remains necessary to reach out to students with less EMI experience in online settings.

Table 7. Independent samples *T*-test for two groups of EAP students.

	Previous English Learning Experience (Mean ± SD)		*T*	Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Yes (*n* = 96)	No (*n* = 17)		
Writing	3.15 ± 0.72	2.60 ± 0.89	2.813	0.006 *
Speaking	3.09 ± 0.87	2.70 ± 1.04	1.639	0.104
Reading	2.97 ± 0.86	2.68 ± 0.92	1.291	0.200
Listening	3.69 ± 0.93	3.25 ± 0.98	1.755	0.082
Study	3.05 ± 0.88	2.68 ± 0.93	1.572	0.119

* $p < 0.05$.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study investigated EMI university students' difficulties with English writing, speaking, reading, listening, and study skills. While previous studies [9–11] identified writing as the most challenging skill, our participants found reading to be the most difficult skill to master, followed by study skills, speaking, writing, and listening. Notably, study skills, which have not been widely explored in similar studies, emerged as the second most problematic area for these students. Accordingly, study skills are an area of difficulty that should be given a more prominent role within EAP courses that prepare students for digital EMI settings. As in previous studies, vocabulary was particularly demanding, and students with less EMI experience faced difficulties with many of the skills, especially writing.

5.1. Study Skills and EAP Challenges

Many of the challenges students encountered were related to study techniques, self-organisation, and motivation. Motivating oneself to study was the most significant challenge related to study skills for the participants. Emotional struggles within online educational settings have been reported in other studies (e.g., [49,50]), and language difficulties likely exacerbate the psychological challenges among EMI students. Learners can adopt a range of strategies to cope with the frustrations they experience, including individual and cooperative emotion regulation strategies [51]. For example, they may engage in encouragement, increasing awareness (e.g., of tasks), task planning, and social reinforcement [52]. Previous studies [50] have recommended that online language practitioners foster a cooperative and transparent learning environment in which teachers and students negotiate their roles. Giving students the confidence to speak and contribute to the online learning environment is crucial for successful language learning.

5.2. Vocabulary Challenges

Students faced problems employing academic and technical vocabulary in their assignments, which is consistent with previous studies [35,51,53]. Challenges with vocabulary affected various subskills, including paraphrasing texts during reading, using synonyms during writing, and using varied wording in speaking tasks. Taking EMI courses online may exacerbate these challenges because they provide students with less direct contact with lecturers and peers, as well as fewer opportunities to ask questions.

To address these issues, online EAP courses should emphasise the strategies and tools students can use to learn vocabulary. In addition, course designers could develop assignments in which students use discipline-specific terms in addition to general academic terms. EAP teachers and lecturers in the disciplines could collaborate to produce vocabulary lists and techniques for mastering vocabulary. Though EMI courses are generally seen as content-focused, lecturers could be encouraged to take the time to highlight and explain key terms. Raising awareness about students' experience with EMI courses through professional development could also help subject-matter lecturers understand the linguistic challenges students face.

5.3. Supporting Students with Lower English Proficiency

One major implication of this study is that it is necessary for online EMI instructors to reach out to students with lower levels of English proficiency, who may be less confident and willing to communicate during online classes. In this study, an independent variable—whether students were taught most of their secondary school classes in English—had a significant influence on the perceived difficulty of various skills, similar to studies conducted in face-to-face settings [11,35,36,53]. To assist struggling students in adapting to the English environment, university language centres can provide targeted small-group teaching. Providing these students with mentors, in particular, could provide them with a personalised and low-pressure environment in which they can gain insight and confidence [54,55]. Structured group work with clear roles and regular virtual student–teacher conferences can also promote active learning and elevate the learning trajectories of struggling English users. Those who develop EAP materials could also consider producing microlearning resources such as infographics (e.g., [56,57]), which can summarise key learning points in visually appealing ways and support students as they work on assignments. Finally, EAP teachers can help develop students' reading skills when delivering content online by integrating technology such as brainstorming tools (e.g., wikis, Miro) to help students understand texts and generate new ideas for later writing tasks.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study gauged the needs of online students taking EMI courses using a self-reported questionnaire, finding that reading and study skills were particularly demanding. Although incorporating qualitative data would allow for further exploration, many of our findings should resonate with EAP practitioners who help students deal with such challenges. More studies are required to confirm whether reading and study skills are the most prominent challenges faced by other cohorts of students or those in other contexts. With the increasing popularity of EMI and the widespread adoption of online higher education, EAP support will continue to be crucial in assisting students in their learning pursuits. Despite these challenges, online EAP courses have significant potential. We hope that the results of this study will help guide EAP practitioners and course developers in Hong Kong and beyond.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire: Developing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Provision

Section I—Demographics

1. What is your gender?

   Male
   Female

2. What is your year of study?

   Year 1
   Year 2
   Year 3
   Year 4

3. What is your Faculty?

   Faculty of Applied Science and Textiles
   Faculty of Business
   Faculty of Construction and Environment
   Faculty of Engineering
   Faculty of Humanities
   School of Design
   School of Hotel and Tourism Management

4. Did you study the majority of your secondary school subjects in English?

   Yes
   No

Section II—Writing Difficulties

5. Reflecting on your university studies, how difficult are the following skills?

Writing	1 = very difficult	2 = difficult	3 = neutral	4 = quite difficult	5 = not difficult
Citing sources correctly					
Using academic/technical vocabulary					
Using synonyms/a range of vocabulary					
Expressing your ideas clearly and concisely					
Using Appropriate essay structure					
Using an appropriate tone/formality					
Producing grammatically correct sentences					
Writing critically/evaluating ideas from sources					

Section III—Speaking Difficulties

6. Reflecting on your university studies, how difficult are the following skills?

Speaking	1 = very difficult	2 = difficult	3 = neutral	4 = quite difficult	5 = not difficult
Having clear and correct pronunciation					
Using stress and intonation					
Speaking with confidence					
Speaking fluently					
Engaging the audience					
Using a range of language					
Referring to sources in presentations					
Expressing yourself clearly					
Speaking persuasively					
Using a suitable spoken tone					

Section IV—Reading Difficulties

7. Reflecting on your university studies, how difficult are the following skills?

Reading	1 = very difficult	2 = difficult	3 = neutral	4 = quite difficult	5 = not difficult
Finding suitable academic sources					
Understanding the format of academic texts					
Finding relevant information for your essays					
Understanding academic or technical vocabulary					
Scanning and skimming the academic texts					
Paraphrasing and summarizing information					

Section V—Listening Difficulties

8. Reflecting on your university studies, how difficult are the following skills?

Listening	1 = very difficult	2 = difficult	3 = neutral	4 = quite difficult	5 = not difficult
Understanding lecturers' accents or pronunciation					
Keeping up with the speed of a lecture					
Concentrating on the lecture					
Catching up with the instructors' talk if you fall behind					
Understanding academic/technical vocabulary					
Connecting your knowledge to what the lecturer is saying					

Section VI—Study Skills Difficulties

9. Reflecting on your university studies, how difficult are the following skills?

Study skills	1 = very difficult	2 = difficult	3 = neutral	4 = quite difficult	5 = not difficult
Planning for your assignments					
Managing your time					
Conducting research/searching for sources					
Selecting and synthesizing information					
Using critical thinking skills					
Editing and revising your work					
Acting on feedback					
Motivating yourself to study					

Section VII

10. What other difficulties do you have in your studies?

(open ended)

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