ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN CONTENT COURSES: EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES AND PRACTICES THAI TEACHERS FACE

[1]NAPATTANISSA SANGKAWONG & [2]JUNIFER L. BUCOL

[1&2]Research Center for Language Teaching and Learning, School of Languages and General Education, Walailak University, Thailand

[2]Corresponding author: junifer.bu@mail.wu.ac.th

ABSTRACT

Purpose - Previous studies have generally focused on TESOL teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, this study however, investigates English Medium of Instruction (EMI) in non-English language teaching contexts. This study fills a gap in the current literature on EMI by analyzing the problems and practices of 46 Thai university lecturers who use English as the medium of instruction in various subject fields.

Method - Utilizing an explanatory mixed-method study design, data was gathered through a survey questionnaire and interviews. This methodology facilitated the acquisition of a thorough comprehension of the perspectives and obstacles encountered by Thai lecturers using EMI in content courses.

Findings - The results of the study indicate that Thai lecturers generally hold different attitudes towards the use of EMI. Their apprehension stems from the degree of readiness of the students, including a perceived deficiency in skills and linguistic proficiencies, and the extent of help provided by the institution. Despite the challenges, Thai lecturers demonstrated flexibility by employing several pedagogical approaches within the classroom setting to accommodate the distinct requirements of their subject matter.

Significance - The study's relevance resides in its implications for policy formulation, curriculum design, and teacher professional development initiatives. The results of this study have highlighted the significance of providing customized assistance to lecturers and the necessity of implementing comprehensive approaches to enhance the efficacy of EMI in other academic fields.

INTRODUCTION

Interest in using English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) has steadily grown among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide (Lasagabaster, 2022), becoming a priority in many non-English speaking regions. Various factors contribute to this phenomenon, especially the extensive use of English as a global communication tool, with its various dialects and regional variations (Crystal, 2003; Northrup, 2013; Melitz, 2016). Graddol (1997) noted over two decades ago that socioeconomic and technological advancements would significantly impact the prevalence of English usage today. Additionally, studies have linked globalization and internationalization to the growing popularity of EMI in schools within non-English-speaking countries (Barrot, 2019). This is fueled by the increasing demand for educational institutions to maintain global relevance (Graddol, 2006; Koul & Kaewkuekool, 2010; Tang, 2020).

Consequently, these factors have sparked interest in the role of EMI, leading to significant changes in the educational landscape involving policy-makers (administrators), implementers (teachers), and participants (students) in HEIs in areas where English is not the native tongue (L1), such as in Thailand. In Thailand, the adoption of EMI in HEIs aligns with the national imperative for educational internationalization, focusing primarily on several key objectives, namely (a) ensuring that students remain updated and competitive in the international community (Moller & Crick, 2018), (b) attracting students from neighboring countries and around the world (Shimauchi, 2018), and (c) enhancing the institution's profile and achieving international recognition. Scholars believe that EMI can enhance students' English communication skills, a crucial element for successful integration into a globalized society (Rao, 2016). Since 1990, Thailand has prioritized the globalization of higher education, with international programs which have employed English as the instructional language playing a major role in the growth and advancement of both public and private colleges (Lavankura, 2013).

While previous studies have explored teacher perceptions of EMI in various HEIs (Galloway & Sahan, 2021), student learning achievement in EMI contexts (Tang, 2021), and language policy (Ra & Baker, 2021), there is limited research conducted specifically in the Thai context regarding the use of EMI by teachers in content courses. Although existing studies by Boonsuk and Fang (2021) and Baker and Tsou (2021) have examined EMI implementation, their focus has primarily been on international or bilingual programs rather than the university-wide academic offering of content subjects, which are typically taught in the mother tongue (L1).

This current study was aimed at addressing this gap by exploring the challenges faced by lecturers who taught content courses at a Thai university as they implement the EMI policy. Furthermore, how these perceptions influenced lecturers' teaching practices at the university was examined. Ultimately, this research was aimed at raising awareness about the necessary preparation for EMI implementation among higher education institutions in Thailand, as well as other countries striving to deploy its effective implementation in various educational contexts.

Defining EMI

Providing an exact definition of English as a medium of instruction is inherently challenging. While a commonly cited definition by Macaro (2018) describes EMI as the use of English for instruction in teaching the content of "academic subjects in countries where English is not the first language" (Dearden, 2015; Xu & Chuaychoowong, 2017), its widespread applicability is debated due to the existence of various contextual approaches and applications. This complexity led Macaro (2018) to refer to EMI as a 'problematic' term, considering the proliferation of interpretations within the existing literature.

Further complicating the definition, EMI can be viewed in relation to other pedagogical approaches. For instance, it shares similarities with 'Content-based Instruction' (CBI), which integrates language learning with content subjects (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). Likewise, connections can be drawn to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Additionally, the 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' (CLIL) model, widely practiced in Europe, exhibits a close affinity with EMI (Pun & Thomas, 2020). Conversely, Galloway and Sahan (2021) propose an EMI continuum framework encompassing all these related practices.

In the context of the present research, the definition 'teaching content subjects using English as the primary language of instruction' will be adopted when referring to EMI in the specific context in question, i.e., Thai lecturers using EMI in content courses. This definition provides a clear and focused lens for examining the specific context under investigation.

Observations of EMI implementation in HEI

The adoption of EMI to enhance students' language proficiency and prepare them for global integration has become widespread in tertiary education institutions. This trend is particularly evident across different parts of the Asian region, as it is driven by factors like socioeconomic growth, increased international collaboration, and expansion of tertiary educational establishments (Walkinshaw et al., 2017). A comprehensive review of 83 research studies on the implementation of EMI in higher education by Macaro et al. (2018) supports this observation, highlighting the growing demand for EMI among HEIs worldwide. However, their findings also reveal a lack of conclusive evidence regarding the direct impact of EMI on students' overall English language development or course content learning outcomes. Moreover, the review identifies a gap in research regarding specific classroom pedagogical approaches that demonstrably benefit both language acquisition and subject matter knowledge (Macaro et al., 2018).

While the impact of EMI on overall language development among students remains under debate, some studies report positive effects on specific language skills. For instance, the research by Coscun and Hasirci (2017) which investigated the impact of EMI on Turkish engineering students discovered a correlation between studying in English as a medium of instruction and improving the English proficiency of these students, particularly in receptive skills like reading and listening. Similarly, Ament and Vidal's (2015) study of Spanish university students found improvements in students' English competence. However, they suggest modifications to the course design to achieve more significant results (Ament & Vidal, 2015).

Undeniably, while there is compelling evidence of improvement, there are also reported challenges and drawbacks in adopting EMI. Manh's (2012) study in Vietnam exemplifies this issue, pointing to the unequal opportunity due to the socioeconomic divide between students. Students from wealthier backgrounds who can afford supplemental English education may have a significant advantage over those from rural areas with limited access to such resources.

While some micro-level studies demonstrate the potential benefits of EMI on students' English proficiency (Coscun & Hasirci, 2017; Ament & Vidal, 2015), it is crucial to recognize the potential obstacles associated with implementing this initiative. Researchers recommend that thorough planning and policy considerations be considered before implementing EMI. This ensures optimal results that balance language learning with subject comprehension (Ulla, Bucol & Na Ayuthaya, 2022). Therefore, planning and strategizing are critical for achieving positive outcomes in language acquisition and subject understanding whenever EMI is implemented.

Context of EMI implementation in Asia and Thailand

The phenomenon of English as the driver of economic growth and development has significantly impacted the proliferation of EMI in Asia, particularly in the Southeast region. This trend aligns with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) consensus to promote English as the official second language of instruction alongside local vernacular languages (Kirkpatrick, 2020). Similarly, studies from other countries, such as Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and China, have integrated EMI as part of their educational frameworks (Williams, 2015; Tsou & Kao, 2017; Hino, 2017; Murata & Iino, 2017; Galloway, Kriukow & Numajiri, 2017).

Furthermore, regional cooperation initiatives also fuel the emphasis on EMI. For instance, the 2012 agreement between the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and ASEAN Universities Network (AUN) to facilitate student and teacher exchanges within the region has spurred countries like Malaysia and Myanmar to immediately implement EMI as part of their curriculum, even amidst limitations in preparation (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Congruently, in 2015, driven by the ASEAN Economic Community's (AEC) focus on regional mobility and economic integration, countries like Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia have mandated the integration of English into HEIs as part of their language policy implementation (Fauzanna, 2017). However, it is important to note that some ASEAN countries, such as Singapore, the Philippines, and Hong Kong, had implemented EMI programs earlier (Chang, 2011).

Among the ASEAN nations, Thailand is the only country that has never been colonized (Kirkpatrick, 2016), presenting a unique set of challenges in EMI implementation. Historically, the use of English as a second language has faced challenges due to the strong national identity and cultural emphasis on the exclusive use of the Thai language. However, modernization efforts have gradually facilitated greater acceptance of English in the country (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). Records indicate that policy reforms promoting English language instruction as an integral part of the Thai educational system date back to the reign of King Rama VI (Bennui & Hasim, 2014). Since then, several reforms in educational policy have been implemented, but they have not yielded significant improvements in the country's English proficiency (Kaur et al., 2016). Thailand's national English proficiency remains low, as evidenced by a ten-year trend of "low" to "very low" (2019-2023) scores on the Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), as is shown in Table 1 (Education First, 2023). Notably, a key factor contributing to

this low proficiency is the continued use of Thai as the primary language of instruction for most content subjects, despite efforts to improve overall English language skills.

Table 1

Summary of the State of English Proficiency in Thailand (2014-2023)

2014	2015	2106	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Very low proficiency	Very low proficiency	Very low proficiency	Low proficiency	Low proficiency	Very low proficiency	Very low proficiency	Very low proficiency	Very low proficiency	Very low proficiency

Note. Retrieved from https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/regions/asia/thailand/.

Challenges of EMI Implementation in Thailand

Several studies have explored EMI implementation in Thailand. For example, Tang (2020), using Spolsky's language policy framework, examined the challenges faced by lecturers at the Thailand International College. The framework was found to be relevant in studying English language learners in the Thai context. His study identified key areas for consideration, including language issues for both lecturers and students, a cultural mismatch between students and foreign lecturers, structural challenges related to the limited number of staff who were confident in conducting classes in English, and institutional recognition in the global context. It is important to note that this study focused on international programs. Students entering these programs had pre-screened English proficiency, and lecturers possessed training and strong English backgrounds, making them more prepared for implementing EMI.

Similarly, Pomat et al. (2022) investigated EMI in a Thai university nursing program, highlighting student proficiency issues, challenges faced by teachers, and institutional concerns. The study also identified the needs of students and suggested teaching techniques to achieve instructional objectives using EMI. The awareness of student challenges in the nursing classroom prompted the teachers to integrate strategies in their approach, such as sharing short films, providing course summaries in the student's first language (L1), reteaching in L1, and allowing the use of translation software. This approach is intriguing as it encourages student-centered learning instead of the traditional teacher-centered approach.

While the existing body of literature has extensively examined multiple dimensions of EMI within HEIs, these investigations have primarily focused on exploring teacher perspectives, student academic performance, and the formulation of language policies within language education. However, a noticeable research gap exists in the Thai context, particularly concerning teachers' use of EMI in content-based courses. Thus, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived challenges teachers face when implementing EMI in teaching content subjects in the university?
2. What strategies and practices do teachers employ to address the challenges of EMI implementation, both inside and outside the classroom?

OBJECTIVE

The goal of the present investigation addresses the gap by examining the perspectives and practices encountered by teachers responsible for instructing subject-specific courses at a university in Thailand, particularly concerning the implementation of the EMI policy. The results of this inquiry will significantly contribute to a better comprehension of EMI as an instructional methodology, while concurrently fostering consciousness regarding the essential groundwork required for the successful integration of EMI within HEIs.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive, mixed-method explanatory sequential design (Subedi, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017) to comprehensively investigate the challenges faced by teachers and their coping strategies in implementing EMI in a Thai university-wide context. The research utilized survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as instruments to gather the required data. The survey aimed to measure the extent of the lecturers' responses to challenges, while the semi-structured interviews provided opportunities to delve deeper into the lived experiences of these teachers, enriching the quantitative data with their perspectives and explanations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A detailed breakdown of each research phase, including data collection methods, focus, and analysis techniques, is as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Outline of Data Collection and Analysis
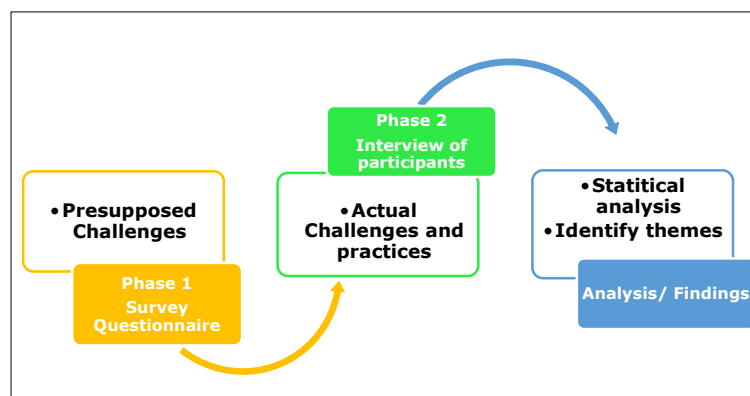
Correction: Presupposed challenges; Actual Challenges and Practices -Resolved

Context of the Study

The study was conducted at a comprehensive, semi-autonomous university in southern Thailand. The university offers undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in various disciplines, including agriculture, biotechnology, engineering, health, informatics, management, liberal arts, natural science, social sciences, and international business. The academic year is divided into three terms, each lasting 13 weeks. This university categorizes students based on the primary mode of instruction (MOI) used in their classes. The categories are as follows:

- The regular program utilizes Thai as the primary language of instruction.
- The English program employs a bilingual approach, incorporating both Thai and English.
- The international program uses English as the medium of instruction for all subjects.

Driven by the goal of internationalization and recognition as a world-class higher education institution, the university has institutionalized EMI and implemented it across all subject disciplines in the regular program as part of its language planning reform for the past three years. The policy requires teachers to deliver a specific percentage of English integration when teaching the content subjects. For instance, teachers are required to deliver 25 percent of their instruction in English for first- and second-year students, while the percentage increases to 50 percent and 75 percent for third- and fourth-year students. However, the majority of students (80%) possessed English proficiency levels ranging from A1 to A2 based on the placement test using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) scale, with only a small number reaching B1 to B2 levels.

Participants of the Study

Forty-six Thai lecturers (N=46) from various faculties at the university participated in this study. The participants were selected using a simplified random sampling process, considering their willingness and availability to participate and contribute to the research, as Dörnyei (2007) has recommended. Details on the participants' demographics are as presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of the Participants

School/Faculty	Male Lecturers	Female Lecturers
School of Agriculture		2
School of Allied Health Sciences	3	3
School of Informatics	1	
School of Languages and General Education	5	7
School of Liberal Arts		4
School of Management		3
School of Medicine		1
School of Nursing	1	2
School of Pharmacy	3	3
School of Public Health	1	1
School of Science	3	3
Total	17	29

The participants in this study ranged in age from 25 to 65 years old. In terms of educational background, 67 percent (n=31) held doctoral degrees (Ph.D.), while the remaining 33 percent (n=15) possessed a master's degree (MA). Four participants held the rank of Associate Professors, 24 were Assistant Professors, and 18 were without an academic rank. Moreover, the English proficiency level of the participants ranged from A2 to C1, according to CEFR. Interestingly, 60.9 percent (n=28) had the opportunity to study abroad, while 39.1 percent (n=18) completed their university degrees in Thailand.

Instruments and Data Collection

The data in this study were collected using a mixed-methods approach, utilizing a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Upon getting the approval from the University's Ethics Review Board (UERB), data collection was carried out during the last semester of the academic year (January-May 2022. The participants were fully informed about the ethical standards employed in this research.

Data collection was carried out in two sequential phases. In the first phase, data was collected through a simple random sampling survey using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions and literature review with the adaptation of some questions from previous studies (Do & Le, 2017; Pun & Thomas, 2020; Galloway & Sahan, 2021) to suit the particular context of this study. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, namely one on demographics and the other on challenges related to EMI implementation. The demographics of the participants were used to determine the background of each respondent, while the second part was about the challenges faced by the various stakeholders in the implementation of EMI. Three clusters of challenges were explored and they were as follows: Cluster 1 (Statements 1-6) focused on the competence of the lecturers to teach EMI classes, Cluster 2 (Statements 7-11) examined the perception of the lecturers about the capacity of students to learn the content subjects in English, and Cluster 3 (Statement 12-18) explored the lecturers' point of view on institutional issues related to EMI implementation at the university. The questionnaire used a psychometric Likert scale to measure the participants' level of agreement or disagreement related to EMI challenges in the areas of concerned. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and three (3) as neutral. Initially drafted in English, the questionnaire was translated into Thai and underwent back-translation for accuracy. Each statement on challenges in the questionnaire was coded, like Statement 1 = S1, Statement 2=S2, for data analysis. Content validation was ensured through consultation with two EFL experts from other universities, and revisions were done accordingly, as Siniscalco & Auriat (2005) have suggested. This was followed by piloting with ten lecturers to assess the internal consistency, which resulted in a reliable Cronbach's Alpha index coefficient of (α=0.876).

After completing the validation process, the final questionnaire was distributed via university email to all content subject lecturers. The responses collected were summarized and double-checked. The data was then coded and imported according to the format defined by the statistics data editor Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0 for analysis. A reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha was conducted to check the internal coherence of the data. The outcome was a coefficient of (α=.797), which could be considered an acceptable benchmark value with participants fewer than 100 (n<100) and items greater than 12, according to Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel (2007). Then, a series of statistical analyses were conducted to achieve comprehensive results.

Following the survey, phase 2 of data collection began. Fifteen respondents agreed to participate in the study's semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions were prepared to explore the lecturers' experiences with implementing EMI and these questions were elaborated with regard to the specific challenges identified in the survey, for example, "*Can you describe some of the biggest challenges you face in teaching your subject using EMI?*", "*Can you describe some specific strategies you use to make your EMI classes more engaging and understandable for students?*". The interview sessions were prearranged for the participants' convenience and conducted online using video recording platforms with the informed consent of the interviewees. The mode of questions and answers (Q&A) was bilingual (Thai/English), depending on the participant's preference and ability to comprehend and respond to the questions. The recordings were transcribed, with Thai transcripts translated into English. The final

transcripts were cautiously reviewed against the recordings for accuracy, and participants were contacted for clarification when there was a need to do so.

FINDINGS

Quantitative Findings

A descriptive analysis was conducted to explore the extent to which content teachers perceived various challenges associated with the implementation of EMI. An analysis of Table 3 reveals that Cluster 2 of statements 7-11 (S7-S11), which was focused on "*Lecturers' perception on students' capacity to study in EMI classes*," emerged as the area with the highest average degree of challenge with a mean of 4.12. Notably, within this cluster, statement 8 (S8) ("*The students in my subject have difficulty understanding the lesson when conducted in English*") stood out as the most concerning challenge to lecturers. This concern likely stems from the perceived low level of English proficiency of the students. The second most prominent challenge area relates to institutional issues (Cluster 3). As previously mentioned, statement 13 (S13) garnered the highest level of agreement among respondents. This suggests that participants strongly desire a clear plan in the implementation of EMI at the university. Therefore, the findings show that participants have not seen or received a comprehensive plan for executing EMI within the institution.

Table 3

Summary of the Areas of Challenges

Clusters of challenges	Items in the survey	N	Min	Max	Mean
Lecturers' perceptions of students' capacity to study in EMI classes	7-11	46	1.0	5.00	4.12
Lecturers' view on EMI-related issues	12-18	46	1.43	5.00	3.66
Lecturers' competence to teach in EMI classes	1-6	46	1.13	5.00	3.43

Cluster 1 (S1-S6), which explored lecturers' perceived competence to teach in EMI classes, revealed the lowest average challenge score (*M*=3.43). This finding implies that lecturers may feel more confident delivering lessons in English if they have been exposed to English-speaking environments; they will experience greater comfort in using the language compared to those whose education and training occurred solely within the country.

Further analysis was conducted to determine the overall mean for all challenges. Considering that a score of 3.0 as the neutral midpoint of the scale, it can be noticed from Table 4 that the results indicate that all items of challenge were perceived as greater than the average at *M*=3.71 (*SD*=0.99), except S15 ("*The university is providing an environment where teachers are exposed to use English as a language of conversation*"). This presupposes a generally high level of perceived challenge related to EMI implementation. To validate the assumption, a frequency item analysis was conducted, and the result revealed a mode (most frequent response) of 4.0, further supporting the conclusion that content teachers at this university perceived a significant level of challenge while implementing EMI. A closer

examination of the minimum and maximum value of responses for each statement provides additional insights. While most responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), there were exceptions for statements S6 ("*My experiences and training in the use of English contribute to the effectiveness of using English in my teaching*") and S13 ("*The university needs to have a clear language planning policy before implementing EMI as a classroom practice*"). Significantly, statement 13 (S13) displayed the highest degree of agreement among respondents *M*=4.63 (SD=0.49), with all responses falling between 4.0 (agree) and 5.0 (strongly agree). This indicates a strong consensus among lecturers regarding the need for a clear roadmap for EMI implementation. Conversely, statement 15 (S15) had the lowest degree of agreement (*M*=2.96), suggesting a perceived lack of a supportive environment for using English within the university.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire Data

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
S1	46	1.00	5.00	3.1087	1.12008
S2	46	1.00	5.00	3.2174	1.11381
S3	46	1.00	5.00	3.0652	1.20004
S4	46	1.00	5.00	3.6522	1.15888
S5	46	1.00	5.00	3.5435	.95932
S6	46	2.00	5.00	4.0217	.74503
S7	46	1.00	5.00	4.1304	.97999
S8	46	1.00	5.00	4.2391	.97033
S9	46	1.00	5.00	4.1957	.85945
S10	46	1.00	5.00	3.9348	.97530
S11	46	1.00	5.00	4.0870	.98491
S12	46	1.00	5.00	3.5000	.91287
S13	46	4.00	5.00	4.6304	.48802
S14	46	1.00	5.00	3.4348	1.16718
S15	46	1.00	5.00	2.9565	1.22849
S16	46	1.00	5.00	3.2174	1.19095
S17	46	1.00	5.00	3.5435	.95932
S18	46	1.00	5.00	4.3261	.84471
Valid N (listwise)	46				
Average	46	1.22	5.00	3.7114	0.9921

Note. S = Statement; Numbers 1-18 = number of challenge statement

Qualitative Findings

The interview data collected were analyzed using a thematic approach, combining deductive and inductive coding strategies from the framework in Braun and Clarke (2006). The deductive coding employed pre-existing themes derived from the research question, while inductive coding allowed for the emergence of new themes from the data. This iterative process involved initial coding, identification

of recurring themes, theme refinement, and finalization for the current study. Thematic analysis offers a data-driven approach that can potentially generate insights beyond the immediate research focus (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure anonymity, interviewees were tagged with pseudonyms (Teacher 1 [T1] to Teacher 15 [T15]). Although the survey and interview data supported EMI implementation at the university, participants also raised several concerns. These concerns echoed the previous findings from similar studies conducted in Vietnam and Thailand by Galloway and Sahan (2021), encompassing language proficiency issues, institutional concerns, teaching and learning strategies, accessibility to EMI programs, and cultural considerations. However, this study identified additional factors crucial for the successful implementation of EMI, particularly in developing a comprehensive strategic plan.

Figure 2 presents interview excerpts that both confirm and diverge from the findings in previous research. As noted in Tang (2020) and Galloway and Sahan (2021), the language proficiency of both students and teachers emerged as a primary concern. This deficiency can negatively affect engagement in class discussions. As observed by teachers, the students manifested a lack of interest or difficulty understanding the lesson once a concept was introduced in English. Teachers acknowledged the need to generate scaffolding strategies to support students' learning on certain subjects or specific fields of study. As English subjects in this university were only introduced to first-year and second-year students, some respondents emphasized the importance of continuous access to English learning beyond their second year of studies. Furthermore, the analysis revealed a gap in program evaluation; no respondents reported witnessing any diagnostic assessments conducted during the last three years of the EMI program to gauge students' progress. Several interviewees indicated they had not seen any formal evaluation results regarding the program's overall effectiveness.

Figure 2

Interview Responses on Teachers' Challenges in the EMI Classroom
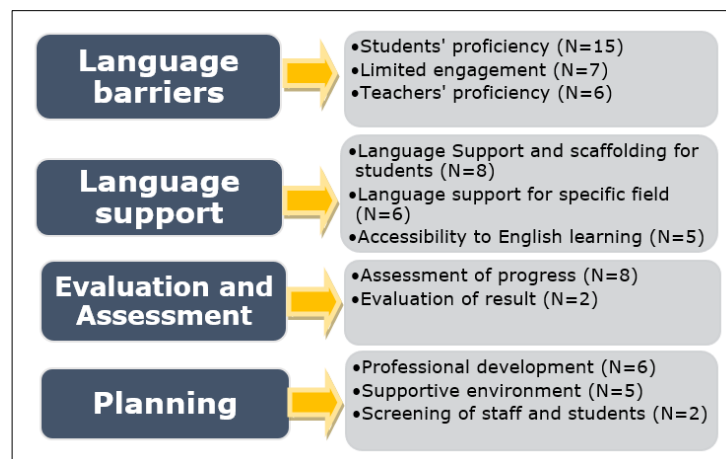
Moreover, lecturers highlighted the need for professional development opportunities to enhance language and content integration skills. This aligns with findings from He and Lin (2018), which identified similar needs in EMI contexts as part of the professional development plan. Furthermore, several respondents emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive university environment promoting English as a daily interaction language, not just a classroom medium. This cultural shift is crucial for overcoming participant anxieties about using English outside of formal settings, as some lecturers and students reported feeling hesitant to do so for fear of being negatively judged. Finally, some participants suggested implementing a screening process to assess the English language

proficiency of prospective students and faculty members (Wilkinson, 2013). This will address the concern of the first research inquiry regarding the perceived challenges lecturers face in EMI classroom implementation.

Teacher Practices and Strategies in EMI classrooms

Table 5 reveals various strategies the lecturers employed to ensure student comprehension of complex concepts in EMI classes. Two prominent strategies used involved translanguaging and code-switching, where lecturers supplemented English instruction with explanations in Thai. Some lecturers gradually increase the use of English in their classes through incremental language integration. Others maintain Thai instruction while incorporating English for specific activities such as writing assignments or presentations. Additionally, some lecturers allow their students to use translation apps if they struggle to understand the lesson. Beyond language-related strategies, the lecturers utilized various resources to enhance English instruction, such as online dictionaries, articles, case studies, videos, and online materials. They also provide supplementary materials such as readings, slides in English, or presentations to facilitate student learning. Several participants mentioned incorporating multimedia elements to foster engagement and accessibility. These elements included Google Translate, Kahoot!, Quizlet, Quizziz, and other online interactive games.

This can be seen in the response of one of the lecturer's interviews:

> *"I teach the student to know the technical terms. When they need more knowledge, they can learn by themselves from online sources. I ask them to use Google Translate or search online dictionaries to know the meaning of the words. Sometimes I employed interactive games using Quizlet." (T8)*

Some lecturers leverage collaboration with international students as teaching assistants or faculty members participating in team teaching. This collaboration approach exposes students to diverse accents, teaching styles, and cultural perspectives, as can be seen in the comment by T10 below:

> *(For) some topics, I asked for help (from) our foreign lecturer. Some presentations are taught by both myself and a foreign lecturer. At times, I also asked (for) international students' assistance in my class. (T10)*

The most frequent feedback underscored the critical role of professional development in equipping lecturers with effective EMI strategies. This resonates particularly with lecturers who have not had the opportunity to be exposed to an international education experience. Members of the teaching faculty emphasized the importance of training and professional development initiatives that provide them with practical strategies and exposure to English-speaking environments. Another key observation centered around fostering a supportive learning atmosphere where students can learn and feel at ease using English. For instance, lecturers allocate consultation time or provide individualized support to students facing English language challenges. This practice included offering additional explanations, clarifications, or supplementary resources to assist students overcome language barriers. These findings directly address the second question of this study, which explored the strategies and practices the teachers employ to address the challenges of EMI implementation, both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 5

Summary of the Strategies and Practices Used by Teachers

Practices	Mode	*N*
Multilingual approach	Translanguaging, Code switching, Translation	15
Use of English supplementary resources	PowerPoint slides, worksheets, reading articles, online sources, video clips	15
Integration of Technology	Google translate, online games/activities Kahoot!, Quizziz, Quizlet, Socrative method	15
Incremental language integration	Integration of English is increasing gradually	8
Professional Development	Attend training, workshops, self-improvement	6
Supportive learning Environment	Small group discussion, collaborative activities using English, pair interaction	5
Professional networking	Assistance from foreign lectures and students	3
Contextualization and adaptation	Simplifying and using real-world examples	3
Individual support	Teacher provides consultation	2
Assignments	Assigned task in English	2
Scaffolding	English outside the classroom	2

DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the challenges content subject lecturers face implementing EMI and the strategies they used to create a conducive learning environment. While the findings revealed generally positive perceptions of EMI among lecturers, these positive views were tempered by practical challenges. For instance, lecturers mentioned that Thai student proficiency and attitudes toward learning in English were the two prominent challenges in implementing EMI. This issue has also been found in previous studies conducted in the region, which emphasized the importance of considering the language proficiency levels of students before implementing EMI (Pun & Thomas, 2017; Yıldız et al., 2017; Do & Le, 2017; Pun & Jin, 2021; Yeh, 2014). Furthermore, the lecturers emphasized that students within each faculty or school exhibited widely varying English language proficiency levels, with many struggling to understand the lectures conducted in English.

The present study also revealed a perceived lack of university support for lecturers transitioning to EMI classrooms. As indicated in their responses, lecturers of the content subject had yet to see how the university prepared the lecturers for an EMI classroom setting. This was particularly evident and spoken out loud by lecturers who had not studied abroad or lacked prior exposure to English-speaking environments.

Furthermore, interview responses underscored the need for training programs to equip lecturers with effective EMI strategies. Additionally, lecturers emphasized the importance of a clear and systematic language policy for EMI implementation. Though the participants were aware of the EMI policy, they expressed concerns about the lack of specific guidelines for implementation and monitoring. This

finding aligns with that of Walkinshaw et al. (2017, p. 7), who identified *'policy-level short-sightedness'* as a critical issue in institutional-level policy implementation. The lecturers strongly advocated for a comprehensive language planning framework that had defined a clear roadmap for EMI implementation and evaluation. This alludes to a bottom-up research-driven study, suggesting the need for administrators to pay attention to empirical data to guide the necessary preparations and efficient monitoring of an authentic EMI implementation. A consistent way of assessment and evaluation is crucial to EMI success. The current guideline, which mandated partial EMI implementation (25% in English for the first year and second year, and 50 percent -75 percent in English for the third year and fourth year content courses), lacked a practical monitoring mechanism. There was no empirical evidence demonstrating adherence to this guideline, nor were there concrete, measurable indicators to evaluate success in either English language development or subject matter knowledge acquisition, echoing similar concerns raised by Macaro et al. (2018).

Finally, the findings of the present study has revealed the diversity in the approaches used by lecturers to address the challenges encountered in their classes and their efforts to meet the specific needs of the students they taught. As Wilkinson (2013) has emphasized, effective EMI instruction would require both language competence and a strong community of practice for social support. Importantly, the study found that the lecturers felt relatively confident in their ability to teach in English. Many expressed readiness to conduct classes in EMI. However, some lecturers expressed reluctance to implement the policy due to their limited English proficiency. In particular, lecturers who had studied abroad or had been exposed to an English-speaking environment were seen as having an advantage in terms of their confidence in delivering EMI instruction.

CONCLUSION

This research, which was carried out at a university in Thailand, investigated the difficulties lecturers encountered while using English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in their teaching practices. The findings in this study were largely consistent with challenges faced by lecturers in higher education institutions globally, with student English proficiency identified as the key obstacle. However, the study also yielded unique insights specific to the Thai EMI context. The lecturers emphasized the gradual approach to EMI integration in class, the importance of professional development focused on language proficiency enhancement, and the need for a supportive language learning environment.

The findings highlight the pressing need to improve student proficiency, which was identified as the primary obstacle to implementing EMI successfully. The lecturers employed various practical methodologies to address this issue and compensate for their students' language inadequacies. Notably, a significant difference in perceptions emerged between lecturers with international education experiences and those who studied within the country. This phenomenon warrants further exploration.

These findings of the present study do not in any way generalize to other contexts of EMI implementation, but have suggested the need to consider lecturers' particular educational training and background during the planning phase to ensure the effective execution of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). It is recommended that further research be conducted to identify the specific needs of lecturers in terms of their educational background and training to ensure the success of EMI implementation. Additionally, future studies should investigate the most comprehensive and effective training approach to be used in EMI instructor professional development programs.

DECLARATION

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

Ament, J. R., & Pérez-Vidal, C. (2015). Linguistic outcomes of english medium instruction programs in higher education: A study on economics undergraduates at a Catalan University. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, *5*(1), 47-68. https://doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v5i1.239

Baker, W., & Tsou, W. (2021). EMI and translanguaging in Asia through the ROAD-MAPPING lens. In W. Tsou & W. Baker (Eds.), *English-medium instruction translanguaging practices in Asia* (pp. 183-195). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-3001-9_10

Barrot, J. S. (2019). English curriculum reform in the Philippines: Issues and challenges from a 21st century learning perspective. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, *18*(3), 145-160.

Bennui, P. & Hashim, A (2014) English in Thailand: Development of english in a non-postcolonial context. *Asian Englishes*, *16*(3), 209-228. https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2014.939 810

Boonsuk, Y., & Fang, F. (2023). Re-envisaging english medium instruction, intercultural citizenship development, and higher education in the context of studying abroad. *Language and education*, *37*(3), 271-287.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Chapple, L. & Curtis, A. (2000) Content-based instruction in Hong Kong: student responses to film. *System*, *28*(3), 419-433. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(00)00021-X

Coscun, G. & Hasirci, B. (2017): The Impact of english medium instruction (EMI) on students' language abilities, *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, *9*(2). https://ijci.net/index.php/IJCI/article/view/73/45

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage publications. pdf

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge University press. pdf

Curle, S., Jablonkai, R. R., Mittelmeier, J., Sahan, K., Veitch, A., & Galloway, N. (2020). English in higher education–english medium. part 1: Literature review. *English in Higher Education– English medium*. https://purehost.bath.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/211894382/English_in_HE_litt_review.pdf

Dearden, J. (2015). English as a medium of instruction–A growing global phenomenon. *British Council*. Online: https://bit.ly/3BM2cqP.pdf

Do, H. M., & Le, L. T. D. (2017). Content lecturers' challenges in EMI classroom. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, *2*(1), 1-21.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Fauzanna, W. (2017). The implementation of english in higher education in the context of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in an International accounting department. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (ASSEHR), Atlantis Press, Volume 148.Pdf

Galloway, N., Kriukow, J., & Numajiri, T. (2017*). Internationalisation, higher education and the growing demand for English: An Investigation into the English Medium of Instruction (EMI) movement in China and Japan.* The British Council.

Galloway, N. & Sahan, K. (2021). *An investigation into English Medium Instruction in higher education in Thailand and Vietnam.* British Council, *188*. 4143_Navig8_EME_HE_Thailand_Vietnam.pdf

Graddol, D. (1997). *The Future of English? A guide to forecasting the popularity of the English language in the 21st Century*. British Council.

Graddol, D. (2006). *English Next*, *62*. London: British council.

He, P. & Lin, A. M.Y. (2018). Becoming a "language-aware" content teacher: Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) teacher professional development as a collaborative, dynamic, and dialogic process. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, *6*(2), 162 – 188. https://doi.org/10.1075/jicb.17009.he

Hino, N. (2017). The significance of EMI for the learning of EIL in higher education: Four cases from Japan. In Fenton-Smith, B., Humphreys, P., Walkinshaw, I. (Eds), *English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific. Multilingual Education*, *21*, 115-131. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51976-0_7

Kaur, A., Young, D., Kirkpatrick, R. (2016). English education policy in Thailand: Why the poor results?. Kirkpatrick, R. (Eds) *English Language Education Policy in Asia, 11*, 345-361. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22464-0_16.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2017). The languages of higher education in east and southeast Asia: Will EMI lead to Englishisation?. Fenton-Smith, B., Humphreys, P., Walkinshaw, I. (Eds*) English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific*, *21*, 21-36. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51976-0_2

Kirkpatrick, A. (2020). English as an ASEAN lingua franca. *The handbook of Asian Englishes*, 725–740. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118791882.ch32

Koul, R., & Kaewkuekool, S. (2010). English as a medium of instruction in Thai universities: A review of literature. In selected topics in education and education technology: Proceedings from the 9th WSEAS International Conference on Education and Educational Technology (pp. 89-94).

Lasagabaster, D. (2022). *English-Medium instruction in higher education* (Elements in Language Teaching). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108903493.

Lavankura, P. (2013). Internationalizing higher education in Thailand: Government and university responses. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *17*(5), 663–676. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315313478193

Leitner, G., Hashim, A., Wolf, H-G. (2016). *Communicating with Asia*: *The Future of English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.

Macaro, E. (2018). *English medium instruction*. Oxford University Press.pdf.

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of english medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching*, *51(1*), 36-76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350

Manh, L. D. (2012). English as a medium of instruction in Asian universities: The case of Vietnam. *Language Education in Asia*, *3*(2), 263–267.

Melitz, J. (2016). English as a Global Language. In Ginsburgh, V. & Weber, S. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language*, 583-615. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-32505-1_21

Moller, F., & Crick, T. (2018). A university-based model for supporting computer science curriculum reform. *Journal of Computers in Education*, 5(4), 415-434. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-018-0117-x.pdf

Murata, K., Iino, M. (2017) EMI in higher education: An ELF perspective. In *The Routledge Handbook of English as a Lingua Franca* (pp. 400-412). Routledge. eBook ISBN9781315717173

Northrup, D. (2013). *How English became the global language*. Springer.pdf

Pomat, N., Jannok, A., Buripakdi, A., & Wilang, J. D. (2022). Partial EMI nursing program: Insights from students and teachers in Thailand. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12(7), 1386-1396.pdf

Ponterotto, J. G., & Ruckdeschel, D. E. (2007). An overview of coefficient alpha and a reliability matrix for estimating adequacy of internal consistency coefficients with psychological research measures. *Perceptual and motor skills*, 105(3), 997-1014. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.105.3.997-1014

Priya, A. (2021). Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application. *Sociological Bulletin*, 70(1), 94–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022920970318

Pun, J., & Jin, X. (2021). Student challenges and learning strategies at Hong Kong EMI universities. *Plos one*, 16(5), e0251564. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251564

Pun, J. K. H., & Thomas, N. (2020). English Medium Instruction: Teachers' challenges and coping strategies. *ELT Journal*, 74(3), 247–257. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa024

Ra, J.J., Baker, W. (2021). Translanguaging and language policy in Thai higher education EMI programs. In Tsou, W. & Baker, W. (Eds) *English-Medium Instruction Translanguaging Practices in Asia* (pp59-77). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-3001-9_4

Rao, C. (2016). *A Brief Study of English language proficiency: Employability*. English for specific purposes world, 49(17), 1-8.

Shimauchi, S. (2018). English-medium instruction in the internationalization of higher education in Japan: Rationales and issues. *Educational Studies in Japan*, 12(77-90). https://doi.org/10.7571/esjkyoiku.12.77

Siniscalco, M. T., & Auriat, N. (2005). *Questionnaire design*. Quantitative Research Methods in Educational Planning, 8. UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. http://www.sacmeq.org and http://www.unesco.org/iiep.

Subedi, D. (2016). Explanatory sequential mixed method design as the third research community of knowledge claim. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 4(7), 570-577. http://pubs.sciepub.com/education/4/7/10

Tang, K. N. (2020). Challenges and importance of teaching english as a medium of instruction in Thailand international college. *Journal of English as an International Language*, 15(2), 97-118.

Tang, K. N. (2021). Implementing english-medium instruction (EMI) in Thailand: University students' perspectives. *KKU Research Journal (Graduate Studies) Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 95–108. Retrieved from https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/gskkuhs/article/view/200751

Trakulkasemsuk, W. (2018). English in Thailand: Looking back to the past, at the present and towards the future. *Asian Englishes*, 20(2), 96–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2017.1421602

Tsou, W., Kao, SM. (2017). Overview of EMI development. In Tsou, W. & Kao, SM. (Eds) *English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education*. English Language Education, 8(pp. 3-18). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4645-2_1

Ulla, M.B., Bucol, J., Na Ayuthaya, P.D. (2022). English language curriculum reform strategies: The impact of EMI on students' language proficiency. *Ampersand*, Volume *9*(3), 100101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2022.100101.

Walkinshaw, I., Fenton-Smith, B., Humphreys, P. (2017). EMI issues and challenges in Asia-Pacific higher education: An introduction. In Fenton-Smith, B., Humphreys, P. & Walkinshaw, I. (Eds) *English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific*. Multilingual Education, (vol 21, pp. 1-18). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51976-0_1

Wilkinson, R. (2012). 1. English-Medium Instruction at a Dutch University: Challenges and Pitfalls. In A. Doiz, D. Lasagabaster & J. Sierra (Eds.), *English-Medium Instruction at Universities: Global Challenges*, 3-24. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698162-005

Williams, D. G. (2015). A systematic review of english medium instruction (EMI) and implications for the South Korean higher education context. *English language teaching world online*, *2014*, 1-23.

Xu, L. & Chuaychoowong, M. (2017) A case study of teachers' beliefs and practices with english-medium instruction (EMI) at Mae Fah Luang University. *Proceedings of the International Conference*: *DRAL 3/19th ESEA 2017*, (accessed November 12, 2021). chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://sola.kmutt.ac.th/dral2017/proceedings/5-6Additional/264-279_A%20case%20study%20of%20teachers_%20beliefs%20and%20practices%20with%20English-medium%20Instruction_Lingrui%20Xu%20and%20Maneerat%20Chuaychoowong.pdf

Yıldız, M., Soruç, A., & Griffiths, C. (2017). Challenges and needs of students in the EMI (English as a medium of instruction) classroom. *Konin Language Studies*, *5*(4), 387-402. https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/publications/challenges-and-needs-of-students-in-the-emi-english-as-a-medium-o

Yeh, C.-C. (2014). Taiwanese students' experiences and attitudes towards english-medium courses in tertiary Education. *RELC Journal*, *45*(3), 305–319. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688214555358