



ISSN: 2617-6548

URL: www.ijirss.com



EMI teaching methodology: Perceptions and practice from students' perspectives

 Le Thi Tuyet Hanh^{1*}, Thai Phan Tu Van², Phan Thi Ha Duyen³

^{1,2,3}Vinh university, Vietnam.

Corresponding author: Le Thi Tuyet Hanh (Email: hanhltr@vinhuni.edu.vn)

Abstract

The increasing adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in tertiary education, largely driven by globalization, has attracted substantial scholarly attention in recent years. This study investigates students' perceptions of lecturers' teaching efficacy in EMI contexts, as well as the challenges students encounter throughout their learning process. A mixed-methods design was employed, integrating survey data from 280 participants with in-depth interviews involving 20 selected individuals, alongside three classroom observations conducted at different universities in Vietnam. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents hold positive perceptions of lecturers' teaching effectiveness, particularly with respect to pedagogical practices, language use, and instructional flexibility. Nevertheless, a range of challenges persists, as students experience both subjective and objective barriers during their learning process. In response, the study proposes several pedagogical and institutional measures to address these challenges, enhance the effectiveness of EMI implementation, and support Vietnam's broader efforts toward international integration and engagement.

Keywords: EMI, Perceptions, Practices, Teaching efficacy, Teaching methodology.

DOI: 10.53894/ijirss.v9i5.11621

Funding: This work is funded by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (Grant Number B2024-TDV-04).

History: Received: 23 February 2026 / Revised: 17 April 2026 / Accepted: 21 April 2026 / Published: 7 May 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Transparency: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Acknowledgments: This paper was written and analysed as part of the project supported by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Vietnam.

Publisher: Innovative Research Publishing

1. Introduction

English as Medium Instruction (EMI) has been attracted a greater deal of attention from educators and researchers around the world in recent time. It is defined as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" [1]. According to Han [2]; Othman [3] and Wang, et al. [4] the current teaching and learning situation in EMI classes is characterized by various challenges and developments, particularly in higher education contexts. The literature reveals a predominance of transmission-oriented pedagogy in EMI classrooms, where lecturers often rely on monologic teaching

methods [5]. This approach limits student engagement and interaction, as many students hesitate to participate actively in discussions due to language barriers and cultural factors. The current situation in EMI classes reflects a complex interplay of challenges related to language proficiency, pedagogical practices, and the need for targeted teacher training. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the quality of education in EMI settings.

Research on students' perceptions of EMI teachers has revealed significant insights into how these perceptions impact the quality of EMI education. Phuong and Nguyen [6] indicate that students recognize several benefits of EMI, including improved language skills and enhanced employability. However, they also report drawbacks such as difficulties in understanding complex content and the pressure of learning in a second language. The quality of EMI is closely linked to how students perceive their teachers. Positive perceptions can enhance motivation and engagement, leading to better learning outcomes, while negative perceptions can hinder students' academic performance [6]. Furthermore, to improve the quality of EMI, it is essential to provide targeted training for teachers that focuses on both language proficiency and pedagogical skills. This training should address the specific challenges faced by EMI teachers, particularly in non-native contexts Wang, et al. [4]. Xu and Xiao [7] state that understanding students' perceptions can help institutions tailor support services, such as language assistance and study skills workshops, to better meet the needs of diverse learners in EMI settings. The research on students' perceptions of EMI teachers highlights the importance of both teacher competencies and student support in enhancing the quality of EMI education.

In Vietnam, EMI is widely implemented in tertiary education as a strategic approach to internationalize institutions and improve graduates' employability in the globalized labor market [8-10]. However, there is little research on EMI teachers' teaching efficacy in Vietnam, as well as students' reflections on their EMI teachers' proficiency. This research aims to investigate students' perceptions of the teaching proficiency of lecturers in EMI classes in higher education, as well as the difficulties encountered by students when lecturers use EMI. To this end, the study seeks to answer the following three research questions:

1. *What are students' perceptions of the lecturers' teaching efficacy in the EMI classes?*
2. *What are the difficulties that students encounter when lecturers use EMI in classes?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teaching Efficacy

Due to the complexity of the EMI phenomenon and the diverse contexts in which it is being implemented and developed, defining the concept of teaching efficacy can be difficult. Consequently, this study adopts the following definition of teaching efficacy by Lo and Othman [11] which refers to a teacher's ability to positively impact student learning and achieve desired educational outcomes. It encompasses the confidence a teacher has in their skills, strategies, and methods to engage students, facilitate learning, and adapt to various classroom. They also stated high teaching efficacy is often linked to greater effort, persistence, and a willingness to try new approaches, ultimately benefiting student performance and classroom dynamics. Existing research consistently highlights that the ability to teach disciplinary content effectively in English—encompassing both pedagogical strategies and language proficiency—plays a critical role in determining the success of EMI programs [12, 13]. However, significant challenges emerge when lecturers are required to convey complex subject matter in English, particularly in classrooms with students of varying proficiency levels. In such contexts, some lecturers adopt the use of the first language as a compensatory strategy [14] although concerns have been raised regarding its long-term pedagogical effectiveness [15]. Empirical classroom-based research in China further indicates a discrepancy between lecturers' reported and actual use of English during instruction [16]. Despite these improvements, instructional practices in many EMI classrooms remain predominantly teacher-centered, thereby constraining student engagement [5]. Within the Vietnamese context, even lecturers with formal training in English have reported a lack of confidence when teaching in EMI environments [10, 17]. Collectively, these findings point to the importance of lecturers' EMI competence as a key underlying factor influencing instructional effectiveness.

According to Guskey [18] and Magill, et al. [19] teaching efficacy is a critical factor that can significantly impact various educational outcomes, including student achievement and motivation. Magill, et al. [19] stated teaching efficacy reflects teachers' beliefs in their ability, which describes a teacher's conviction that they can make a difference in their students' learning experiences and outcomes. Besides, this term emphasizes the influence on student performance, as high levels of teaching efficacy are associated with better student performance, as teachers who believe in their capabilities are more likely to implement effective teaching strategies [18].

2.2. EMI Teaching Efficacy

Recent studies have increasingly focused on EMI teachers' teaching efficacy, examining its critical role in enhancing student engagement and academic outcomes in various educational contexts. Guskey [18] and Magill, et al. [19] indicated students' perceptions of their lecturers' teaching efficacy significantly influenced their learning experiences and academic success. Al Zumor [20] highlighted that using English Medium Instruction (EMI) in scientific disciplines without proper preparation can negatively impact the teaching process and learning outcome.

Many studies indicate that lecturers are generally viewed as competent to teach EMI classes. Ahn, et al. [21] found most South Korean university students rated their professors' proficiency highly, with only 2% to 10% describing their communication skills as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor.' Additionally, Lo and Othman [11] indicated lecturers had a satisfactory understanding of EMI teaching processes. Overall, the research suggested most students believed in their faculty's professional knowledge and teaching proficiency, feeling well-supported in their learning environments. However, there has been other research which reported that several issues have been identified regarding EMI lecturers' teaching

proficiency. Bolton, et al. [22] noted teachers in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa lacked the necessary pedagogical skills to effectively teach in English, adversely affecting students' learning experiences.

The self-efficacy of EMI teachers plays a crucial role in their teaching efficacy [6, 14, 23, 24]. These studies indicated that many teachers struggle with confidence in their English language skills, which can negatively affect their teaching performance and student engagement. Enhancing teachers' self-efficacy through targeted training and support is essential for improving their instructional effectiveness in EMI settings. Moreover, as Wang, et al. [4] mentioned in their study, effective EMI teaching requires a blend of content knowledge and language proficiency. Teachers are encouraged to integrate language and content in their instruction, which can lead to better learning outcomes for students. Continuous professional development and innovative teaching strategies are necessary to overcome these challenges and improve teaching efficacy.

2.3. Challenges Faced by Students

As Latif [25] mentioned in his study, while English Medium Instruction (EMI) can provide benefits like international exposure and enhanced English proficiency, students often face significant challenges. He identified the barriers in Egyptian public and private universities, where Arabic is the main language of instruction. These challenges include students' language competence, teachers' communication skills, and occasionally, teachers' negative attitudes toward using English in their courses.

In terms of difficulties in comprehending lectures caused by language-related issues, EMI students in Vietnam had trouble comprehending their instructors' English language because of limited English language competency Hanh and Bac [10]. Phuong and Nguyen [6] also found that about half of the surveyed students struggled to understand lectures due to challenges with new vocabulary, terminology, and scientific concepts. This lack of understanding, primarily attributed to limited English proficiency, can lead to confusion regarding subject preferences. Insufficient vocabulary and poor listening skills hinder students' ability to follow lecturers' explanations and take effective notes, resulting in gaps in their content knowledge. In addition, Ahn, et al. [21] found that undergraduate students at South Korean universities encountered significant difficulties with university-level reading and writing materials, particularly with academic articles and full-length books. Also Hanh and Bac [10] mentioned that Vietnamese EMI students "have difficulty while reading textbooks or course materials written in English". Similarly, Phuong and Nguyen [6] noted that students struggled with English textbooks, with vocabulary being a major challenge. Consequently, students often relied on dictionaries to translate words into their native language for better comprehension. Ahn, et al. [21] also highlighted that academic essays and reports were among the toughest writing tasks, while students identified "speaking to professors" and "giving presentations" as their greatest speaking challenges.

When studying group discussions and communication skills among students, Hanh and Bac [10] stated that Vietnamese students struggled to connect with instructors and classmates during discussions, primarily due to anxiety and varying levels of English competence. This made it difficult to organize class activities and for those with limited English proficiency to express their views effectively. Phuong and Nguyen [6] also found that many students, despite engaging in classroom discussions, felt that their limited vocabulary hindered their ability to express knowledge, ask questions, and interact effectively with lecturers and peers. Students often hesitate to ask questions, even when they understand the material, due to a fear of making mistakes. These language-related issues obstructed the teaching and learning process, resulting in reduced interaction between lecturers and students with limited English proficiency.

Regarding challenges related to the learning context and internal issues, Al Zumor [20] showed that EMI also incurred psychological effects on many students, such as anxiety, frustration, tension, fear, and embarrassment, ultimately resulting in poor educational outcomes. To some extent, these challenges contributed to a loss of interest in EMI classes. Some students expressed a preference for learning mathematics and science in their first language [26]. Additionally, students may face difficulties caused by teacher-related factors. Students often associated the quality of EMI lectures with lecturers' language proficiency, particularly accents and pronunciation [7, 27]. Many students also observed that lecturers prioritized content delivery over engaging with students in English, contributing to dissatisfaction with their learning experiences in EMI settings. Besides, according to Hanh and Bac [10] most EMI students in Vietnam experienced psychological issues, including anxiety, embarrassment, and insecurity. In contrast, students in higher education institutions in some Asian countries reported minimal issues with English Medium Instruction (EMI). Bolton, et al. [22] found that most students from Singapore's major tertiary institutions experienced few difficulties in communicating with faculty and using English for academic purposes. Similarly, a survey in Indonesian universities indicated that despite diverse language backgrounds, students generally exhibited high proficiency in English and reported minimal challenges in EMI programs [28].

In short, research on English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs has explored student perceptions of teachers' teaching efficacy in EMI classes; however, a key gap remains in understanding how Vietnamese students experience teachers' teaching efficacy from EMI students' perspectives and the challenges their learners face during their learning process. This study was conducted to bridge this gap with a viewing contributing to enhancing teaching practices and ultimately improving the learning experience for students in EMI programs.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The quantitative component involved a survey administered to 280 participants, while the qualitative aspect included in-depth interviews with 10 selected individuals. This approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of

students' perceptions of lecturers' teaching proficiency and the challenges faced in EMI classes at Vinh University. By combining numerical data from surveys with detailed personal insights from interviews, the research captures the complexity of these perceptions and experiences, ensuring a more nuanced and holistic analysis.

3.2. Participants

Two hundred and eighty students taking the EMI program courses at Vinh university completed the survey. The survey participants were 280 students from 10 universities in Vietnam. Amongst the 280 students, 135 were women (44%) and 145 were men (56%) from different years, namely Sophomore, and Junior, majoring in Information technology, Business administration, and Mathematics Teacher Education (High-quality program). From survey questionnaire responses, 5 low-level students (low, below average, and average) and 5 high-level students (fairly good, good, very good, and excellent) were intentionally selected for the interview. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent prior to their participation.

3.3. Research Instruments

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from three previous studies Phuong and Nguyen [6]; Pun and Thomas [14] and Chuang [24] and designed to capture students' perceptions of the lecturers' teaching proficiency, and the difficulties students encounter when teachers use EMI in classes. The survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Before distribution, the questionnaire was piloted with 30 students. Additionally, the researchers made revisions to the tool to further enhance its validity before administering it to the target participants. The survey instrument after the revision included 20 statements, which focus on students' opinion on teachers' teaching proficiency and attitudes in the first part, and language-related challenges encountered during the program participation in the second part.

3.3.2. Interview

The second instrument employed in this study was a semi-structured interview with 20 students deliberately selected from the 280 survey respondents. The interviews aimed to gain a deeper understanding of students' perceptions of teachers' efficacy and experiences regarding the challenges they face when lecturers use EMI in classes. The interviews included two open-ended questions focusing on students' difficulties in comprehending lectures, including challenges related to vocabulary, grammar, listening skills, and lecturers' teaching methods (e.g., use of complex vocabulary, pronunciation, speed, explanation of technical terms) and their difficulties in participating in lecture discussions, including understanding the content, expressing their opinions, and interacting with lecturers and peers. The interview data was used to complement and provide further insights into the findings obtained from the survey questionnaire.

3.3.3. Observation

The study employed observation as a supplementary research instrument to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of EMI classrooms. The observation sessions were designed to capture instances of lecturer-student interaction, lecturer's teaching practices, and student engagement during EMI lessons. The researchers deliberately selected 3 classes of 3 different majors to witness firsthand the challenges students encounter in EMI classrooms and to examine the strategies lecturers employ to facilitate comprehension and engagement. Especially, researchers focused on some specific areas including lecturer's use of code-switching, the clarity of explanations, the level of student participation, and instances of communication difficulties.

4. Findings

4.1. Lecturers' Teaching Efficacy Perceived by EMI Students

There were 12 items in the questionnaire related to students' perceptions of lecturers' teaching proficiency in EMI classes. This cluster in the questionnaire aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of (1) teaching methods, (2) language use, and (3) instructional flexibility performed by the EMI teachers. The results are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1.
Students' perceptions of the lecturers' teaching methods in the EMI classes.

Items	M	SD	Percent (%)				
			SD	D	N	A	SA
Lecturers always provide constructive feedback.	3.85	0.96	0	15	8.75	52.5	23.75
Lecturers provide multiple teaching methods during EMI classes.	3.81	1.14	5	12.5	7.5	46.25	28.75
Lecturers use clear and structured teaching methods.	3.74	1.04	3.75	10	17.5	46.25	22.5
Lecturers provide more definitions and exemplification of technical words in English.	3.7	0.95	0	16.25	15	51.25	17.5
Lecturers provide additional English explanations and input.	3.65	1.1	1.25	20	16.25	37.5	25
Total mean	3.75	1.04	2	14.75	13	46.75	23.5

As indicated in Table 1 the statement “Lecturers always provide constructive feedback” received the highest agreement percentage at 76.25%, along with a low disagreement percentage of 15%. Regarding teaching methods, approximately 70% of students expressed positive attitudes toward EMI lessons, and 71.25% agreed that lecturers use straightforward language to enhance understanding, despite the varied ratings from participants (with a standard deviation of 1.26). Additionally, a significant 68.75% of respondents supported the statement that “Lecturers provide more definitions and exemplifications of technical words in English.” The following statement regarding whether instructors offer additional English explanations and input also received favorable ratings, with a mean value of 3.65, although nearly one-fourth of respondents disagreed with this assertion.

Table 2.
Students’ perceptions of the lecturers’ language use in the EMI classes.

Items	M	SD	Percent (%)				
			SD	D	N	A	SA
Lecturers use code-switching for greater comprehension.	3.79	1.05	1.25	13.75	18.75	37.5	28.75
Lecturers use simple English terms for easier comprehension.	3.71	1.26	11.25	6.25	11.25	42.5	28.75
Lecturers’ speech level is acceptable.	3.56	1.19	5	20	11.25	41.25	22.5
Arithmetic mean	3.69	1.17	5.83	13.31	13.75	40.41	26.67

Table 2 shows that a considerable proportion of participants believe lecturers should address English-language-related challenges through EMI and utilize code-switching techniques to aid comprehension, with mean values of 3.8 and 3.79, respectively. Despite this, the standard deviations of 1.21 and 1.05 reflect a diversity in participants' ratings. Additionally, a significant number of participants affirmed the adequacy of lecturers' speech levels and the effectiveness of instructors' explanations for the course material, with 63.75% and 60% agreeing, respectively. However, standard deviations of 1.19 and 1.1 indicate substantial variation in perceptions among participants.

Table 3.
Students’ perceptions of the lecturers’ instructional flexibility in the EMI classes

Items	M	SD	Percent (%)				
			SD	D	N	A	SA
Lecturers discuss English-language-related challenges through EMI with students.	3.8	1.21	2.5	21.25	5	36.25	35
Lecturers discuss the subject issues with students at length and with relative ease and accuracy through EMI.	3.66	1.12	3.75	17.5	10	46.25	22.5
Lecturers provide flexible course adjustments.	3.60	1.09	2.5	16.25	22.5	36.25	22.5
Lecturers explain the course material well to students with diverse needs and experiences through EMI.	3.56	1.1	3.75	16.25	20	40	20
Average mean	3.66	1.13	3.13	17.81	14.38	39.68	25

As indicated in Table 3 three-quarters of the respondents indicated that lecturers employ a variety of instructional approaches. Regarding course adjustments, students recognized the flexibility offered by lecturers, reflected in a mean value of 3.60. However, 22.5% of students expressed uncertainty about this item, highlighting a lack of clarity regarding lecturers' methods. In short, participating students generally perceive lecturers' teaching proficiency—specifically in teaching methods, language use, and instructional flexibility in EMI classes—positively, with mean values for each statement ranging from 3.56 to 3.85. However, a standard deviation mostly above 1 indicates varied opinions among students.

A deeper understanding was achieved through the analysis of qualitative data from the observations, which is presented in the following figure.

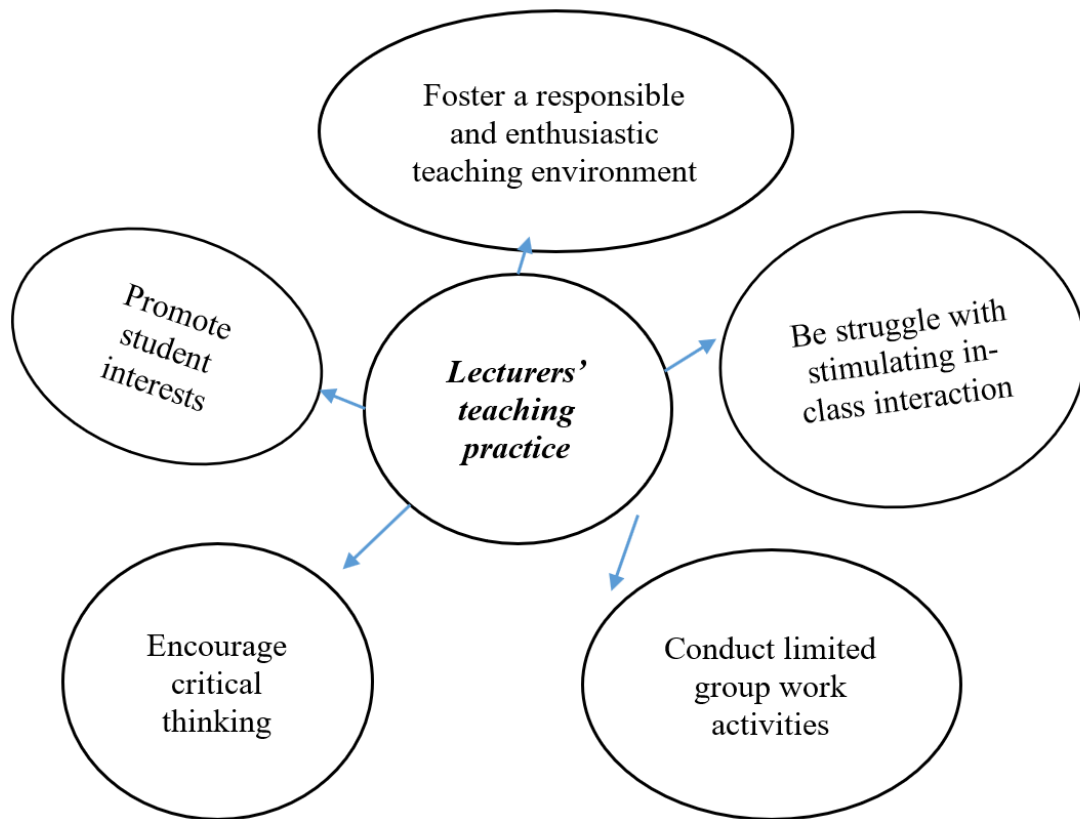


Figure 1.
EMI lecturers' classroom practice from observations

As indicated in Figure 1 the observations of lecturers in EMI classes illustrate their dedication and enthusiasm for teaching, as well as their commitment to enhancing student learning. Through diverse activities and methods, they promote students' interests, encourage critical thinking. For instance, during discussions, they posed open-ended questions that required students to justify their opinions and consider alternative viewpoints. However, the limitation of group work activities and in-class interactions were witnessed.

4.2. Challenges Perceived by EMI Students When Lecturers use EMI in Classes

The questionnaire included five items assessing the challenges students face when lecturers implement EMI in the classroom. These challenges were categorized into five areas: (1) language barriers, (2) lecturers' instructions and explanations in English, (3) students' understanding of lesson content, (4) comprehension of vocabulary, and (5) note-taking ability. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Students' perception of their difficulties when lecturers use EMI in classes.

Items	M	SD	Percent (%)				
			SD	D	N	A	SA
Language barriers discourage discussions and interactions between lecturers and students.	2.63	1.41	26.25	32.5	6.25	22.5	12.5
I have difficulty in understanding lecturers' instructions and explanations in English.	2.58	1.37	26.25	32.5	10	20	11.25
I have difficulty participating in the lecture discussion because I cannot understand the content of the lesson sufficiently to ask and answer questions.	2.55	1.27	23.75	33.75	13.75	21.25	7.5
I have difficulty in understanding new vocabulary, terminology, and new concepts provided in the lectures.	2.34	1.21	27.5	42.5	1.25	26.25	2.5
I have difficulty taking notes during English lectures because of the lecturer's pronunciation and speed.	2.25	1.12	25	48.75	6.25	16.25	3.75

As illustrated in Table 4 it seems that the majority of EMI students did not have difficulties in their classes. More specifically, one-third of the participants agreed with the statement, "Language barriers discourage discussions and

interactions between lecturers and students.” Similarly, 31.25% concurred that they have difficulty understanding lecturers’ instructions and explanations in English. Regarding challenges in participating in class discussions due to a lack of content comprehension, 28.75% of participants agreed with this statement, with a standard deviation of 1.27. Additionally, the statement “I have difficulty understanding new vocabulary, terminology, and concepts presented in the lectures” received agreement from approximately 29% of participants, with a mean value of 2.34. As regards taking notes during English lectures, one-fifth of the respondents expressed a negative attitude toward EMI classes, stating that they found it difficult to take notes during lessons, despite the varied responses from others (standard deviation of 1.12). In summary, Table 4 shows that many participants do not encounter difficulties in EMI classes, reflected in mean values ranging from 2.2 to 2.6 for all statements, while the standard deviation above 1 indicates a variety of responses.

In contrast, the data from the interviews indicated that students encountered several problems when lecturers used EMI in class, particularly when comprehending lectures and engaging in lecture discussions in EMI classes. Figure 2 illustrates the challenges low-level and high-level students perceived when lecturers used EMI in classes and Figure 2 summarizes the sources of these difficulties.

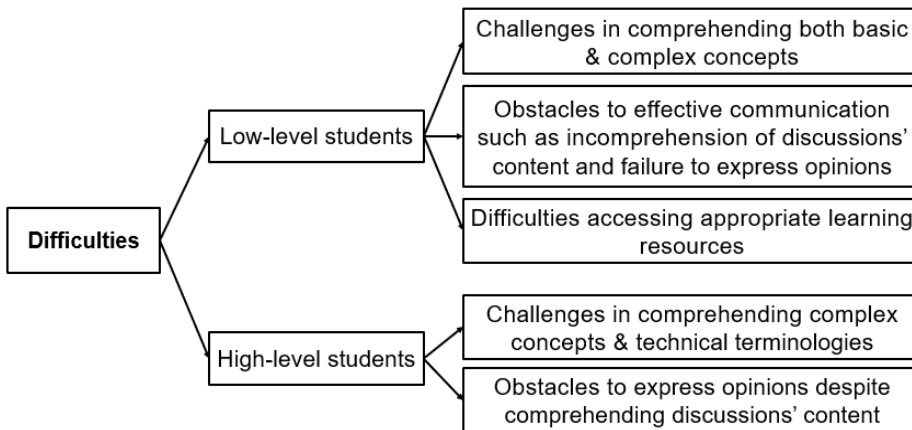


Figure 2. EMI students’ responses in the interview in terms of challenges low-level and high-level students encounter when lecturers use EMI in classes

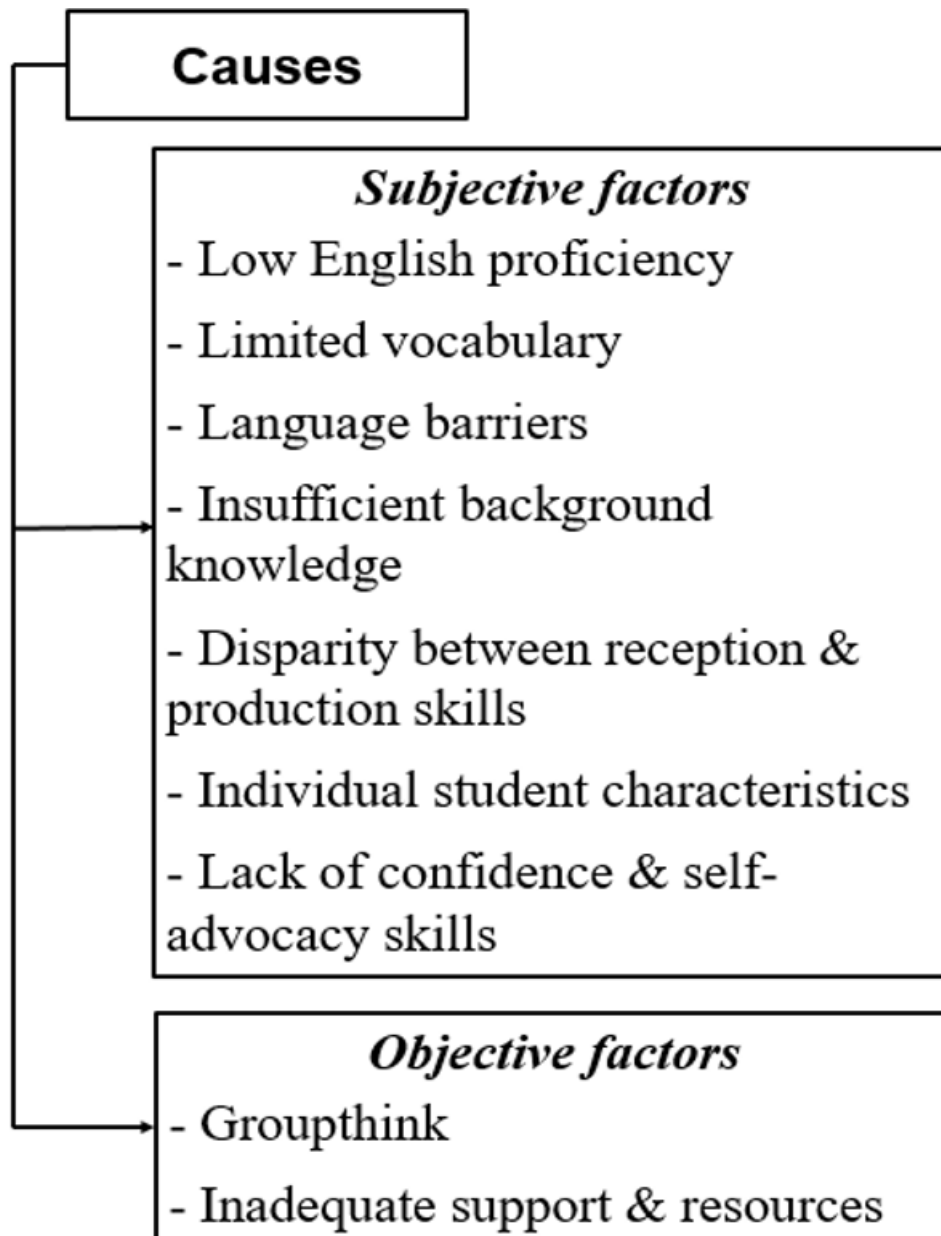


Figure 3.
Sources of EMI students' difficulties in EMI classes.

Overall, the students involved in this study have encountered a wide range of difficulties in EMI lessons. However, the challenges faced by weaker students are more severe compared to those experienced by higher-performing students. Among these, challenges in comprehending learning content and obstacles to effective communication stand out as the most significant. A key factor contributing to these difficulties is inadequate vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, English proficiency plays a critical role in determining students' performance throughout their learning process.

5. Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

5.1. Question 1: What Are Students' Perceptions of the Lecturers' Teaching Attributes in the EMI Classes?

One of the purposes of the present study involved examination of students' perceptions of the teaching efficacy of lecturers in EMI classes in higher education. The results indicated that a majority of students hold favorable opinions regarding lecturers' professional ability and attitudes in EMI classes. In particular, lecturers were reported to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and enthusiasm in their teaching, and foster students' critical thinking and intellectual interests. The attempts by lecturers to promote critical thinking among students, as perceived by most high-level students, are considered a new insight compared to the research conducted by Wang, et al. [4]. These favorable perceptions likely stem from lecturers' active efforts to adapt their pedagogical approaches to accommodate students' diverse needs. The results from the interviews and questionnaires indicate that by providing constructive feedback, employing code-switching, and simplifying terminology, lecturers create a supportive learning environment that helps overcome language barriers. Additionally, observations of the EMI teachers' instructional processes show that lecturers made efforts to encourage in-class interactions

and group discussions by organizing engaging activities and providing continuous support for students. This contrasts with the findings of Tran, et al. [9] who found that lecturers prioritized content delivery over student engagement.

However, a minority of questionnaire participants did not support the lecturers' approach in these areas in which interactions and group work activities were somehow limited. This aligns with research outcomes by Ahn, et al. [21]. These results can be explained by the fact that students' language competence and previous educational experiences play a crucial role in shaping their perceptions. Obviously, there are some lower-level students with limited English skills and insufficient background knowledge who struggle to comprehend the material, leading them to perceive the teaching methods and resources as unsuitable for their learning needs. In addition, each student has unique learning preferences that significantly influence their perception of teaching proficiency and attitudes. Some students favor a highly interactive teaching style that encourages class participation and discussion, while others prefer a more lecture-based approach that focuses on the systematic delivery of content. In short, although individual viewpoints can diverge due to factors such as personal preferences, personal backgrounds and language competence, most students seem to appreciate their lecturers' professional ability and attitudes in EMI courses. One pedagogical implication is creating collaborative learning environments where high-performing students support those with language difficulties to foster peer learning and reduce comprehension gaps.

5.2. Question 2: What are the Difficulties That Students Encounter When Lecturers Use EMI In Classes?

Based on the survey and interview data, we have gathered and synthesized the challenges and their causes associated with EMI lessons, as shown below.

Regarding difficulties in comprehending lectures, under 30% of the surveyed students reported challenges in following lectures, taking notes, engaging in learning activities, and understanding course materials. The interview results also revealed comparable views. Limited vocabulary knowledge and inadequate listening skills may hinder students from grasping lecturers' explanations and understanding new terminology, leading to deficiencies in their content knowledge. This aligns with the findings from a study conducted by Phuong and Nguyen [6]. Additionally, questionnaire participants noted that the lecturers' speech and pronunciation made it even more difficult to follow the lectures and take effective notes. It is suggested that the universities should support EMI students' English language learning through different activities, including establish ESP classes or English extra-curricular activities to promote students' English proficiency and confidence, respectively. Another suggestion might come to the encouragement of EMI lecturers to participate in certain EMI training programs to improve their teaching skills, including English skills and giving instruction skills.

In terms of challenges when communicating, 35% of the surveyed participants advocated that language barriers impede students' ability to communicate effectively with both lecturers and peers during discussions. This finding does not align with the research outcomes by Bolton, et al. [22] in which most students from Singapore's six top universities reported minimal difficulties in communicating with faculty and using English for academics. It is understandable when English is one of the fourth official languages in Singapore. Students with low English proficiency, limited vocabulary, and insufficient background knowledge tended to stay quiet and less involved, negatively influencing their comprehension of the lecture and discussion topics. Moreover, several students with low English proficiency indicated that while they understood the lecture content and assignment instructions, they struggled to articulate and express their thoughts. This suggests a disparity between their reception (listening and reading) and production skills (speaking and writing). This is in line with the findings of Tong and Tang [16]. Additionally, other factors such as individual student characteristics and the influence of groupthink further affect students' participation in class discussions. One pedagogical implication to enhance lecture comprehension that institutions can provide pre-lecture materials such as key vocabulary lists, summaries, and guided reading assignments, allowing students to familiarize themselves with the content in advance. Bilingual glossaries can help bridge language gaps by enabling students to quickly grasp technical terms. Additionally, lecturers can adopt interactive teaching methods, including visual aids, real-life examples, and engaging discussions, to reinforce understanding and encourage active participation. These strategies create a more accessible and supportive learning environment, helping students grasp complex concepts more effectively.

Concerning a challenge predominantly reported by lower-proficiency students is the significant barrier to accessing academic resources, as most materials are in English. A subjective factor exacerbating this issue is that underperforming students might lack the confidence and self-advocacy skills necessary to identify and request resources that cater to their learning needs. This is in accordance with the findings from a study conducted by Al Zumor [20]. Additionally, as mentioned by interview participants, a key factor contributing to this issue is the inadequate support and resources provided by educators to help lower-proficiency students navigate and access suitable learning materials. There may exist a paucity of differentiation and personalization in the resources made available, further hindering these students' ability to engage with the course content effectively. These results indicate originality and fresh insights from our study. For this problem, the researchers suggest that universities can supplement original materials with translated texts or simplified summaries to help students engage with complex readings. Training in academic research skills, such as skimming, scanning, and critical reading strategies, can further empower students to navigate scholarly content efficiently. Additionally, institutions should provide language support services, including writing centers, tutoring programs, and online databases with accessible content, to assist students in their academic pursuits.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the teaching efficacy of lecturers in EMI classes as well as the difficulties encountered by students when lecturers use EMI in tertiary context in Vietnam. First, the results indicated that EMI lecturers were highly appreciated by their students in terms of teaching methods, The outcomes of our research

indicate that a majority of students hold favorable opinions regarding lecturers' teaching proficiency and attitudes in EMI classes. Only a small proportion of students do not adapt to the lecturers' approach in terms of teachers' teaching methods, the use of technical vocabulary, the additional explanations provided, and the adaptation of course materials that hindered note-taking, discussions, and interactions during classes. It can be seen that these differences in the students' opinions stemmed from both objective and subjective factors. Second, It is shown that EMI students face various challenges in EMI lessons, with difficulties in understanding course content, communicating effectively and accessing learning materials. A major contributing factor to these challenges is their limited vocabulary knowledge, which hinders comprehension and engagement and a limited number of course materials in English in the current market in Vietnam. Additionally, students' overall English proficiency significantly influences their academic performance, affecting their ability to grasp key concepts and participate actively in learning activities.

The study could not avoid some limitations. Firstly, the scope of the research is limited as it only focuses on three majors, which may lead to some degree of bias. To address this issue in further study, it is recommended to expand the research scope by including more majors in the survey to improve objectivity. Secondly, the credibility of our data may be compromised as the assessment of lecturers' teaching efficacy is based mainly on students' perceptions. To ensure impartiality, objectivity, and reliability, it is suggested to involve lecturers as participants in the survey.

References

- [1] E. Macaro, *English medium instruction*. Oxford, U.K: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018.
- [2] J. Han, *The research on English medium instruction and a proposed constructivist EMI teaching framework*. In *English medium instruction as a local practice*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022.
- [3] J. Othman, "Academic vocabulary learning in EMI education: Challenges and strategies," *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 3–18, 2024.
- [4] K. Wang, R. Yuan, and P. I. De Costa, "A critical review of English medium instruction (EMI) teacher development in higher education: From 2018 to 2022," *Language Teaching*, pp. 1-32, 2025.
- [5] W. Sun, J. Han, C. Curry, and K. Carroll, "Pedagogy in teaching through English medium instruction—Academics' cases in a Chinese university," *Sustainability*, vol. 15, no. 14, p. 10942, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151410942>.
- [6] Y. H. Phuong and T. T. Nguyen, "Students' perceptions towards the benefits and drawbacks of EMI classes," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 12, no. 5, pp. 88-100, 2019.
- [7] L. Xu and Y. Xiao, "Students' perceptions of native/non-native English-speaking EMI teachers: Are NS teachers better than NNS teachers?," *In Frontiers in Education*, vol. 7, p. 1082600, 2023.
- [8] L. T. Tran and H. T. Nguyen, *Internationalisation of higher education in Vietnam through English Medium Instruction (EMI): Practices, tensions and implications for local language policies*. In *Multilingual education yearbook 2018: Internationalization, stakeholders & multilingual education contexts*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018.
- [9] T. H. T. Tran, R. Burke, and J. M. O'Toole, *The evolution of English as a medium of instruction in Vietnamese tertiary EFL contexts*. In K. M. Bailey & D. Christian (Eds.), *Research on teaching and learning English in under-resourced contexts*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- [10] L. T. T. Hanh and N. T. Bac, "English-medium instruction in Vietnam: Benefits and drawbacks from students' perspectives," *International Journal of Language Education*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 1–10, 2023.
- [11] Y. Y. Lo and J. Othman, "Lecturers' readiness for EMI in Malaysia higher education," *Plos One*, vol. 18, no. 7, p. e0284491, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284491>.
- [12] M. E. DelliCarpini and O. B. Alonso, "Teacher education that works: Preparing secondary-level math and science teachers for success with English language learners," *Global Education Review*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 155–172, 2014.
- [13] F. Chen, *Instructional language use in environmental science classrooms*. In W. Tsou & S.-M. Kao (Eds.), *English as a medium of instruction in higher education: Implementations and classroom practices in Taiwan*. Singapore: Springer, 2017.
- [14] J. Pun and N. Thomas, "English medium instruction in Hong Kong higher education: The role of learner engagement," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 276–291, 2020.
- [15] E. Macaro, *English medium instruction: Content and language in policy and practice*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- [16] F. Tong and S. Tang, *English-medium instruction in a Chinese university math classroom: An observation study*. In J. Zhao & Q. Dixon (Eds.), *English-medium instruction in Chinese universities*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- [17] G. T. C. Nguyen, C. T. H. Pham, C. X. Pham, and B. N. Nguyen, "Primary school teachers' determinants of integrated teaching for realistic math education," *European Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 253-263, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.12.1.253>.
- [18] T. R. Guskey, "The past and future of teacher efficacy," *Educational Leadership*, vol. 79, no. 3, p. 20, 2021.
- [19] C. Magill, C. Cronin, B. Walsh, R. Polman, and J. Rudd, "Teaching efficacy of undergraduate PE students: What are the key predictors and what can PE educators learn from this?," *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 8, p. 1166613, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1166613>.
- [20] A. Q. Al Zumor, "Challenges of using EMI in teaching and learning of university scientific disciplines: Student voice," *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 1-17, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v5i3p1>.
- [21] H. Ahn, K. Bolton, W. Botha, and J. B. Shone, *English-medium instruction in higher education in South Korea*. In *The Routledge handbook of English-medium instruction in higher education*. New York: Routledge, 2024.
- [22] K. Bolton, W. Botha, and J. B. Shone, *English-medium instruction in higher education in Singapore*. In *The Routledge handbook of English-medium instruction in higher education*. New York: Routledge, 2024.
- [23] W.-C. Huang, "Influence of enhanced self-efficacy on English performance through English medium instruction: A mixed methods research," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 32, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00255-3>.

- [24] Y.-T. Chuang, "An EMI pedagogy that facilitates students' learning," *English Language Teaching*, vol. 8, no. 12, pp. 63-73, 2015.
- [25] M. M. M. A. Latif, *English-medium instruction in higher education in Egypt. In The Routledge handbook of English-medium instruction in higher education*. New York: Routledge, 2024.
- [26] S. Baa, N. Maghfirah, and H. Borland, "The implementation of English medium instruction (EMI) at the public secondary schools in South Sulawesi Indonesia: Students' voices," *International Journal of Language Education*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 481-493, 2023.
- [27] L. T. T. Hanh, T. P. T. Van, and N. T. N. Ha, "Perceptions of lecturers and students regarding the use of English in the EMI classroom," *Vinh University Journal of Science*, vol. 54, no. 2C, pp. 85-93, 2025.
- [28] C. Hill, K. Bolton, and J. B. Shone, *English-medium instruction in higher education in Indonesia,* in *The routledge handbook of English-medium instruction in higher education*, K. Bolton, W. Botha, and B. Lin (eds.). London and New York: Routledge, 2024.