

Impacts of EMI Courses on English Language Proficiency: Students' Voices

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: EMI, improvement, specialized vocabulary acquisition, tourism and hospitality education, language skills

This study investigates the impact of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) courses in fostering the development of English language skills among students majoring in tourism and hospitality at a Vietnamese higher education institution. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 154 EMI students majoring in tourism and hospitality through a questionnaire. The results demonstrate that students perceive the greatest improvement in their specialized English vocabulary knowledge after taking EMI courses. However, writing skills and the ability to use English grammar in daily conversation are perceived to improve the least. Compared to second-year students, third-year students evaluate the effectiveness of EMI courses in improving English language proficiency higher. In addition, EMI students report that in-class activities such as listening to EMI lectures, studying class materials, participating in oral presentations, and making English presentations help enhance students' English.

Introduction

English-medium instruction (EMI) is becoming more prominent in higher education globally with an increasing number of universities adopting English as a teaching language in specialized content classes. The growing demand for English proficiency and the need for universities to adapt to English as the dominant academic language has resulted from this shift. As educational institutions worldwide aim for what is called “internationalization”, EMI programs have become a significant factor that brings about novel language learning experiences (Villares, 2019). In the past two decades, there has been an exponential increase in the number of EMI programs that are offered by higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide (Macaro et al., 2018). In European higher education, EMI programs have witnessed a dramatic rise in the number, growing more than tenfold from around 700 to over 8000 by 2014 (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). Following global trends, Asian regions have also expanded their EMI programs considerably, influenced by globalization and the prominence of English as a global

lingua franca (Hamid et al., 2013).

The globalization of higher education drives the growth of EMI, the spread of English as a global lingua franca as well as the improvement of foreign language skills and employability prospects of local students (Dang et al., 2023). In Vietnam, the emphasis on foreign language education, highlighted in the National Foreign Language 2020 project, has sparked a surge in interest in EMI programs. Phan and Doan (2020, p. 260) refer to EMI as the “flavour of the day” in Vietnam’s higher education institutions (HEIs). The recent increase in EMI in Vietnam addresses but reflects the rising enthusiasm for English education that has spread throughout the country’s higher education landscape over the last ten years.

Several research have been conducted on Vietnamese EMI students who have reported several improvements in their English competency due to frequent contact with English through EMI courses (Le, 2016; Truong et al., 2020). They reported becoming more confident about their English communication skills, and better at understanding English lectures and reading academic materials. However, there is limited research on how EMI courses influence the English competency of EMI students in this research context. Therefore, this study addresses this research gap by conducting an investigation into the perception of EMI students towards the impact of EMI courses on English language proficiency.

The research aims to examine the impact of EMI courses on students’ English proficiency in a Vietnamese higher education institution. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To determine the role of EMI programs in fostering the development of English language skills among students.
- To explore any differences in perceptions between second-year and third-year students regarding the improvement of their English proficiency through EMI courses.
- To investigate students’ self-perceptions regarding how classroom activities in EMI classes enhance learners’ English language proficiency.

Literature Review

English as a Medium of Instruction

EMI is a worldwide phenomenon that is expanding in all facets of education and the educational environment (Dearden, 2014). It has significantly increased in universities all over the world (Macaro et al., 2018). The term “medium of instruction” refers to a language other than the language studied as an object itself that is used to deliver the content of nonlanguage subjects (such as mathematics, science, and history in secondary schools and specialized subjects like medicine, architecture, and engineering in tertiary education). The pupils’ first language (L1) is frequently the default medium of teaching in schools. Alternatively, the pupils may use the second language (L2) (Ho & Ho, 2004). A variety of terms, including Content-Based Instruction in North America, Immersion in Canada, Content and Language Integrated Learning in Europe, and EMI in post-secondary education in Europe and Asia, have been used to describe the use of an L2 to substitute an L1 for teaching discipline subject. Despite using L2 as the primary language of teaching, these approaches differ from one another in terms of pedagogical

practices, social context, and the linguistic status of the L2 (Lo & Macaro, 2012).

Reasons for the Growth of EMI in HEIs

Several factors drive the growth of EMI in higher education and it is critical to comprehend the factors behind the global acceleration of EMI in HEIs. Primarily, English's status as the international language of science and technology motivates its adoption (Ducker, 2019). EMI is seen as a response to globalization, with universities implementing it for academic, political, social, and economic reasons (Rahman & Mehar Singh, 2020).

According to Galloway and Rose (2015), HEIs may choose to deliver content in English for the following reasons:

- assessing the latest advancements and boosting global competitiveness to raise the profile internationally
- boosting income (and making up for the shortage at the domestic level)
- improving lecturer and student mobility to help attract talented students
- fostering intercultural competences in graduates
- boosting employability in both domestic and international markets
- enhancing English proficiency
- demonstrating the innovations in English language teaching
- using English in multilingual settings, including those in East and Southern Africa

Benefits of EMI

As a result of EMI's worldwide spread, researchers have explored the benefits of implementing EMI in different academic contexts, notably higher education contexts (Derakhshan et al., 2022; Su & Kong, 2023; Sahan & Şahan, 2024). Derakhshan et al. (2022) has explored the benefits and opportunities of offering EMI courses in Iran. To gather data, 24 EMI instructors and students from different nationalities participated in an open-ended questionnaire. Their responses were examined through content analysis, which revealed several key themes such as 'greater access to specialized resources,' 'increased opportunities to enhance English proficiency,' and 'improved prospects for pursuing education abroad.' Su and Kong (2023) also investigated the positive impacts of implementing EMI in Chinese music classes. Through convenience sampling methods, they surveyed 74 students from different classes and identified six key themes, including the improvement of students' English literacy, the enhancement of academic interest, the familiarization with other cultures, the expansion of English vocabulary, the advancement of musical knowledge, and the increase in students' energy levels. Similarly, Sahan and Şahan (2024) have emphasized the effectiveness the value of EMI in improving English language skills, facilitating the acquisition of technical terms, and providing access to English resources, all of which contribute to academic and professional growth.

Challenges Facing EMI Practices

The adoption of EMI in HEIs has encountered significant challenges despite its benefits. A primary concern is the language proficiency of both students and administrators. Students' and

lecturers' limited English skills can impede academic performance and effective teaching. Research has demonstrated that students with insufficient English proficiency struggle with content understanding, and are prone to longer course completion times, higher dropout rates, and difficulties in communicating disciplinary content (Chapple, 2015; Doiz et al., 2013). According to a study conducted by Le (2016), Vietnamese students commonly struggle with fundamental English academic skills such as taking notes, writing academically, and communicating orally. These students also reported a lack of resources to support the development of these skills within their EMI programs. In addition, the English language courses provided appear to fall short of meeting the educational demands of students in the EMI context (Dang et al., 2023). Several students shared that they were overwhelmed by the changes in teaching and learning methods when transitioning from high school to university (Nguyen et al., 2017). The additional pressure of studying in English heightens their anxiety, while limited access to the latest, high-quality English materials remains another significant challenge for EMI students (T. T. N. Le, 2016).

As students deal with these challenges, educators are also facing their own difficulties in implementing EMI. Content lecturers in higher education institutions encounter various issues that affect both their teaching practices and professional development. EMI instructors frequently report similar issues, such as the need for increased preparation time, difficulties in teaching in a foreign language, and struggles in facilitating students' discussion in English (Beckett & Li, 2012; Birgün, 2023; Do & Le, 2017). Many have reported a lack of confidence among educators when delivering lectures in English, primarily due to limited exposure to the language and insufficient communication skills (T. T. N. Le, 2016; Vu & Burns, 2014). Ultimately, the absence of professional development programs tailored to EMI further hinders teachers' efforts to improve their EMI teaching methods. While some EMI lecturers have the chance to attend training courses (T. T. N. Le, 2016; H. T. Nguyen et al., 2017), these opportunities remain infrequent and lack a structured approach. In conclusion, while EMI brings potential benefits for higher education, both students and lecturers continue to encounter major linguistic and pedagogical challenges that require extensive support and well-organized development programs.

EMI Practices in Vietnamese HEIs

EMI has been becoming increasingly significant in Vietnamese university curricula in recent years. The implementation of EMI has significantly impacted Vietnamese higher education, bringing a new wave of educational reform and internationalization. EMI addresses the demand for internationalized and higher-quality education from Vietnam's fast-growing middle-class population (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). It also contributes to the broader governmental goal of internationalizing the sector by aligning university curricula with international standards, fostering foreign investment, and attracting international students (Dinh & Nguyen, 2019; Rizvi, 2020; L. Tran & Marginson, 2018; Trinh & Conner, 2019; Vinuniversity, 2023). EMI facilitates collaborations with over 200 international institutions at the institutional level, enhancing teaching, learning, and staff and student mobility (MOET-International Cooperation Department., 2023). This has led to notable international exchanges, boosting the professional experiences of both staff and students (Nguyen et al., 2016). A study conducted by Nguyen et.

al. (2024) to analyze factors affecting learner autonomy in EMI learning found that factors such as motivation, learning attitudes, and strategies have the greatest influence on the learner autonomy of English-major students in EMI programs. Moreover, EMI students report improved English proficiency, better disciplinary knowledge, and more active learning styles (Ngo, 2019; N. Tran et al., 2019). Additionally, EMI is seen as a stepping stone for further studies abroad and enhances graduates' employability (Tran et al., 2019; Truong et al., 2020). EMI lecturers gain professional development through exposure to English, international collaboration, and financial incentives (Le, 2016; Truong, 2017). These benefits demonstrate the significant role of EMI in advancing the internationalization and development of Vietnamese higher education (Curle et al., 2020).

Several challenges were also reported in earlier studies in Vietnamese HEIs contexts (M. Le, 2012; H. T. Nguyen et al., 2016, 2017; Vu & Burns, 2014). Using Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) language-in-education planning framework, Nguyen et al. (2016) explored how a Vietnamese public university employed EMI to adapt to the government's new policy of institutional autonomy. Their case study, which relied on interviews for data collection, examined policies concerning EMI access, teaching staff, EMI evaluation, and resources. The research explored that the EMI programs failed to meet essential conditions such as lecturers' English proficiency, adequate materials and resources, teacher training, and the creation of social and pedagogical environments necessary for ensuring content and language learning outcomes.

Nguyen et al. (2017), also using the language-in-education planning framework, investigated the implementation of EMI in a Vietnamese university. They observed that the national guidelines for EMI did not allow sufficient time and preparation for institutions. Challenges included English entry requirements, the implementation of imported curricula, students' and lecturers' poor English proficiency, and lecturers' unfamiliarity with EMI-focused pedagogy. In addition, Vu and Burns (2014) conducted a study using questionnaires and interviews to examine the challenges faced by university lecturers. Their findings revealed difficulties related to lecturers' language abilities, students' language competence and learning styles, pedagogical issues, and resource availability. They suggested improvements in lecturers' English proficiency, pedagogical support, institutional investment in English materials and technology, and reconsideration of student recruitment procedures for EMI programs. These recommendations align with those proposed by Nguyen et al. (2017). Additionally, Nguyen (2022) conducted a secondary study to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach and explored that the majority of teachers expressed the need for training in designing and implementing translanguaging practices within EMI classroom environments.

Impacts of EMI Courses on Students' English Proficiency

Research on the impact of EMI on students' English proficiency has produced conflicting results, suggesting that additional research is needed (Galloway et al., 2017; Macaro et al., 2018). Some researchers have found that EMI positively influences students' language skills (Chung & Lo, 2023; Sánchez-Pérez, 2023; Vidal & Jarvis, 2020), while others suggest it has no beneficial effect (Bälter et al., 2023; Sah & Li, 2018; Wang & Yu, 2023). The research by Vidal and Jarvis (2020) highlighted the positive effects of EMI in higher education, including

significant gains in students' second language proficiency and a modest improvement in essay quality. However, no substantial changes were observed in lexical diversity. These findings suggested that while EMI may boost language and writing skills, further research is required to fully understand its impact on language development. EMI courses have also been shown to positively impact specific areas of language proficiency, particularly in English writing (Sánchez-Pérez, 2023). This study found that EMI enhanced students' lexical accuracy and vocabulary range, helping them use more accurate and diverse words. However, Sánchez-Pérez (2023) reported that other key writing skills, such as syntax, grammar, organization, and fluency, showed no significant improvement. This suggests that while EMI promotes vocabulary development, it does not fully address broader language proficiency without additional language support. Similarly, EMI was shown to enhance English language skills (Chung & Lo, 2023). Through pre- and post-assessments of two groups – one taking EMI courses and the other participating in Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) courses, the study noted considerable improvement in English listening skills, though reading skills declined. Nevertheless, the EMI group noticeably outperformed the CMI group in both listening and reading tests. Therefore, while both studies have indicated the positive influence of EMI on English language competence, the specific areas of improvement, such as vocabulary, listening, and writing, are influenced by the specific context and implementation of EMI.

While EMI is becoming more widespread worldwide, research into its effectiveness for content and language learning remains inconsistent. One study conducted by Bälter et al. (2023) examined the impact of EMI on students' academic performance in an online setting. By comparing test performance and drop-out rates between students enrolled in an English-medium course and a Swedish-medium course, the study revealed that students in the English-medium course had lower test scores and higher dropout rates compared to those in the Swedish-medium course. The results suggested that EMI may negatively impact students' academic performance under certain conditions. In a qualitative study at a Macau University, Wang and Yu (2023) pointed out that using broad terms like 'content learning' and 'language proficiency' is too vague to assess students' learning outcomes, such as knowledge mastery, access to information, and bilingual proficiency. The study noted that while EMI enhanced some aspects of student learning, it was less effective in enhancing knowledge mastery and bilingual academic proficiency. The researchers also argued that simply raising admission requirements for English proficiency may not be sufficient to address these issues and calls for further research and initiatives to better support students in EMI contexts.

In summary, existing research on the impact of EMI on students' content learning and English proficiency has presented mixed and contradictory results, calling for more in-depth studies. While some studies suggest that EMI boosts English proficiency, others report minimal or no significant gains, highlighting ongoing debate in the field. In the context of Vietnamese HEIs, there is a striking gap in research on the effectiveness of EMI programs, with very few studies investigating long-term language development among EMI students. The lack of comprehensive data on how these programs affect English proficiency after years of participation further emphasizes the need for targeted research. This study addresses to fill this gap by examining the specific impact of EMI courses on students' English proficiency, providing critical insights into whether these courses genuinely contribute to language

development.

Research Questions

To achieve the aim of the study, the survey sought to address the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the students' perceptions of their English language ability after taking EMI courses?

Research question 2: How do students perceive the impact of different activities in EMI classes on their English language skills?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was conducted at a public institution in northern Vietnam, examining its EMI program, which has been running for two years. The program focuses on tourism and hospitality, offering a four-year degree aimed at preparing students for careers in these fields. In addition to their EMI coursework, students complete six semesters of English for Occupational Purposes to strengthen their professional language skills. The teaching staff consists primarily of lecturers with double degrees who have graduated from top overseas institutions or leading universities in Vietnam, providing students with both industry knowledge and advanced English proficiency. This study aims to evaluate the impact of EMI programs on students' English language skills, explore students' confidence and usage of English before and after EMI courses, identify specific EMI activities that contribute to English language improvement, and provide recommendations for improving the effectiveness of EMI programs in promoting English proficiency in Vietnamese higher education. By examining this relatively new EMI program, the study offers valuable insights into how tourism and hospitality education through English can be optimized to support language development and address the challenges and opportunities within the context of northern Vietnam.

The participants of this study are 154 second- and third-year undergraduate students enrolled in EMI programs at a university in Vietnam. They are majoring in Tourism, Management of Travel Services and Tourism, and Hotel Management at a university in Vietnam. All participants have been pursuing EMI programs for at least one year in the case of second-year students and at least two years for third-year students. During each semester, the students have between four and six subjects which use English as a medium of instruction.

These participants were selected for several reasons. First, their participation in EMI programs was largely voluntary, reflecting a genuine interest in improving their English skills alongside their subject knowledge. Second, most of the students entered these programs with a relatively low level of English proficiency, making them ideal candidates to assess the extent that EMI programs contribute to their language development. By focusing on this group, the research seeks to determine if their language skills had improved after one or more years of studying in an EMI environment.

Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to collect data on students' perspectives regarding the impact of EMI on their English language skills. It consists of five sections, focusing on various aspects of the participants' experiences with EMI. In the first part, the researcher collects basic demographic information from the participants. It includes questions about their year of study (second or third year) and their major, with options for Tourism, Hotel Management, or Management of Travel Services and Tourism. In the second section, students are asked to assess their perceived improvement in English language skills after participating in EMI courses. They rate the improvement in different language skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar use in daily communication, general vocabulary, and tourism-specific vocabulary) on a 6-point scale ranging from "No improvement" (1) to "Very much improved" (6). In the third part, there are questions to explore students' confidence and usage of English before and after attending EMI courses. Students are asked to reflect on their confidence and fear of making mistakes before starting EMI, as well as how confident and active they feel after engaging in EMI courses. Responses are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 means "Strongly disagree" and 5 means "Strongly agree." In the next part, participants evaluate the impact of specific EMI activities on their English skills. They rate various activities, such as using online resources, attending EMI lectures, group discussions, presentations, and extracurricular activities, in terms of their contribution to vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, communication, and writing skills. The scale ranges from "Very untrue of me" (1) to "Very true of me" (5). In the last section, students evaluate their English proficiency before and after participating in EMI courses using Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. CEFR scale, ranging from A1 (Basic user) to C2 (Proficient user), is used due to its popularity worldwide and its great contributions to language standards, curricula and revision reform (North, 2014). To accommodate students who may be less familiar with the CEFR framework, the researcher also includes corresponding IELTS band scores as by 2021, more than 60 training centers in Vietnam required international certifications like IELTS, TOEFL, or SAT for student admissions, with IELTS being the most commonly used certification (Vietnamnet, January 2022). Overall, the questionnaire aims to gather detailed insights into how students perceive the role of EMI in improving their English skills and confidence, as well as the effectiveness of specific EMI activities in promoting language development.

Data Collection

In this phase, a draft version of the questionnaire was first sent to the supervisor to feedback. After that, additions, adjustments and other modifications to the wording of certain statements were made to enhance the questionnaire items, remove ambiguity, and prevent any misunderstanding from the participants. The questionnaire was also translated into Vietnamese to ensure that even respondents with limited English proficiency had no difficulties in completing it. After that, approval was obtained to pilot the questionnaire.

After piloting the questionnaire with 19 students, minor modifications were made to improve clarity and consistency in both English and Vietnamese versions. A Cronbach alpha coefficient analysis was conducted using SPSS in order to assess the reliability of the questionnaire items.

The results indicated adequate internal reliability for the constructs measuring perceived English improvement (0.879) and the effectiveness of EMI learning activities (0.918). The researcher then proceeded to collect data for the main study.

The study involved both online and face-to-face data collection. For face-to-face distribution, the researcher was present at the location where the participants were asked to complete the questionnaires. Before participants started, the researcher provided a brief introduction to the study, ensuring that participants understand the research more clearly and enabling the researcher to offer immediate assistance or clarification as needed.

For participants unable to attend in person, the questionnaire was distributed online. For these online versions, the introduction at the beginning of the questionnaire included the research title, its purpose, and the importance of the study, ensuring that participants received the necessary context before proceeding with the survey.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to interpret the collected quantitative data. The responses from the questionnaires were converted into numerical form for analysis. SPSS 20 was utilized to analyze the survey data. Paired sample tests were conducted to assess students' self-evaluations of their English language proficiency before and after participating in EMI courses. Crosstabulation was used to examine students' self-assessments of their improvement in specific skills—listening, speaking, reading, writing—and language components such as grammar and vocabulary. Mean and standard deviation analyses were applied to evaluate how various EMI class activities contributed to improving English proficiency. The data were presented in graphs and tables for each research question to facilitate synthesis, comparison, and generalization.

Results

Students' Self-Assessment of English Improvement after Participating in EMI Courses

This section presents students' self-assessment of their English skill improvement after participating in EMI courses, comparing responses from second-year and third-year students. In the first place, the figures for students' self-perception of English listening skills improvement are presented in Table 1. Both data collected from second- and third-year students are shown in the table.

As can be seen from Table 1, in the total results, 50% of students reported moderate improvement in their English listening skills, 20.1% reported 'quite a lot,' and 5.2% felt they had improved 'a very great deal.' Only 0.6% of students reported no improvement at all. Both second-year and third-year students demonstrated consistent responses in the 'moderate' category. Specifically, 51.2% of second-year students and 48.5% of third-year students reported that their English listening skills improved moderately. This suggests that students from both year groups shared a similar perception of their improvement in this middle category. A larger proportion of third-year students (8.8%) compared to second-year students (2.3%) reported that after participating in EMI courses their listening skills improved 'a very great deal.' This

indicates that third-year students were more likely to feel that they had significantly improved their English listening skills than second-year students. A slightly higher percentage of third-year students (86.7%) compared to second-year students (66.3%) reported that their listening skills improved to a moderate extent or higher (combining the categories of ‘moderate,’ ‘quite a lot,’ and ‘a very great deal’). This shows that third-year students were more likely to perceive a greater degree of improvement in their listening skills overall, whereas a larger portion of second-year students felt their improvement was only ‘a little’ or less.

Table 1

Students’ self-assessment of English listening skills improvement

		To what extent have your English listening skills improved? * Crosstabulation						
		To what extent have your English listening skills improved?					Total	
		Not at all	Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	
Second year	Count	1	7	21	44	11	2	86
	% within Year of study	1.2%	8.1%	24.4%	51.2%	12.8%	2.3%	100.0%
Third year	Count	0	0	9	33	20	6	68
	% within Year of study	0.0%	0.0%	13.2%	48.5%	29.4%	8.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	7	30	77	31	8	154
	% within Year of study	0.6%	4.5%	19.5%	50.0%	20.1%	5.2%	100.0%

Table 2 presents responses to the question regarding the level of improvement in students’ English reading skills.

Table 2

Students’ self-assessment of English reading skills improvement

		To what extent have your English reading skills improved? * Crosstabulation					
		To what extent have your English reading skills improved?				Total	
		Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	
Second year	Count	5	13	40	24	4	86
	% within Year of study	5.8%	15.1%	46.5%	27.9%	4.7%	100.0%
Third year	Count	0	5	26	28	9	68
	% within Year of study	0.0%	7.4%	38.2%	41.2%	13.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	5	18	66	52	13	154
	% within Year of study	3.2%	11.7%	42.9%	33.8%	8.4%	100.0%

Table 2 indicates that 42.9% of students reported moderate improvement in their English reading skills, while 33.8% experienced ‘quite a lot’ of improvement, and 8.4% reported ‘a very great deal’ of improvement. Only 3.2% of students reported ‘very little’ improvement. The

overall pattern of responses between the two-year groups was similar, as both groups showed a strong trend toward reporting improvement in the ‘moderate’ and ‘quite a lot’ categories. However, third-year students reported more improvement in the ‘a very great deal’ and ‘quite a lot’ categories, while second-year students had a larger share in the ‘a little’ category.

Table 3 shows the responses to the question about the extent of improvement in students’ English writing skills.

Table 3

Students’ self-assessment of English writing skills improvement

		To what extent have your English writing skills improved? * Crosstabulation						
		To what extent have your English writing skills improved?						
		Not at all	Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	Total
Second year	Count	3	6	36	31	9	1	86
	% within Year of study	3.5%	7.0%	41.9%	36.0%	10.5%	1.2%	100.0%
Third year	Count	0	5	11	34	13	5	68
	% within Year of study	0.0%	7.4%	16.2%	50.0%	19.1%	7.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	3	11	47	65	22	6	154
	% within Year of study	1.9%	7.1%	30.5%	42.2%	14.3%	3.9%	100%

Overall, data from Table 3 indicate that 42.2% of students reported moderate improvement in their English writing skills, while 14.3% experienced ‘quite a lot’ of improvement, and 3.9% indicated ‘a very great deal’ of improvement. Only 1.9% reported no improvement at all. More specifically, in the ‘quite a lot’ category, 10.5% of second-year students and 19.1% of third-year students felt significant progress. Regarding ‘a very great deal’ of improvement, 1.2% of second-year students and 7.4% of third-year students indicated this enhancement level. These figures highlight that third-year students reported a higher level of improvement in writing skills across all categories.

Table 4 showcases the responses to the question about the degree of improvement in students’ English speaking skills.

Table 4

Students’ self-assessment of English speaking skills improvement

		To what extent have your English speaking skills improved? * Crosstabulation					
		To what extent have your English speaking skills improved?					Total
		Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	
Second year	Count	3	22	30	26	5	86
	% within Year of study	3.5%	25.6%	34.9%	30.2%	5.8%	100.0%
Third year	Count	3	4	21	29	11	68
	% within Year of study	4.4%	5.9%	30.9%	42.6%	16.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	6	26	51	55	16	154
	% within Year of study	3.9%	16.9%	33.1%	35.7%	10.4%	100.0%

Regarding speaking skills, 33.1% of students reported moderate improvement in their English-speaking skills, while 35.7% experienced ‘quite a lot’ of improvement, and 10.4% indicated ‘a very great deal’ of improvement. Only 3.9% of students reported very little improvement. Overall, 89.7% of third-year students and 70.9% of second-year students reported moderate or higher improvement, showing that third-year students perceived greater overall progress in terms of speaking skills.

Table 5 highlights the responses regarding students’ ability to use English grammar in daily communication after completing EMI courses.

Table 5

Students’ self-assessment of their ability to apply English grammar in everyday communication after taking EMI courses

		To what extent has your ability to apply English grammar in everyday communication improved? *						Total
		Crosstabulation						
		To what extent has your ability to apply English grammar in everyday communication improved?						
		Not at all	Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	
Second year	Count	1	9	25	38	12	1	86
	% within Year of study	1.2%	10.5%	29.1%	44.2%	14.0%	1.2%	100.0%
Third year	Count	0	2	9	25	24	8	68
	% within Year of study	0.0%	2.9%	13.2%	36.8%	35.3%	11.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	11	34	63	36	9	154
	% within Year of study	0.6%	7.1%	22.1%	40.9%	23.4%	5.8%	100.0%

As can be seen from Table 5, a larger proportion of third-year students (11.8%) compared to second-year students (1.2%) reported that their grammar skills improved ‘a very great deal.’ Additionally, a higher percentage of third-year students (83.8%) compared to second-year students (59.4%) reported that their grammar skills improved to a moderate extent or higher. Table 6 and 7 display students’ responses regarding general English vocabulary and specialized English vocabulary acquired during EMI courses.

Table 6

Students’ self-assessment of their general English vocabulary after taking EMI courses

		To what extent has your general English vocabulary improved? *					Total improved?
		Crosstabulation					
		To what extent has your general English vocabulary improved?					
		Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	
Second year	Count	2	22	40	20	2	86
	% within Year of study	2.3%	25.6%	46.5%	23.3%	2.3%	100.0%
Third year	Count	2	2	28	26	10	68
	% within Year of study	2.9%	2.9%	41.2%	38.2%	14.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	4	24	68	46	12	154
	% within Year of study	2.6%	15.6%	44.2%	29.9%	7.8%	100.0%

Table 7

Students' self-assessment of their specialized vocabulary after taking EMI courses

		To what extent has your specialized English vocabulary improved?					Total
		Crosstabulation					
		Very little	A little	Moderate	Quite a lot	A very great deal	
Second year	Count	1	15	32	36	2	86
	% within Year of study	1.2%	17.4%	37.2%	41.9%	2.3%	100.0%
Third year	Count	0	5	16	31	16	68
	% within Year of study	0.0%	7.4%	23.5%	45.6%	23.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	20	48	67	18	154
	% within Year of study	0.6%	13.0%	31.2%	43.5%	11.7%	100.0%

The data from Tables 6 and 7 reveal that students generally reported more improvement in their specialized English vocabulary for tourism and hospitality compared to their general English vocabulary. In the 'quite a lot' category, 43.5% of students indicated significant improvement in specialized vocabulary, compared to 29.9% for general vocabulary. Similarly, 11.7% of students reported 'a very great deal' of improvement in specialized vocabulary, while only 7.8% felt the same for general vocabulary. Although both second- and third-year students showed progress, third-year students consistently reported higher levels of improvement across both categories, particularly in the specialized field. The 'moderate' improvement category was comparable for both, with 44.2% for general vocabulary and 31% for specialized. These results suggest that students experienced greater advancement in field-specific vocabulary, particularly those in their third year.

Comparison of Perceived Improvement in English Skills between Second and Third-year EMI Students

This part evaluates whether the differences in self-reported progress across multiple language skills between the two academic groups are statistically significant, providing insights into how students' year of study influences their perceived language development in the EMI program. The independent samples t-test results show significant differences between the two groups of participants in their perceived improvement across all English skills after participating in the EMI program. The level of improvement in all assessed language skills and language components—listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar, general vocabulary, and specialized vocabulary in tourism and hospitality – had p-values below 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), indicating statistically significant differences between second year and third year students.

Table 8

Differences between the two groups of participants in their perceived improvement

		Independent Samples Test				
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Listening	Equal variances assumed	.060	.807	.000	-.886	-.326
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	-.882	-.329
Reading	Equal variances assumed	.057	.812	.001	-.779	-.218
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	-.775	-.222
Writing	Equal variances assumed	1.073	.302	.000	-.871	-.257
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	-.873	-.256
Speaking	Equal variances assumed	.049	.826	.001	-.821	-.198
	Equal variances not assumed			.002	-.822	-.198
English grammar	Equal variances assumed	.177	.675	.000	-1.073	-.465
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	-1.074	-.464
General vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	2.510	.115	.000	-.885	-.338
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	-.887	-.336
Specialized vocabulary	Equal variances assumed	.066	.798	.000	-.855	-.316
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	-.857	-.314

To be more specific, the statistics in Table 9 show that, compared to second-year students, third-year EMI students consistently reported higher mean scores across all English skills and surveyed language components. These higher means for third-year students reflect the significant differences found in the t-test, highlighting greater perceived improvement in English skills among third-year students.

Table 9.

Comparison of Perceived Improvement in English Skills and Language Components

Improvement in ...	Which year are you in?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening	Second year	86	3.73	.913
	Third year	68	4.34	.822
Reading	Second year	86	4.10	.921
	Third year	68	4.60	.813
Writing	Second year	86	3.47	.942
	Third year	68	4.03	.977
Speaking	Second year	86	4.09	.966
	Third year	68	4.60	.979
English grammar	Second year	86	3.63	.934
	Third year	68	4.40	.964
General vocabulary	Second year	86	3.98	.826
	Third year	68	4.59	.885
Specialized vocabulary	Second year	86	4.27	.818
	Third year	68	4.85	.868

For second-year students, the lowest mean was 3.47 in writing skills, while their highest mean was 4.27 in specialized vocabulary items. In contrast, third-year students had a higher range, with the lowest mean of 4.03 in writing skills and the highest mean of 4.85 in specialized vocabulary. Overall, both groups had their highest mean scores in specialized English vocabulary, reflecting notable progress in mastering industry-specific terms.

EMI Students' Perceptions of the Impact of EMI Courses on English Language Proficiency

Table 10 presents the findings from a paired samples t-test that evaluates the impact of EMI courses on students' perceptions of their English language proficiency. The analysis compares students' self-assessments before and after participating in EMI courses, using data from paired differences to determine whether the change is statistically significant. The results offer insight into the effectiveness of EMI courses in enhancing students' language skills.

Table 10

Students' perceptions of the impact of EMI courses on English language proficiency before and after taking EMI courses

		Paired Samples Test		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Paired Differences				
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Before – After taking EMI courses	-1.106	-.894	-18.615	153	.000

The p-value (Sig. = .000) in Table 10 indicates a highly significant result, as it is well below the commonly accepted threshold of .05. This suggests that the difference observed in EMI students' perceptions of their English language proficiency, before and after EMI courses, is statistically significant. A p-value of .000 implies that the probability of the result occurring by random chance is extremely low, essentially confirming that EMI courses have a substantial and reliable impact on improving English proficiency. The significance of this p-value demonstrates that there is strong evidence to support the effectiveness of EMI courses in enhancing students' language skills, reinforcing the importance of EMI instruction in academic settings.

The two figures below compare students' self-assessed English proficiency before (D1) and after (D2) participating in EMI program.

Figure 1

Students' self-perceptions of their English language proficiency before taking EMI courses

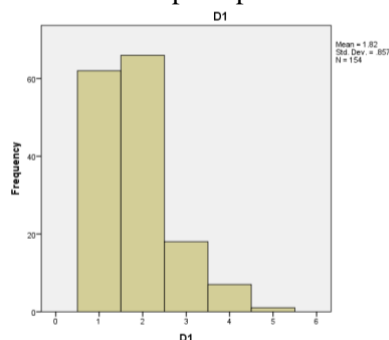
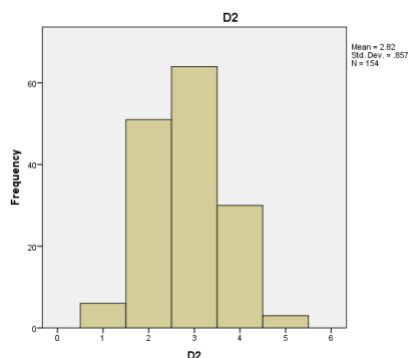


Figure 2

Students' self-perceptions of their English language proficiency after taking EMI courses



In the first chart, the distribution shows that most students rated their proficiency at the lower levels, with the highest frequencies at 1 (Basic) and 2 (Elementary), indicating lower self-confidence in their English skills. The mean proficiency score is 1.82, with a standard deviation of 0.857, suggesting a concentration around the lower levels of proficiency.

In contrast, the second chart shows a noticeable shift upwards. The highest frequencies are now at level 3 (Intermediate), with fewer students rating themselves at the Basic level. The mean proficiency score increased to 2.82, indicating overall improvement. However, the standard deviation remains the same, suggesting the distribution of students' proficiency still varies but has shifted towards higher levels. Overall, the charts illustrate that after participating in the EMI program, students generally perceive an improvement in their English proficiency.

EMI Students' Self-Evaluation of How Various Activities Impact their English Abilities

The data from Table 11 reveals distinct patterns in how various activities in EMI classes contribute to students' English language development in an EMI context.

For vocabulary enhancement, *listening and participating in EMI presentations* (C4) yielded the highest mean score of 4.18 (SD = .745), indicating that this activity had the most significant impact, while *studying online EOP materials* (C1) had the lowest mean at 3.90 (SD = .785). In terms of listening comprehension, *attending EMI lectures* (C6) was rated most beneficial with a mean of 4.01 (SD = .695), whereas *studying online EOP materials* (C5) received the lowest score of 3.62 and exhibited the highest standard deviation (.901), suggesting greater variation in student perceptions. Reading comprehension was reported to improve most through *reading EMI course materials* (C10), with a mean of 3.93 (SD = .724), closely followed by *reading online EOP materials* (C9) at 3.90 (SD = .756). Regarding communication skills, *giving presentations in EMI programs* (C13) stood out as the most impactful, with the highest mean score of 4.30 (SD = .668), while *participating in extracurricular activities* (C14) was rated lowest at 3.45 and had the highest variability (SD = 1.004).

Table 11

EMI students' evaluation of how various activities in EMI classes impact their English abilities

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
C1	154	3.90	.785
C2	154	3.94	.663
C3	154	4.06	.729
C4	154	4.18	.745
C5	154	3.62	.901
C6	154	4.01	.695
C7	154	3.94	.756
C8	154	3.88	.855
C9	154	3.90	.756
C10	154	3.93	.724
C11	154	3.98	.859
C12	154	4.03	.828
C13	154	4.30	.668
C14	154	3.45	1.004
C15	154	3.47	.818
Valid N (listwise)	154		

Finally, for writing skills, *writing reports and essays for EMI courses* (C15) resulted in a moderate mean score of 3.47 (SD = .818). These findings highlight different activities' varying degrees of influence on students' English proficiency development across multiple skill areas.

Discussion

Research question 1: *What are the students' perceptions of their English language ability after taking EMI courses?*

The findings indicate that students experienced the most significant improvement in their specialized English vocabulary knowledge after completing EMI courses. This suggests that EMI courses enhance students' ability to understand and use terminology related to their field of study. The immersion in subject-specific content delivered in English likely facilitated their acquisition of specialized vocabulary, helping them to better grasp complex concepts and communicate more effectively in their academic and professional environments.

The finding that students perceive improvements in their English language ability after attending EMI courses aligns with existing literature, which generally supports the positive impact of EMI on language skills. Several studies have examined the potential benefits of EMI on students' English language proficiency, offering differing views on the nature of these improvements. For example, Van Der Worp (2017) argues that EMI courses offer students

significant exposure to English, which naturally promotes language development. This exposure is particularly effective over time, with students often reporting increased confidence and improved language proficiency after one to two years of study. Moreover, students who experience EMI report higher English skills and feel more comfortable using English in future jobs.

Similarly, Yu-Ying Chang (2010) reveals that overall, although the students generally did not think that they had a high level of comprehension of their EMI lectures, most of them did not show negative attitudes towards the courses. Additionally, most surveyed students reported that English instruction positively affected their English language proficiency, especially in listening comprehension. Other studies also suggest that EMI in higher education can substantially improve students' English proficiency over time. Research has demonstrated notable language proficiency gains among students of different levels after one year of EMI (Lestari, 2020) and over a four-year period (Yuksel et al., 2023).

The findings also reveal that writing skills and the ability to use English grammar in daily conversation showed the least improvement among students after taking EMI courses. This suggests that while EMI courses effectively enhance specialized vocabulary, they may not focus enough on practical language skills such as writing and grammar. The emphasis in EMI courses is often on academic content and subject-specific terminology, which might leave limited room for students to practice grammar knowledge and refine writing skills.

In contrast, Lestari (2020) indicates that the extent of improvement can be affected by students' initial proficiency levels. Their study suggests that students with higher proficiency may benefit more from EMI courses, as they are better prepared to handle the academic demands. On the other hand, those with lower proficiency may struggle at the beginning, which could hinder the perceived language process. This suggests that additional language support may be necessary for lower-proficiency students to fully reap the benefits of EMI.

Furthermore, Macaro et al. (2018) emphasize that the design of the course and the pedagogical approaches used in EMI programs play a crucial role in language development. They argue that the effectiveness of EMI in improving language proficiency depends on the teaching methods applied. For instance, courses incorporating more interactive and student-centered approaches may foster quicker language acquisition than compared to traditional teacher-centered approaches. This is consistent with other findings, such as those by Soruç and Griffiths (2018), who note that active participation in discussions and group work in EMI courses promotes language learning.

In conclusion, while the positive impact of EMI on language ability is generally recognized, factors such as initial proficiency, course structure, and pedagogical strategies play crucial roles in determining the extent of improvement. While most students perceive improvements in their English skills after attending EMI courses, the pace and degree of these improvements can vary based on individual and contextual factors.

Research question 2: How do students perceive the impact of different activities in EMI classes on their English language skills?

The self-assessments provided by students regarding the impact of different activities in EMI

classes on their English proficiency highlight the diverse ways in which academic engagement contributes to language development. Specifically, the finding that students perceive vocabulary enhancement most effectively through listening and participating in EMI presentations aligns with research indicating the importance of active engagement in language learning. According to Airey (2012), exposure to disciplinary-specific vocabulary in oral academic contexts, such as presentations, significantly aids vocabulary acquisition because students must actively process and use new terms in real-time discussions.

Furthermore, the benefit of attending EMI lectures for listening comprehension corroborates previous findings by Flowerdew and Miller (1992), who noted that lectures in a second language provide learners with structured exposure to academic language and discourse, facilitating improvements in listening skills. The structured format of lectures, coupled with the rich input of academic language, allows students to build listening comprehension in ways that more informal or unstructured interactions may not.

In terms of reading comprehension, the high ratings associated with reading EMI course materials mirror the conclusions drawn by Hyland (2006), who emphasized the value of subject-specific texts in enhancing students' reading abilities. Academic materials offer consistent exposure to both technical language and complex grammatical structures, enabling learners to improve their comprehension skills. Interestingly, the minimal difference between the effectiveness of reading EMI course materials and reading online EOP materials suggests that both resources play a similar role in enhancing reading comprehension. Gartner and Krasna (2015) pointed out that online materials, while sometimes perceived as less interactive, could still provide valuable input, especially when well-structured and relevant to the learner's field.

Regarding communication skills, giving presentations in EMI programs was identified as the most impactful activity. This result aligns with the findings of Evans and Green (2007), who argued that presenting in a foreign language requires students to practice essential communication skills, including organization, language use, and audience interaction. These factors are essential in fostering speaking and communication abilities. In contrast, extracurricular activities, which received the lowest rating, may be viewed as less beneficial due to their informal and unstructured nature. Although Soruç and Griffiths (2018) suggest that extracurricular activities can improve language use, their impact can vary based on factors like students' engagement and the availability of opportunities for authentic language practice. In this study, it is not compulsory for students to take part in extracurricular activities, which may explain the lower rating. Many students are often passive in their involvement, limiting their chances to practice their language skills in real-world settings.

Finally, for writing skills, students rated writing reports and essays in EMI courses as having a moderate impact. This finding supports Hyland's (2013) view that academic writing assignments provide valuable practice in organizing genre conventions and refining language precision. However, the moderate mean score may reflect the challenges students face when writing in a second language, a task that is often more challenging than listening or speaking skills.

The variations in how students perceived the impact of different activities indicate that while

there is general agreement on the effectiveness of certain activities – such as giving presentations and attending lectures – in enhancing specific language skills, others, like extracurricular activities and writing assignments, may not be seen as equally beneficial. These findings suggest that structured, interactive, and subject-focused activities within EMI environments foster language development more effectively than more informal or passive learning activities.

Conclusion

Summary of the Findings

Students perceived significant improvements in their English proficiency after attending EMI courses, with specialized English vocabulary showing the most notable gains. However, writing skills and the ability to use grammar in daily communication were perceived as the least improved. Third-year students consistently reported greater progress across all skills compared to second-year students, with notable differences in listening, speaking, grammar, and specialized vocabulary acquisition. These year-based differences were statistically significant, highlighting that longer exposure to EMI courses may lead to higher perceived improvements.

Moreover, students identified specific EMI activities that contributed differently to their English language development. Listening and participating in EMI presentations were rated as most effective for vocabulary enhancement, while attending lectures improved listening comprehension, and reading course materials was key for reading skills. Speaking skills benefited most from giving presentations, whereas writing assignments showed only moderate effects. Extracurricular activities were rated as least effective, likely due to their informal and optional nature.

Implications of the Study

Based on the findings of the research, several improvements can be made to enhance EMI teaching and learning. Firstly, there is a need to strengthen teacher training programs, particularly those that focus on both language proficiency and subject-specific EMI strategies. Teachers should be provided with continuous professional development opportunities, including workshops and peer mentoring, to improve their ability to teach in English effectively. It is also important to establish clear assessment criteria that evaluate both content knowledge and language proficiency. Providing bilingual learning materials and language support programs would also benefit students, enabling them to better understand complex concepts while enhancing their English skills.

Promoting more interactive and student-centered teaching methods is essential to further improve EMI teaching. This includes using strategies like flipped classrooms, group discussions, and collaborative projects to increase student engagement and foster active learning. Integrating digital tools and platforms can enhance the learning experience by making content more accessible and encouraging collaboration outside the classroom. Regular monitoring and evaluation of EMI programs through feedback from both students and teachers will provide valuable insights into areas for improvement and help align the programs with the

needs of the learners.

Limitations of the Study

Despite these findings, the study has certain limitations. First, it relies exclusively on self-reported data, which may be influenced by individual biases and differences in self-perception. Additionally, the study does not consider the students' initial English proficiency levels, which could have offered a more detailed understanding of how different activities affect students at various stages of language proficiency.

Future Directions for Further Studies

Future research should aim to include more objective measures of language process, such as pre- and post-tests, to supplement self-reported data and provide a more accurate view of language development. It is also recommended to explore how initial proficiency levels relate to the perceived effectiveness of different EMI activities to determine whether certain activities benefit students with varying proficiency. Finally, incorporating explicit language support into EMI courses could help improve writing skills, offering students the targeted assistance in this area.

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