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How to cite:

Nguyen, An (2021). Internationalisation of Vietnamese higher education through English Medium Instruction programmes: a literature review on outcomes. In: Vietnam Education Symposium 2021, 9-12 Sep 2021, Hochiminh City, Vietnam (Hybrid).

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Vietnam Education Symposium 2021

Internationalisation of Vietnamese higher education
through English Medium Instruction programmes:
a literature review on outcomes

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In this presentation

Backgrounds and overview of EMI research

Vietnamese Higher Education context

Review methods

Review of EMI outcome research

A summary of knowledge gaps

Background and overview of English Medium Instruction research

- **Personal background:** reasons why I decided to study abroad in the UK
- **Internationalisation of higher education** (Knight, 2004; Marginson, 2010; Johnson, 2009)
- **Teaching English as a global language** (Crystal, 2003)
- **Teaching content through English: English Medium Instruction**

‘the use of English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdiction where the first language of the majority of the population is not English’. (Macaro, 2018, p. 1)



Figure 1: Language-content continuum (Macaro, 2018, p.29)

Internationalisation through EMI: a geographical map

- **Europe:** the Bologna Process 1999 (Coleman, 2018; Lueg and Lueg, 2015; Macaro et al., 2018)
- **Middle East:** EMI in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (Belhiah and Elhami, 2014)
- **East Asia:** Globalisation Project in South Korea, Global 30 Project in Japan, Multi-functional EMI in China (Byun et al., 2011; Cho, 2012; Rose et al., 2020)
- **Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America** remain under-researched areas of EMI

Vietnamese Higher Education context

- **An overview of Vietnamese HE sector: ‘standing between flows’**

- **The new mission of Vietnamese HE sector:**

“strengthen the country’s human resources to serve the cause of industrialisation and modernisation within the context of Vietnamese socialist-oriented market economy and international integration” (Resolution No.29-NQ/TW, 2013)

- **‘Standing between flows’** (Le-Ha and Ngoc, 2020)

- Neoliberalism: transfer of institutional and budgetary powers from State to institutions (Huong and Fry, 2004; Oliver et al., 2009)
- Socialism: Doi Moi policy that modernised the economy with Vietnamese characteristics (Pham, 2011), compulsory Marxist-Leninist learning at Vietnamese universities (Ngo, 2020, Nguyen, 2018, Pham, 2018)
- Confucianism: individual beliefs in the role of education and the pursuit of intellectual elitism (Ngo, 2020)

- **Internationalisation at home: what are the aspirations?**

- **At macro-policy level:**

- A quick fix strategy to improve students’ English proficiency (Tri and Moskovesky, 2019)
- Boost the process of industrialisation and modernisation for further international integration (Hamid et al., 2013; Duong and Chua, 2016)

- **At meso-institutional level:**

- Opportunities to attract and recruit international staff and students (Nguyen et al., 2017; Nguyen, Walkinshaw and Pham, 2017)
- Profitability and reputation boost

- **At micro-classroom level:**

- Boost students’ English language skills and employability (Walkinshaw and Oanh, 2014)
- Widen students’ access to English-written resources (Ngo, 2019)
- More international opportunities and further education (Dang and Seals, 2018; Nguyen and Tran, 2018)

Review methods

- **Guidelines on systematic review (Gough et al., 2017)**

- **Inclusion criteria:**

First round of selection: keyword search on online databases (BEI, ERIC, APA Psycinfo, Thu Vien DHQG HN, China Academic Journals): a total of 781 results

- Peer-reviewed articles & doctoral theses
- English, Chinese, and Vietnamese-written resources are considered

Second round of selection: abstract screening: a final total of 41 empirical studies was yielded.

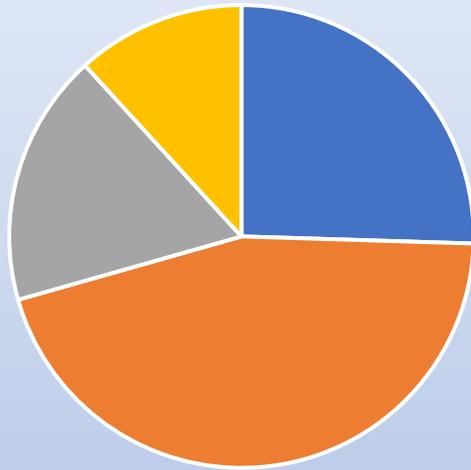
- Reported empirical data on instructional outcomes of EMI
- Framed EMI as content & language-driven programme
- Research contexts in which English is not majority's L1

- **Exclusion criteria:**

- Framed EMI as purely language-learning programme
- Theoretical analyses or systematic reviews
- Other types of unmentioned publications (blog, commentary, book review, Master's dissertations, etc)
- Studies were documented on an Excel sheet with key information recorded in columns for content analysis.

Findings

EMI research geographies



■ Europe ■ East Asia ■ Middle East ■ Others

EMI subjects classification (Macaro et al., 2018)

Hard subjects	Soft subjects
Science, Medical Studies, Engineering, Physics	Economics, Business Administration, Accounting and Finance, History, Philosophy

Research methods used in EMI outcome studies

Interviews/ focus group/ perception questionnaire	Test scores/quantitative questionnaire	Mixed- methods	Experimental research	Multi-method (document analysis, classroom observation, interviews)
14	10	10	5	2
Total number of studies reviewed				41

Breakdown of total studies reviewed in terms of outcome focus

EMI outcomes as language-content development			EMI outcomes as others
Language development	Content learning	Both	
16	11	10	4
Total number of studies reviewed			41

Findings	Language-content outcomes			Other outcomes
	Language	Content	Language-content	
Positive gains	2	3	2	0
Negative loss	5	4	1	4
Mixed findings	9	4	7	0
Total number of studies reviewed				41

Findings

• EMI impacts on language gains

- Main methods employed to determine language gains of EMI:
 - **General English test scores** (e.g: national high-stake English tests, end-of-term scores, GPA on EFL subjects) (Lei & Hu, 2014; Nurshatayeva & Page, 2020; Yang, 2015)
 - **Component English skills performance** (e.g: reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, pragmatic competence, lexical diversity and complexity) (Aguilar & Muñoz, 2014; Coşgun & Hasırcı, 2017; Taguchi, 2014; Tai, 2015; Vidal & Jarvis, 2020)
 - **Self-reported perceptions** (e.g: perceived language gains from EMI learning, language learning motivation, English self-efficacy beliefs) (Aizawa & Rose, 2019; Chapple, 2015; Kirkgöz, 2009; Lei & Hu, 2014; Rogier, 2012; Wannagat, 2007; Yang, 2015)
- Findings:
 - Mostly mixed findings, with improvement focused on receptive linguistic skills (listening, reading); not so much on productive skills (speaking, writing).
 - Insignificant gains in writing and aspects of language knowledge (vocabulary, grammar)
 - Positive gains only in students' perceptions of improved self-efficacy beliefs, motivation and less anxiety
- Various indicators of language gains and inconsistencies in research methods led to difficulty to identify patterns, and determine effects of EMI on linguistic skills
 - A holistic, comprehensive framework on defining EMI language gains is in need
 - Research methods that enable valid, reliable, fair assessments of EMI language outcomes is required
 - Consideration of contextual, learners' individual, and socio-cultural factors is called for

• EMI impacts on content learning

- Content learning is measured through **GPA scores** (Nurshatayeva & Page, 2020; Henandez-Nanclares & Jemenez-Munoz, 2017; Dafouz et al., 2014; Zaif et al., 2017; Dafouz & Camacho-Minano, 2016); **students' learning reports** (Chuang, 2015); experimental test scores (Vinke, 1995; Tatzl & Messanrz, 2013); **self-reported perceptions** (Cho, 2012)
- Findings: conflicting evidence on whether EMI has adversely affected learning, with slightly more studies confirming a domain loss of content comprehension
- Remained issues:
 - Lack of evidence to track changes in learning over time
 - Lack of comparison between control and treatment groups
 - Studies overtly focused on using GPA as an indicator of academic success – an inadequate measure of learning

• EMI impacts on language-content learning

- Mostly mixed findings with language impacts more clearly defined and measured than content impacts. Studies mostly adopted a mixed-method design to measure outcomes in both learning and content.
- Remained issues:
 - Inconsistencies in methodological techniques (mostly qualitative perception-based research) led to difficulties to compare and contrast outcomes
 - Lack of a clear theoretical framework to explain the implications of language-content findings

Findings

- **EMI outcomes beyond language-content learning**

- **Learner self-concept and identity formation outcomes:**

- EMI as a product of internationalisation led to homogenisation of cultural values
- Privilege-afforded class with ambivalence about global-local nexus of values and beliefs (Gu and Lee, 2019)
- Learners' self-concept and internality compared to L1 MOI learners (Chan, 2007)

- **Knowledge production outcomes**

- EMI conceals a hidden hegemonic hierarchy and promoted uneven development of knowledge production
 - Native versus non-native speakerism
 - Americanised academic norms and discipline-specific knowledge limited to the Global North (Song, 2021)

- **Social justice outcomes**

- Effects of EMI policies on producing social class divisions.
- English and local MOI students forming self and othering representation
- Adverse consequences on social cohesion and social inequalities (Hamid, et al., 2013)

- **Remained issues:**

- Lack of clear theoretical framework to explain relationships between language-content learning and other outcomes

Summary

- A strong link between internationalisation of higher education and English Medium Instruction provision.
- The development of EMI is an ‘unstoppable train’ (Macaro, 2015, p.7)
- The terminology and underlying assumptions of EMI is subject to contextualisation and readaptation.
- Knowledge gaps include EMI research in language-content learning and other forms of outcomes at higher education level.
- Calls for a comprehensive framework, both methodologically and theoretically to evaluate the effectiveness of EMI programmes on students’ learning outcomes.

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Thank you very much for your attention!

**For further questions and comments,
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