

Title: A Study of Student Perceptions of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Courses in Taiwan's Higher Education

Authors: Avanzado Renz Abanto – 張智惠 Chih-hui Chang – 蕭自強 Tieu Tu Cuong

Emails: renztavanzado@gmail.com; chang00@mail.dyu.edu.tw; tucuongtdn@gmail.com

Affiliation: MA in English, Department of English, Da-Yeh University

Abstract

Research Overview

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) has become a cornerstone of Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Policy and the BEST Project. This pilot study evaluates EMI implementation at a private university in central Taiwan through the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model. The research highlights both the strengths and challenges of EMI, situating student perceptions within broader bilingual education reforms.

Purpose of Study

The study aims to investigate how undergraduate and graduate students perceive EMI courses, identifying areas of effectiveness and difficulty across contextual, instructional, procedural, and outcome dimensions. By applying the CIPP framework, the research provides a holistic evaluation of EMI effectiveness and emphasizes the importance of student-centered pedagogy in ensuring equitable bilingual education.

Research Methods

A quantitative design was employed, using a 20-item, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire aligned to the CIPP dimensions, complemented by three open-ended questions. The demographic profile of the study shows that data were collected from a total of 57 undergraduate and graduate students, both local and international, between March and April 2026. Of this sample, 29 were female students (50.9%), and 28 were male students (49.1%), reflecting a nearly balanced gender

distribution. In terms of academic level, 22 respondents (38.6%) were undergraduates, 34 respondents (59.6%) were graduate students, and 1 respondent (1.8%) was a doctoral student. Regarding EMI exposure, 27 respondents (47.4%) reported taking more than five EMI courses, 14 respondents (24.6%) had taken four to five courses, and 16 respondents (28.0%) had taken one to three courses. This consolidated profile highlights a balanced gender representation, a majority of graduate students, and substantial EMI exposure, with nearly half of the participants demonstrating extensive familiarity with EMI instruction.

Results and Discussion

The quantitative analysis of student perceptions across the four CIPP components reveals a nuanced evaluation of EMI implementation. Within the Context dimension ($M = 3.55$), the highest agreement was for institutional support being adequate ($M = 3.92$), followed by clarity of learning goals ($M = 3.87$), relevance of EMI to the program ($M = 3.78$), supportive class environment ($M = 3.63$), and ease of understanding lessons ($M = 3.55$). As for Input ($M = 3.82$), students most strongly agreed that materials are easy to understand in English ($M = 4.05$), teachers are proficient in English ($M = 3.94$), curriculum design supports EMI ($M = 3.81$), resources are sufficient ($M = 3.72$), and institutional preparation is adequate ($M = 3.60$). In the Process component ($M = 3.60$), interaction was rated most highly as helping to understand ($M = 4.00$), followed by engaging classroom activities ($M = 3.85$), clarity of teacher explanations ($M = 3.74$), helpfulness of feedback ($M = 3.65$), and appropriate lecture pacing ($M = 3.60$). Finally, in the Product dimension ($M = 4.03$), students emphasized that EMI prepares them for global opportunities ($M = 4.15$), improves academic performance ($M = 4.05$), boosts confidence ($M = 3.98$), enhances English proficiency ($M = 3.92$), and contributes to long-term learning outcomes ($M = 3.87$).

Collectively, these results show that while institutional support, materials, and interactive processes are valued, the strongest perceptions center on EMI's role in preparing students for global opportunities and improving academic performance. In contrast, relatively lower ratings in contextual clarity and lecture pacing highlight areas where pedagogical refinement is needed to maximize the effectiveness of EMI instruction.

The data from the open-ended questions provide deeper insight into students' experiences with EMI. Most participants reported few or no major challenges, often describing their learning as "easy and smooth." When difficulties were noted, they centered on speaking anxiety, grammar accuracy, pronunciation, and comprehension of discipline-specific vocabulary. Importantly, several students emphasized that obstacles were linked more to instructional delivery—such as unclear explanations or heavy reliance on slides—than to EMI itself.

Students identified interactive and participatory approaches as particularly effective for learning. Group discussions, peer collaboration, and real-life examples were frequently cited as enhancing comprehension and engagement. Independent learning strategies, including reading books, listening to podcasts, and watching English media, were also valued. Preparation practices such as vocabulary building, note-taking, and the use of AI tools further supported learning outcomes. These findings highlight the complementary role of classroom interaction and autonomous learning in strengthening EMI effectiveness.

Suggestions for improvement focused on more engaging, student-centered pedagogy, stronger language and academic support, and lecturer training to refine delivery methods. Despite these recommendations, several respondents expressed satisfaction with current EMI practices, affirming that "so far EMI is working for me." Collectively, the qualitative results reinforce the quantitative findings, underscoring EMI's effectiveness while pointing to areas for pedagogical refinement.

Conclusion

Overall, EMI is well accepted and perceived as effective in Taiwan's higher education system, particularly in preparing students for global opportunities. Its success depends less on language ability alone and more on instructional quality, interactive pedagogy, and institutional support. The findings underscore the need for continuous evaluation and refinement of teaching practices to ensure sustainable and equitable EMI implementation under Taiwan's bilingual transformation.