

English as a Medium of Instruction: Challenges for Vietnamese Tertiary Lecturers

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The development of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is of great interest to language and language policy researchers in an era of globalization and internationalization. Despite recognition of a number of implementational problems and constraints, EMI has been widely introduced into various non-native English-speaking (NNES) countries. The question of what challenges face stakeholders in the implementation of EMI was our major focus in a two-year project that investigated a new EMI undergraduate program in Vietnam. Selected findings from the study's interview component reveal that lecturers were challenged by their own language abilities, students' language competence and learning styles, pedagogical issues, and resource availability. Based on these findings, suggestions are made for enhancing the success of similar programs.

Keywords: English as a Medium of Instruction, globalization, challenges, lecturers, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

It is now a truism to state that English is spreading rapidly around the world. Speakers of English as a first, second and foreign language are said to have increased from 1.2 billion in 2003 to 1.5 billion in 2006 (Crystal, 2006). The

most common factors accounting for this surge in international use include globalization, economic development, internationalization, technological development and the expansion of education (Coleman, 2011c; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2012b; Hamid, Nguyen, & Baldauf Jr, 2013).

The impact of English means in many international educational contexts there is a rapidly growing tendency for English to be adopted as the medium of instruction, even when a majority of the population speaks a local language. For example, Wachter and Maiworm (2008, as cited in Doiz et al., 2012b, p. xvii) note that at over 400 European higher education institutions there were 2400 English-medium programs in 2007, which represented a 340-percent increase within bachelor and master courses compared with 2002.

However, the rapid spread of EMI does not imply immediate success. In fact, the realities of implementing EMI. Hamid et al. (2013), who examined medium-of-instruction (MOI) policies in ten Asian countries, conclude that implementation is “fraught with difficulties and challenges” (p.11). Examples from India, Indonesia and Pakistan suggest that EMI leads to social division (Meganathan, 2011), inequitable resource allocation (Coleman, 2011a), and “language apartheid” (Coleman, 2011b), a phenomenon whereby local languages are dominated by English at school. Further difficulties such as shortage of competent teachers and learners, inadequate resources and support, content and language trade-offs, and inappropriate methodology are also reported in school settings implementing EMI (Byun et al., 2011; Coleman, 2006; Hamid et al., 2013; Kennedy, 2011; Kyeyune, 2010; Manh, 2012; Sert, 2008; Shohamy, 2012; Vinke, Snippe, & Jochems, 1998). Other possible reasons for failure are naive goals mandated from macro-level policy makers without careful consideration of the power and agency of micro-level actors, especially teachers and students, or inadequate resources (Hamid et al., 2013; Lia, Leungb, & Kemberb, 2001; Manh, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2004).

This paper examines the implementation of a recently introduced Vietnamese EMI undergraduate program. We begin by analysing the context of Vietnam and the forces driving the adoption of EMI. Using interview data,

we then investigate key challenges facing the lecturers, who are key players in achieving the EMI language policy goals (Dang, Nguyen, & Le, 2013; Kaplan & Baldauf Jr, 2003). Based on these findings, recommendations to promote lecturers' agency and improve the implementation of EMI policies are made.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of EMI Issues

Defining EMI from the language teaching literature is not a straightforward task. EMI is usually traced to the European content and language integrated learning (CLIL) movement, content-based teaching (CBT) and bilingual education in native English-speaking (NES) contexts. However, the concept extends beyond methodology into policy-making and language planning. Moreover, EMI contexts are not limited to so-called NES countries (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Kachru, 1985; Moag, 1982) and every context has different focal concerns.

EMI contexts vary according to the relationships to the first language (L1). Where English is the first language of the majority of the population and the main instructional language in schools, the main issues, such as language and content integration (Davison & Williams, 2001) and the roles of language and content teachers (Davison, 2006), are at the "micro level" (Tsui & Tollefson, 2004) of the classroom. In non-NES situations EMI may be mandated as a medium of instruction by governmental or institutional language policies. In this context, EMI needs to be examined at both the macro level of language policies and the micro level of EMI practitioners.

Macro-level concerns include the socio-economic contexts of EMI policies (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004), the role of English in language policies (Chang, 2006; Coleman, 2010), the relationship between English and the local languages (Coleman, 2005, 2011c), the effectiveness of the EMI policies

(Coleman, 2011a), and factors influencing EMI adoption (Crystal, 2011; Lo Bianco, 2010; Wilkinson, 2012). On the one hand, English is assumed to play an important role in “increasing employability, facilitating international mobility (migration, tourism, studying abroad), unlocking development opportunity and accessing crucial information, and acting as an impartial language” (Coleman, 2011b, p. 18). Therefore, it is often greatly welcomed by governments as well as individuals (Erling, Seargeant, Solly, Chowdhury, & Rahman, 2012; Le, 2007) with a tendency for English to be introduced at an early educational level (Kyeyune, 2010; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2011; Tien, 2013).

On the other hand, implementational realities can have unexpected outcomes. For example, in Sub-Saharan African countries, Williams (2011) identifies problems of early exposure where primary children in EMI classes become educationally disadvantaged because they “do not understand the teachers or the textbooks” (p. 41). The mismatch between goals and actual implementation is also acknowledged in studies in Asia (Hamid, 2013; Lia et al., 2001; Manh, 2012; Sert, 2008). Kaplan, Baldauf Jr, and Kamwangamalu (2011) indicate up to 12 prominent causes of failure, including inadequate learning time, inappropriate materials and methodology, insufficient teacher training, and under-resourcing. They also claim that adopting EMI as a “silver bullet” to solve major social problems is “a fiction” (Kaplan et al., 2011, p. 119).

As Kaplan (2009) notes macro-level studies fail to depict the subtle changes EMI imposes on individual actors, particularly teachers and students, and a lack of micro consultation in language policy-making is a significant cause of failure. Therefore, recently, the need for a shift into investigation of micro-level EMI has been noted (Dang et al., 2013; Kaplan et al., 2011; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007). Following this trend, this paper analyses a specific micro issue, namely, challenges facing teachers in new EMI contexts. Consequently, the next part of our review focuses selectively on this aspect.

Challenges for EMI Lecturers

The literature identifies four major EMI challenges facing teachers, including teachers' language abilities, students' proficiency, appropriate methods, and inadequate resources. First, teachers are reported to experience linguistic difficulties. Vinke et al. (1998), for instance, report that EMI led to higher demands on the teaching skills of content lecturers' in the Netherlands: the lecturers employed slower speech rates and less flexibility in dealing with unpredicted incidents and various challenges in language use. They had difficulty in expressing themselves effectively, especially in paraphrasing, searching for words, and refining statements. Such factors potentially result in detrimental effects on students' learning, such as less content coverage and knowledge loss. Similarly, Smith (2004, as cited in Coleman, 2006) identifies 15 common problems that European tertiary EMI programs are facing, for example, the need to improve language skills for local students and staff and the supply of competent English-speaking content lecturers. Shohamy (2012) echoes these concerns in the context of Israel: "It is often the case that academic professors will have high knowledge in one of the areas [content], not the other [language]" (p. 203).

The second challenge for EMI teachers is a search for effective pedagogy. Wilkinson (2005) found that Dutch content lecturers had to spend more time using EMI; the communication became "poorer" as a result of their weaker ability to use the instructional language orally, which clearly lowered "the quality of education" (n.p.). His findings suggest that EMI can lead to effective content learning if instructional techniques (e.g. codeswitching between L1 and L2) are adapted, more time is allocated, and most of the program is offered in EMI. However, the appropriateness of 'codeswitching' in EMI remains controversial. When communication in English fails, teachers may take it for granted that the mother tongue will provide a substitute for learning. Kyeyune (2010), nevertheless, points out that this alternative is pedagogically "wrong" because it fails "to facilitate the development of learners' academic literacies" (p. 179). Unsupportive

evidence for codeswitching is also found in other studies (Ibrahim, 2001; Mohamed, 2013; Shohamy, 2012). In fact, Ball and Lindsay (2012), in a recent study with Spanish lecturers, suggest that linguistic and pedagogic competences? are interrelated and that pedagogical competence is more important to facilitate students' learning. The limited literature on EMI pedagogy does not provide clear guidance on the most appropriate teaching methods to compensate language difficulties.

Studies in African and Asian countries extend the concerns to students' language abilities (Byun et al., 2011; Huong, 2010; Kyeyune, 2010; Manh, 2012; Tsuneyoshi, 2005). Kyeyune (2010), for example, observing classroom interactions, reports the frustrating communication failures in Ugandan classrooms because of students' low English proficiency. He writes: "Teachers therefore assume their students to be fluent in the language when they are not" (p.175). Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2012a) and Ibrahim (2001) break down the concept of students' linguistic abilities into Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), based on Cummins' (1979) distinction. Accordingly, even when students' interpersonal communication is effective, they may struggle with EMI.

The final challenge causing implementational problems is limited resources (Dang et al., 2013; Huong, 2010; Manh, 2012). Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, and Bryant (2011), examining several Asian countries' language policies, conclude that "funding for normal programmes, the training of teachers and money for textbooks are all inadequate" (p. 318).

In short, lecturers face multiple challenges in adopting EMI. Although any specific context is unlikely to experience all these problems, it is worth examining one context as a case study to draw out implications that may be relevant to others. The next section examines the context of Vietnam with reference to its agendas to adopt EMI in order to clarify the broader policy landscape within which the study occurs.

ELT DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

The Spread of English

The Vietnamese socio-economic condition since 1986 has changed the role of English in the country (Le, 2007; London, 2006; World Bank, 2014; Wright, 2002). Previously, compared with Russian, English was a minor foreign language. When Vietnam initiated dramatic change towards a centralized market economy, more open to the western world, a huge flow of foreign investments began. English became an attribute of development, a key to access “knowledge about the miracles of science and technology,” “a better standard of living” (Denham, 1992, p. 64), and “an unquestionable asset” (Le, 2007, p. 172) for any Vietnamese seeking a well-paid job in foreign companies. Diplomatic successes in the 1990s created even greater demand for English, leading to “English language fever” (Le, 2007, p. 172). Indeed, this “fever” helped spread English to almost all educational levels. In 2000, 98% of Vietnamese school students chose to study English as a compulsory subject (Vang, 2003, p. 458). At tertiary level, (Le, 2007, p. 167) reported that English of four main foreign languages was the choice of 90% of students. Studying English in Vietnam tertiary education can be typified as an “end” to accumulating credits (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 35).

However, unplanned English development incurred multiple consequences. Initially, its rapid growth resulted in serious shortages of quality ELT teachers for lower education levels (Tien, 2013) and teacher proficiency in English remains a major problem (Hoang, 2012). Another consequence is the unsystematic nature of the English programs introduced into the education system. Since 1980, when English was first introduced in Years 2010-12, various changes have been made, including the extension of English at high school to all grades, and the introduction of English in primary schools. Textbooks developed to meet these changes are, nevertheless, all still available for use, creating lack of continuity and confused sequencing of programming across different learning levels (Tien, 2013). In addition, these

pre-university programs focus mainly on reading and grammar, and learning is assessed primarily through written tests (Denham, 1992; Le & Barnard, 2009; Tien, 2013; Van, 2008).

A further consequence is the remedial approach adopted in tertiary English education. University students have diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds, coming both from major cities where English learning is better resourced and rural areas, which offer only basic language learning opportunities. In addition, not all students complete university English entrance examinations. Nevertheless, new students are enrolled into the same classes, regardless of English level. Given this situation, it is often assumed that their English needs are elementary and therefore problematic, thus disadvantaging and demotivating those aiming to achieve higher English levels (Dong, 2007). Van (2008) describes the situation:

Learning English is not relevant to learners' purposes. They can't understand a lecture in English. They can't communicate in English (in daily or professional situations). They can't read their professional or common sense reading materials texts. They can't write in English. Therefore, although their motivation to learn English is high, they achieve very little. Nevertheless, English is still a subject at higher education institutions. (p. 32) (Translation provided by the first author.)

In summary, since post-reunification? from 1986, English education developments in Vietnam have been greatly influenced by political and economic changes. This rapid and unplanned spread of English? has widened its availability and scope. However, it has also resulted in consequences which have impacted English teaching, such as shortage of qualified teachers, incomprehensive curricula, and lack of differentiation in tertiary programs.

Recent English Initiatives

There has been increasing recognition of the need to address the English language teaching situation described above (Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Le & Barnard, 2009; Nguyen, 2009; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2011; Tien, 2013). The Prime Ministerial Decision number 1400/QĐ-TTg (30 September 2008) launched a national initiative on foreign language teaching and learning in the educational system from 2008 to 2020 and led to investment of VND 9,378 billion in a 12-year period. This policy is known as the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (Hung, 2011).

A major development in this policy is to expand EMI courses: “educational institutions are encouraged to develop and implement bilingual programs” (Vietnam Government, 2008). Courses can be established in both high schools and higher education institutions; consequently, multiple EMI programs have been offered in both public and private universities since 2008. One example is Vietnam National University’s International Standards Programs (ISP), offered in 16 training courses in 2008. Another example is 30 Advanced Programs released by Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) at several higher education institutions nationwide from 2008 to 2015 (MOET, 2008).

The argument for establishing these programs is that EMI will improve the quality of English learning, when English learning is directly linked to content (Huong, 2010; Van, 2008, p. 34). Van (2008) argues:

Experience in some Asian countries such as Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia shows that in order to improve ELT quality in universities, the most effective way is to turn universities into a bilingual environment in which mother tongue is the means of general communication and instructional medium of social science subjects and English is the instructional medium of science and technology. (p. 34)
(Translation provided by the first author.)

Thus, recent ELT innovations in Vietnamese university settings are shifting the focus towards English as a means of communication for study, and subsequently, for work. This process has occurred in two stages. In the first stage, the rapid spread of English resulted in the lack of quality teaching and learning and failure to accommodate more advanced learners. In the second stage these problems have been addressed by expanding EMI to both basic- and advanced-level English learners. It could be argued, however, that this trend appears to originate from top-down enthusiasm to integrate Vietnam into the international community, rather than from more careful bottom-up consideration of how the changes could be best implemented. To provide some understanding of how EMI is being implemented at the micro-level, we analyse interview data from an EMI case study (2011-2012).

THE STUDY

The study investigated the implementation of an EMI program in a Vietnamese public university (hereafter ISP), which had been supported by a Western university. To be admitted to ISP, students had to pass a competitive entrance examination and an English placement test, and on entry were entitled to higher financial government support. This four-year program required students to achieve IELTS 5.5 before they entered the EMI courses. Upon graduation, students were required to submit IELTS 6.0 (or equivalent). The assumption was that students' language skills would improve from 5.5 to 6.0 through their immersion in EMI content courses. Lecturers should be either Vietnamese who can use English for instruction or native speakers of English.

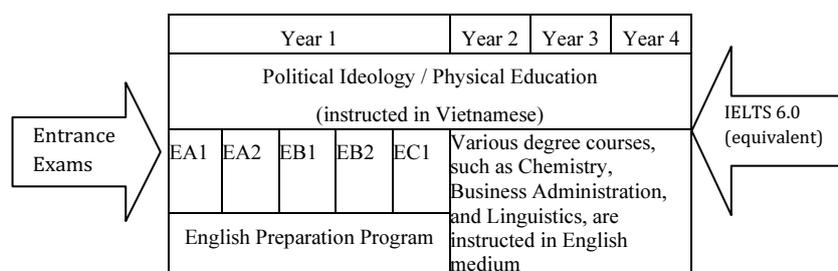


FIGURE 1
Four-year Undergraduate ISP at a Vietnamese University

In the first year, the students took a test and were placed in English language courses (EA1-EC1), according to their Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels. In the following years, they took major courses, which were instructed in English.

The component of the study that investigated lecturer perspectives¹ was conducted in two phases. The first phase employed a questionnaire, involving 71 lecturers, exploring their perceptions of students' English needs and their comments on the implementation of the EMI program. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions, including both closed-ended and open-ended items. Descriptive analysis of the data was adopted, using a needs analysis framework dangling modifier (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). At the end of the questionnaire the participants were invited to leave their contact information if they were willing to participate in the follow-up interviews. Findings from this questionnaire were used to develop themes for further investigation in the study's second phase, which were interviews and class observation. Three major themes emerged from the questionnaire data: students' language abilities, learning considerations (methodology and concepts of teaching and learning) and available resources (including lecturers' competence in EMI). These broad themes were used to develop questions for the follow-up interviews in the second phase, which aimed to

¹ The study also included a student component.

explore how needs were being met and the challenges students and lecturers were encountering in EMI implementation. The purpose for using various data types was a methodological decision to increase credibility of the conclusions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Within the scope of this paper, we will focus on the findings related to challenges derived from the lecturer interviews in the second phase.

Research Questions

The lecturer interviews aimed to answer three research questions:

1. What do (language and content) lecturers perceive to be their students' English needs?
2. How well do lecturers think students' needs are met?
3. What challenges do lecturers face in teaching an EMI course?

As indicated, in this study we focus on the challenges facing the EMI lecturers.

The Participants

There were 16 interview participants, all of whom taught EMI courses. Specifically, 5 language lecturers (LL) taught English B1 to first-year students in the English preparation course (see Figure 1). Nine content lecturers (CL), who specialised in six different subjects: Biology, Business Administration, Physics, Computer Science, Environment Science, and Linguistics, taught EMI content courses to second-year students. Two lecturers taught both EMI content and language (LCL) courses; these lecturers were thus involved in both subject teaching and language teaching. Two lecturers were American and one Canadian, while the other 13 were Vietnamese. Six Vietnamese lecturers had postgraduate degrees/training from English-speaking countries such as America, Australia, and Canada, and six had received postgraduate training in non-English-speaking countries,

namely India, German, France, Japan, Norway, and Russia. One language lecturer had studied English only in Vietnam. Of the 16 lecturers, only four had more than three years' experience of teaching EMI.

Data Collection Instruments

The semi-structured interview was conducted by the first author. The questions were derived from the questionnaire findings, from which the authors identified three major themes: content areas, student learning (methodology and concepts of teaching and learning) and available resources (including teachers and their attitude towards EMI). The questions were also translated into Vietnamese to provide participants with a choice of language, in an acknowledgment of Le's (2012) observation that interviews in Vietnamese are likely to be preferred by the participants. As expected, all Vietnamese participants chose Vietnamese and the three non-Vietnamese lecturers used English.

Procedures

After email explanations on the interviewer and the purpose of the interview, the time and place for an interview was decided with participating lecturers. As few interviewees had their own office on campus, most interviews were conducted in the classroom, which offered privacy after students left. Others took place in quiet areas such as a staff room or restaurant where lecturers preferred. Each semi-structured interview (Richards, 2003; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003) was approximately 30 minutes long depending on the number of questions and interviewees' availability. With permission, all interviews were audio taped and transcribed for Nvivo coding, using a constant comparative analysis method (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify key themes, each of which was traced through the data to identify confirming or disconfirming segments (Kavanagh, 2009) and to avoid personal bias (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The

interviewees were anonymised? The interview data were anonymised and numbered consecutively.

FINDINGS

Four major challenges emerged: lecturers' language abilities, students' language abilities and learning styles, pedagogical issues, and resources.

Lecturers' Language Abilities

To be a lecturer for the ISP program did not require evidence of English proficiency; the only criterion was being able to use English. However, lecturing in English requires specific types of language skills appropriate to pedagogy. While lecturers might consider themselves skilled in English reading or writing, they found lecturing demanding, as content lecturer 8 explained:

Learning in English and teaching in English are two different things. During my doctoral study, reading comprehension was very good. The so-called communicating or presenting in English was not frequent. I also did some presentations on a weekly or monthly basis, but it was very different from lecturing in front of the students. It is easier to present to your fellow colleagues than to your students, for example. (CL 8)

The instructors felt more challenged when their "foreign accents" and "pronunciation errors" could not satisfy students who expected native-like American and British accents (Ton & Pham, 2010). Lecturer 11 said:

There is an issue. I told students that it is not necessary to speak a 'perfect English' as a native English speaker.... Of

course, there are some errors in pronunciation. (CL 11)

When lecturers were confident and perceived that students understood them, different accents and occasional pronunciation errors were seen as less problematic. However, some lecturers were concerned that their language abilities might negatively influence students' English or affect their understanding of content:

I am always aware of helping students [to learn English] to the extent or at my ability only. I rated my English ability as good, but I am not sure if I am of that level. Maybe between 'average' and 'good' [laughing]. Therefore, the lecturers who themselves are not really good at English might spoil their students' English if they tried to help. (CL 14)

But even in the simplest language, it is technical concept, so it is not easy to understand immediately. And because students did not understand, they asked questions. But the lecturers themselves answered in English, which was their second language, so it seemed that they tried to explain, but they were not confident and they explained in Vietnamese so that students could understand. (CL 7)

While some lecturers reported that they had attended EMI courses in a non-English-speaking country (Lecturers 8 and 11), others regretted that they lacked formal training in English and had few opportunities to use the language (Lecturers 14 and 16). Use of English as the instructional language was clearly a key issue for the lecturers, the majority of whom were Vietnamese.

Students' Language Abilities and Learning Styles

Language problems were exacerbated when lecturers had to work with

students with diverse language abilities. Questionnaire data indicated that students' language learning experiences ranged from one to twelve years. This difference appeared to be the consequence of the emerging Vietnamese school language policy, described previously. Nevertheless, through a written placement test, they all enrolled with little differentiation into a one-year language preparation program, causing great difficulty for lecturers:

I had a big issue with students' diverse language ability. I think it is the greatest challenge. When students are of different levels, it is difficult to select a threshold to teach. Well, for good students, you just need to speak briefly and they will get the point. But for lower level students, I have to adjust. (CL 9)

Specifically, language lecturers found it challenging to improve the ability of lower-level students, especially when it was combined with content teaching:

But I don't feel like they fit the lower levels very well because I feel with 20 classes, there are a wide range of levels. And I almost feel like frustration at the lowest students where I mean ideally you want them to be at a level where they understand a lot, and it's a little bit above their levels, and that they are learning, but not frustrated. (LL 3)

If students had achieved the standard, their speaking, listening, reading were good, I could have more comfort in my teaching and focus more on the content. But here, [I have to take care] both content and language, so very hard. (LCL 1)

The diversity of students' learning styles and personalities also challenged their teaching. The lecturers commented on group dynamics or saw students as inactive and unmotivated.

The Oriental tradition, being very reserved. So the class atmosphere was not as interactional as I expected. (CL 15)

They were not confident or active, for example. I tried to be friendly, to prompt the ideas. But habit is something difficult to change. (LL 2)

In contrast, Lecturers 2 and 13 saw their students as dynamic and eager to learn:

In the same activity, students from Hanoi or big cities who had learned much English before were very welcome. They all said, "Let me, let me do it." (LL 2)

Actually, they really want a chance to produce the language. They love activities....they are not great listeners. (LCL 13)

While lecturer opinions on student language abilities varied, this was also an area that caused ongoing challenges.

Pedagogical Issues

Pedagogical issues affected both experienced and novice lecturers, whose EMI experience ranged only from four months to three years. As the program was new, they continually searched for suitable teaching strategies, and codeswitching was one example. When lecturers perceived difficulties in instructional interaction they reverted to Vietnamese.

During the lecture, there was time when I had to introduce some new terms or answer students' questions, things I feel I couldn't explain thoroughly or express opinions easily, hence difficult for the students to understand. Then I think it was

necessary to switch into Vietnamese. (CL 14)

The decision to persist with English could also be motivated by instrumental rather than pedagogical reasons and could cause indecision or tension, as highlighted by two of the lecturers:

In general, the students did not like EMI. They preferred Vietnamese (laughing)...Generally, I lectured in English before. It means it is expected to teaching in English, but the students asked me to teach in Vietnamese, but the school required EMI, so finally it is English. (CL 10)

The advantage of using Vietnamese on this EMI program was to help the students to understand things quickly. If they understood it, they would be more motivated. The disadvantage was when Vietnamese was used regularly; they would prefer Vietnamese to English. Obviously, they prefer a language that helps them understand better. Then we were deviated from the goal, e.g. to help students comprehend English. Both good and bad. (CL 08)

Beyond the issue of codeswitching, lecturers struggled to find effective teaching methods. Most felt that little pedagogical support was available to them, and that they had mainly learned from experience. Some saw workshops or meetings with fellow teaching staff as desirable in order to share good practice. For example:

I think presenting research about what works with teaching in the classroom settings. I think giving some examples of activities that can be used. Maybe giving guidance on adapting the materials that have been chosen. Maybe some introduction to the curriculum outline and maybe the explanation of why

certain books were chosen, so the persons who have laid out the curriculum. (CL 4)

And the second thing we would suggest is a training workshop in which the lecturers can sit together and discuss how they teach this group of students Sharing experience. (LL 2)

In EMI situations, it seems that pedagogical challenges intertwined with language challenges exacerbate the classroom teaching situation.

Resources

To be eligible for the program, lecturers must meet at least two requirements: English language and subject expertise. However, a substantial number of senior academics were originally trained in Russian rather than English. Meanwhile, young lecturers with better English skills have not developed high levels of expertise. This situation limits availability of experienced lecturers to lecture for the EMI program.

Moreover, foreign lecturers' salaries represent a high university cost. The workloads of EMI lecturers are increased, particularly when subjects are offered in English for the first time:

For the new syllabus, I had to redesign slides, update information as in the course provided by our partner university. This is a challenge. (CL 8)

I think there are two big challenges. When we work with professors from our partner university, you should have enough expert knowledge and English to discuss. Without the two things, you are inactive. (CL 16)

Besides the shortage of qualified teaching staff and inadequate supplies of

reference materials, teaching equipment, Internet access, and electricity cause further obstacles for the lecturers:

Now neither lecturers nor students are good enough. Neither are the facilities. For example, in other countries, their international standard programs utilise lots of IT applications, e.g. online library, online submission, online assignments. Those things are not applicable in our situation. Even the access to reference materials is limited. We can access some free websites, though. (CL 14)

I have the, you know, I have little problems with the equipment. On some several occasions when the stereo system doesn't work or there's no electricity in the classroom and I've prepared material and I can't do anything with them. (LCL 13)

Thus, resources provide challenges in terms of both human expertise and physical and material facilities.

DISCUSSION

The increase of EMI is a worldwide phenomenon that is likely to expand into the future. However, its introduction is not unproblematic. The first major challenge, lecturers' own English abilities, is in line with findings in previous studies (Kyeyune, 2010; Manh, 2012; Vinke et al., 1998; Wilkinson, 2005). Their own experiences of studying through EMI do not automatically enable lecturers to teach in English. To become a successful EMI instructor requires combinations of linguistic, academic, and pedagogical competence, which few lecturers possess (Shohamy, 2012). In this study, several Vietnamese content lecturers experienced difficulty in using English, especially in "explaining things" and "answering questions", also found to be

a common issue for Vietnamese ELT teachers in schools (Hoang, 2012; Hung & Dudzik, 2010; Tien, 2013). A natural policy reaction is to invest funding to improve teachers' language proficiency as in the National Foreign Language Project 2020. However, improvement needs time (Donald Freeman, personal communication, 4th March 2014) during which teachers must face their immediate teaching challenges. Moreover, as Kyeyune (2010) highlights, English proficiency is not the only determinant of successful instruction; in her case study, the teachers' domination of classroom talk failed to effectively facilitate learners' academic literacy development. The prevailing issue of EMI language use may overshadow the importance of other pedagogical competences (Byun et al., 2011). While considerable effort may be needed for EMI linguistic competence, the literature shows that short-term training can be an effective solution (Ball & Lindsay, 2012).

Students' English abilities and learning styles are also potential challenges for EMI lecturers. In this study, language lecturers believed it was difficult to improve students' language skills to equip them for EMI within the short time available. Meanwhile, students' diverse language abilities required more effort and resources from content lecturers who had to spend time adapting teaching materials and activities. Increased workload was, similarly reported for Japanese EMI lecturers (Tsuneyoshi, 2005), a demotivating factor in their commitment to EMI. Suggestions to address these issues include establishing an English threshold and improving students' English proficiency above that level (Byun et al., 2011); otherwise, students suffer from both language and content loss in EMI environments (Kyeyune, 2010; Mohamed, 2013). However, it is also argued that a threshold measure might promote elitism (Bruton, 2013; Coleman, 2011a).

Appropriate EMI pedagogy, especially in relation to codeswitching (Barnard & McLellan, 2013) or translanguaging is also a key challenge highlighted in this study. Macaro (2001, 2013) reviews three different positions towards codeswitching. On the one hand, codeswitching can offer efficient pedagogical and educational usage (Barnard & McLellan, 2013; Cook, 2010; Macaro, 2013) when teachers share the first language with their

learners. In contrast, the second position maintains that English can only be learned through English (Chambers, 1991; Halliwell & Jones, 1991; Macdonald, 1993, as cited in Macaro, 2001). Alternatively, L1 is seen as beneficial when students do not have adequate proficiency (Ibrahim, 2001; Mohamed, 2013; Shohamy, 2012). These different views of translanguaging were all evidenced in this study. However, the pedagogical benefits of translanguaging for both language and content development remain inconclusive; either content knowledge or English ability may have been traded off (Bruton, 2013; Sert, 2008). What is clearer is that pedagogical training to improve the effectiveness of codeswitching in relation to other classroom techniques would have been beneficial for the EMI lecturers in this study.

Finally, inadequate resources clearly affect the success of EMI policies (Hamid et al., 2013; Kaplan & Baldauf Jr, 2003; Kaplan et al., 2011; Manh, 2012), and in this study the inadequacies appeared to affect both students and lecturers. The EMI program was imported from overseas universities where instruction had the expectation of good facilities. The lack of basic resources led to unanticipated pressures on the lecturers to modify their teaching content and practices. Dang et al. (2013) suggested that the Internet can provide rich teaching resources for English. Change the comma to a period. This study also indicated the needs for digital learning facilities, good classroom conditions, and adequate human resources.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the previously discussed challenges that the EMI lecturers were facing (language proficiency, student diversity, pedagogy, and resource availability), the study suggests a number of implications, not only in this context but also in similar Asian contexts initiating EMI programs. First, EMI lecturers should first be screened for their language abilities, especially their oral skills, and confidence in lecturing in English and handling

questions from students. This could be done in simulated or actual classroom situations where prospective EMI lecturers are observed as they teach a lesson. Also, language support could be provided for those wishing to enhance their proficiency for an academic context. Such support could include taking English courses specifically oriented to academic teaching in a formal setting or engaging in more informal opportunities, such as study tours in English-speaking countries, scholar exchanges, and travel grants for international conferences (Ball & Lindsay, 2012; Wilkinson, 2005).

The second implication involves pedagogical support assisting lecturers with effective teaching techniques to encourage student participation and minimise teacher talk (Ball & Lindsay, 2012; Doiz et al., 2012a). More importantly, this initiative would provide opportunities for lecturers to share experiences of teaching and practices that work in their own contexts. A discussion forum could be set up or they could be supported to conduct collaborative action research (Burns, 2010) to explore pressing teaching issues in the EMI classroom.

The third implication requires institutional investment in English materials and technology to ensure that adequate facilities are accessible. Such initiatives would reduce the workload for lecturers in searching for up-to-date English materials and enable students to access learning resources independently.

The final implication involves reviewing student recruitment procedures. Adequate English entry requirements are necessary to enhance the benefits for enrolled students. Otherwise, content learning might well be traded off by the need for substantial English improvement.

There are a number of limitations to the study that might affect the scope of these implications. The small number of 16 interviews cannot be the basis for generalizing from the findings. In addition, there was a greater number of responses from content lecturers than language lecturers, and therefore a possible disparity and lack of representativeness of perspectives. Moreover, the data consist of lecturers' self-reports, which may not reflect actual classroom behaviours and practices. The observation component of the study,

from which relationships between one's views and actual practices could be identified, is not included here. However, the aim of this qualitative study was to gain insights into lecturers' experiences and not to seek generalization. Thus, its contribution is to provide illustrations of various factors that could be taken up in future research studies, for example, the extent to which lecturers in other EMI contexts also rely on codeswitching or lecturers' perceptions of the pedagogical skills and knowledge that would strengthen their EMI practices. Such research could potentially assist EMI lecturers and policy-makers in other contexts to develop practical ideas for strengthening and supporting EMI programs. Finally, if English continues to be "the dominant language of teaching for the future" (Ammon & McConnell, 2002, as cited in Coleman, 2006, p.11), it is essential that studies of EMI not only investigate macro issues of policy-making, but also generate evidence for good practice that can assist the development of effective EMI programs.

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²Names of Vietnamese authors do not strictly follow English conventions of first names or last names. Hence, we used the name order that the authors used in the reference.

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