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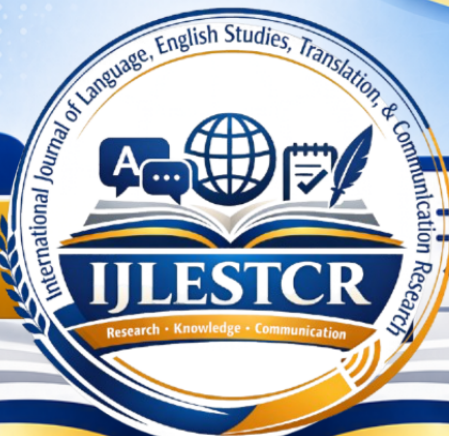
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English-Medium Instruction (EMI) challenges in multicultural classrooms: Basis for teacher-support framework

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Aim: This study explored the challenges experienced by non-English major teachers implementing English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in multicultural classrooms, the coping and adaptation strategies they employed, and the development of a teacher-support framework to enhance EMI implementation.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with non-English major EMI teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis within Clandinin and Connelly's Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space to interpret participants' lived experiences across time, social interaction, and context.

Results: The findings revealed that teachers encountered multiple EMI-related challenges, including linguistic insecurity, students' varying English proficiency, psychological and identity-related concerns, culture shock, and curricular-linguistic misalignment. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience by employing adaptive pedagogical strategies, self-directed language development, collaborative practices, and culturally responsive teaching approaches. These findings served as the basis for developing the EMI-CARE Framework, which emphasizes communicative competence, adaptive pedagogy, affective support, resource provision, and teacher empowerment for effective EMI implementation.

Conclusion: The study concludes that EMI challenges are systemic rather than individual and require comprehensive institutional support, continuous professional development, and context-responsive pedagogical practices. The proposed EMI-CARE Framework provides a practical guide for strengthening English-Medium Instruction in multicultural classrooms by promoting teacher competence, inclusive language pedagogy, and sustainable professional growth.

Keywords: *coping and adaptation strategies; communicative competence; English-Medium Instruction (EMI); multicultural classrooms; non-English major teachers*

INTRODUCTION

English is primarily spoken by over one billion of the world's population, with most being non-native speakers (Lyons, 2021). In the Philippines, English is recognized as a significant language and remains a crucial medium for commerce, law, and education (Cabigon, 2015; Turmudi & Hajan, 2020). However, the presence of language barriers and cultural differences continues to introduce challenges, highlighting the need for improved cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication skills (Bakay, 2023), particularly in multicultural classrooms.

The global use of EMI has grown rapidly and has become increasingly prominent in multicultural educational contexts. Research on EMI in multicultural classrooms shows that addressing diverse mother tongues and maintaining inclusive learning environments remains a challenge (Rajaniprashanth, 2024). In the Philippine context, educators encounter language barriers that may lead to misunderstandings (Kyriakidis et al., 2024). In particular, non-English major teachers face multifaceted challenges related to language proficiency, pedagogical competence, and resource constraints, including pronunciation problems, vocabulary deficiency, and inadequate teaching skills (Cuevas, 2024; Purwanti & Prasanti, 2025). These ongoing challenges point to the need for more targeted institutional support.

To address these concerns, studies suggest strategies such as translanguaging, culturally relevant materials, and professional development (Gülle, 2024; Rajaniprashanth, 2024). While cultural diversity is valued in educational settings, persistent language barriers continue to emphasize the importance of culturally responsive EMI policies and sustained teacher training programs.



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Overall, the implementation of EMI in multicultural educational settings presents a range of pedagogical and linguistic challenges that necessitate the development of adaptive teaching practices and coping mechanisms. While the experiences of students in EMI environments have been extensively documented in the literature, studies examining educators' lived experiences, challenges, and instructional strategies remain limited, particularly among non-English major teachers. In particular, there remains a lack of qualitative narrative investigations that capture teachers' lived experiences and meaning-making processes within multicultural EMI contexts. Existing studies have also paid limited attention to the development of holistic teacher-support frameworks capable of addressing the multifaceted demands of EMI instruction. Furthermore, few studies have simultaneously examined the linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural dimensions of EMI implementation, despite their interconnected influence on teaching and learning outcomes.

This study contributes to the field of Applied Linguistics by advancing understanding of teachers' linguistic competence, classroom language practices, and the ways in which educators negotiate language use in EMI contexts. Also, findings contribute to language studies by revealing the impact of linguistic competence on classroom interaction and communication effectiveness. Furthermore, the research explores pedagogical strategies like code-switching and translanguaging to aid comprehension and participation in diverse classrooms, offering insights into how educators support learning in linguistically varied environments.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

English-Medium Instruction and Multicultural Classrooms

English Medium Instruction (EMI) refers to teaching academic subjects in English in regions where English is not the majority's first language (Rose et al., 2021). This definition is contested: some call for broader interpretations that include Anglophone contexts with multilingual students, while terms like English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings (EMEMUS) recognize the need for pedagogical inclusivity. Rapid EMI adoption in higher education is seen as central to global internationalization. Yet, debate continues about the ultimate impact of EMI on learning outcomes, equity, and effective teaching, highlighting the urgent need for clearer strategies and answers to unresolved questions (Lasagabaster, 2022; Macaro, 2022; Pecorari & Malmström, 2022).

On the other hand, multicultural classrooms are educational settings defined by cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity. These environments require specialized pedagogical approaches to support effective learning and inclusion. Research indicates that multicultural education enhances cultural awareness, empathy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, thereby fostering respect for diverse perspectives (Naz et al., 2023). However, significant challenges remain, such as cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, and insufficient teacher preparation for managing diverse classrooms (Bakay, 2023; Naz et al., 2023).

EMI Challenges

Research on EMI has identified numerous challenges for both students and lecturers. The 2023 literature analysis by Lei and Hu elucidates the hurdles encountered by EMI students and instructors, including linguistic obstacles, increased teaching responsibilities, longer lecture durations, and longer study time. Language difficulties are most prevalent among students at an EMI university in Turkey, with writing and speaking being the most challenging macro language skills. Additionally, the challenge of not sharing a first language with international students is a concern. Instructors may not be fully aware of their students' linguistic challenges or not adequately equipped with EMI instructional strategies, leading to additional study time and workload (Kamasak et al., 2020; Lei & Hu, 2023).

Alongside language difficulties, numerous studies have explored additional challenges faced in implementing EMI, including linguistic, cultural, administrative, managerial, and institutional factors. The shortage of qualified teachers significantly hindered micro-actors' efforts to implement EMI at Japanese universities. Additionally, students' insufficient English proficiency, low motivation, and an unfavorable sociolinguistic environment for English learning further exacerbated the situation. Moreover, EMI creates conflicts among teachers' professional, personal, and institutional identities, requiring renegotiation of their teaching selves due to factors like language support and pedagogical competence (Corrales et al., 2025). Correlatively, EMI teachers' shifting roles from subject specialists to dual facilitators lead to linguistic insecurity and reliance on informal networks, with a need for structured professional development and institutional support (Tobbi, 2025).

These challenges underscore the necessity for effective strategies to address EMI's challenges and enhance the learning experience for both students and instructors (Alhamami, 2023; Lei & Hu, 2023). Hence, this study called for an investigation which are directly foregrounded in the narratives of non-English major EMI teachers.



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EMI Coping Strategies

As established, the prevailing challenges in EMI contexts resulted in coping mechanisms and teaching strategies employed by both teachers and students (Ulfah et al., 2024). These coping mechanisms are intended to facilitate a successful EMI implementation.

Synthesis

Collectively, the adoption of EMI in multicultural settings introduces specific challenges and coping mechanisms. Although student experiences are well documented, research on educators' real-world challenges and strategies remains scarce, especially for non-English major teachers. In particular, there remains a lack of qualitative narrative investigations that capture teachers' lived experiences and meaning-making processes within multicultural EMI contexts. Existing studies have also paid limited attention to the development of holistic teacher-support frameworks capable of addressing the multifaceted demands of EMI instruction. Furthermore, few studies have simultaneously examined the linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural dimensions of EMI implementation, despite their interconnected influence on teaching and learning outcomes. Richards and Pun (2021) highlight the importance of disciplinary literacy and competence for EMI teachers, pointing to the complexity of EMI pedagogy and the pressing need to understand teachers' adaptations. As EMI rapidly expands, examining its implementation, impact, and stakeholder perspectives remains essential to understanding and overcoming core challenges.

This study directly addressed these gaps by focusing on the practical difficulties faced by EMI teachers across various disciplines, particularly non-English majors, who encounter multifaceted challenges in using EMI. It aims to develop a comprehensive framework for teacher support by examining these challenges, scrutinizing coping strategies, and identifying best practices. This framework is novel in its approach, integrating a multidisciplinary perspective that considers the unique challenges teachers face across different subject areas. It also incorporates feedback from non-English major teachers actively engaged in multicultural classrooms, ensuring that their insights are valued. Additionally, it emphasizes the integration of technology and culturally responsive teaching methods, which are often underemphasized in existing models. Key components of the proposed framework include tailored professional development programs, collaborative teaching resources, and instructional strategies that support both language and content mastery. Such a framework is designed to address the prevailing issues faced by non-English major EMI teachers at the forefront of teaching and learning, ultimately facilitating effective EMI implementation across diverse educational settings and multicultural institutions.

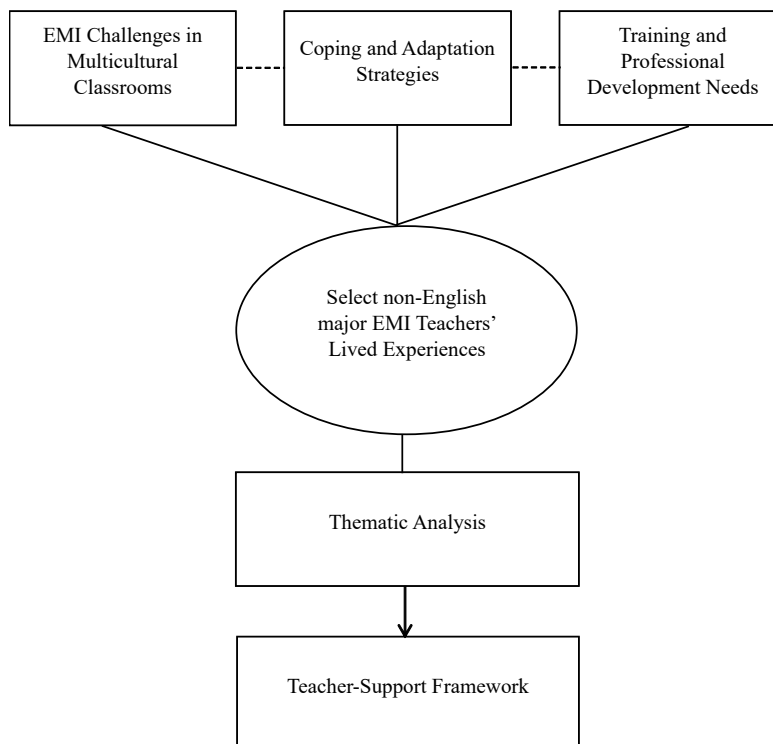
Theoretical Framework

The integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) serves as the primary framework for this study, complemented by Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory and the Intercultural Communicative Competence Model, which provide a robust foundation for this study.

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) aligns with significant educational perspectives, particularly the assertion that "all teachers are teachers of language" (Coyle et al., 2010). This highlights the role of subject teachers in promoting linguistic development across disciplines. The concept further emphasizes the 4Cs framework, which includes four fundamental components: content, communication, cognition, and culture. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) significantly enhances the foundational framework of this study by highlighting the importance of interaction, social context, and the learning processes for both students and teachers, who can influence various factors within educational settings, including tasks, behaviors, and responses. Lastly, research demonstrates that integrating Byram's framework, the Intercultural Communicative Competence Model (Byram, 1997), into English Language Teaching helps students develop linguistic, intercultural, and sociocultural skills for real-life communication situations while raising teacher awareness (Abidin et al., 2024).

Conceptual Framework

This study posits that EMI teachers of non-English majors encounter linguistic, pedagogical, and instructional obstacles in multicultural classrooms. To tackle these issues, a teacher-support framework must be designed grounded on their narratives of experiences, coping strategies, and professional and development needs.

**Figure 1***Paradigm of the Study*

The figure discusses the challenges faced by non-English major EMI teachers in multicultural classrooms, focusing on linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical issues. It outlines coping strategies and adaptive practices adopted by these teachers and highlights their need for professional development training. Insights for a teacher-support framework, derived from thematic analysis of teachers' narratives, aim to provide practical strategies and recommendations to enhance EMI teaching effectiveness in diverse environments. Thus, the paradigm guides the study in examining the limitations and realities of EMI implementation from the teachers' perspective, analyzing their experiences and needs, transcending EMI challenges, and translating these insights into a practical framework to enhance EMI practices in educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

The implementation of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in multicultural classrooms has become increasingly common as educational institutions respond to globalization and the growing linguistic diversity of learners. Although EMI promotes English as a shared language of instruction, its implementation presents complex linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, and intercultural challenges, particularly for non-English major teachers who are expected to teach content subjects using English despite not being formally trained as language specialists. These challenges influence teachers' communicative competence, instructional effectiveness, professional confidence, and interactions with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Previous studies have extensively examined students' experiences and language-related difficulties in EMI contexts. However, limited research has explored the lived experiences of non-English major teachers, particularly their coping strategies, professional adaptations, and support needs within multicultural classrooms. Furthermore, there remains a need for a comprehensive teacher-support framework that integrates teachers' narratives to address the linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural demands of EMI implementation.

In response to these gaps, this study explored the challenges encountered by non-English major EMI teachers, examined the coping strategies and classroom practices they employed, and developed a teacher-support framework



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grounded in their lived experiences. The findings are expected to contribute to English language education, multicultural pedagogy, teacher professional development, and the effective implementation of English-Medium Instruction in diverse educational settings.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To explore the lived experiences of non-English major teachers implementing English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in multicultural classrooms by examining the challenges they encounter, the coping strategies they employ, and the development of a teacher-support framework.

Specific Objectives

1. To explore the challenges encountered by non-English major EMI teachers in multicultural classrooms based on their lived experiences.
2. To identify the coping strategies and classroom practices employed by non-English major EMI teachers in addressing these challenges.
3. To develop a teacher-support framework grounded in the lived experiences of non-English major EMI teachers in multicultural classrooms.

Research Questions

1. What challenges and lived experiences do non-English major EMI teachers encounter in multicultural classrooms?
2. What coping strategies and classroom practices do non-English major EMI teachers employ to address these challenges?
3. What insights from the teachers' lived experiences can serve as the basis for developing a teacher-support framework for English-Medium Instruction in multicultural classrooms?

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative method, specifically narrative inquiry, to elucidate the challenges non-English major EMI teachers faced and the coping strategies they adopted in multicultural classrooms. The synthesis of the findings informed the development of a teacher-support framework, contextualized to the teachers' lived experiences and the EMI realities in the institution. Teachers' personal narratives in multicultural settings served as a rich source of data to uncover how they interpret and make sense of their challenges, coping strategies, and professional identities within multicultural classrooms. The narrative inquiry approach foregrounded the teachers' voices, allowing their lived experiences to shape the development of a teacher-support framework that provides valuable insights into the realities of teaching and learning in multicultural settings. Thus, the Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006), which includes temporality (past-present-future), sociality (personal and social conditions), and place (specific context), served as a salient dimension in understanding lived experiences and exploring narrative themes of EMI teachers in multicultural classrooms.

Narrative inquiry was utilized to understand teachers' experiences as evolving personal and professional narratives rather than as a shared essence of experience, a bounded case, or a theory-generating process. The approach preserves the chronological and contextual nature of participants' lived experiences, allowing for a deeper examination of how teachers negotiate identity, language use, and professional practices over time within EMI settings. Furthermore, narrative inquiry enables the exploration of the dynamic interplay among linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural experiences as teachers adapt to the demands of multicultural classrooms.

Population and Sampling

This qualitative narrative inquiry study was conducted in a private school that enforces EMI in all subjects, except Filipino, across all grade levels. The research locale, with its multicultural classrooms featuring students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the institution's catering to both foreigners and Filipinos are significant to the study's context. The study population consisted of 21 eligible EMI teachers who met the inclusion criteria of currently teaching content subjects through English and possessing at least one year of EMI teaching experience. Of these, 6 teachers belonged to the Primary Department, 9 to the Intermediate Department, and 6 to the Junior High School Department.



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Sampling Technique

This investigation employed a stratified purposive sampling technique, gathering a deliberate sample that ensured representation and minimized biases.

Participants

The participant selection process was thorough, ensuring balanced representation across teaching levels. Purposive sampling was initially used to identify eligible EMI teachers who satisfied the inclusion criteria. The eligible teachers were then grouped into three purposive strata based on their departmental assignment: Primary, Intermediate, and Junior High School. To minimize researcher bias and ensure fairness in participant selection, random selection was subsequently conducted within each stratum. This sampling strategy enabled the study to explore the lived experiences of teachers in different departments, if the EMI challenges they encountered and the coping strategies they employed in multicultural classrooms vary according to the grade levels they teach.

Instruments

This study employed a research-made semi-structured interview to address the research questions and to ensure an in-depth investigation of all identified variables, resulting in rich qualitative data relevant to the research objectives. A semi-structured interview guide was developed in line with the research questions, comprising three parts: (1) EMI Challenges in Multicultural Classrooms, (2) Coping and Adaptation Strategies, and (3) Input for a Teacher-Support Framework. This guide, consisting of a total of nine (9) questions, was aimed at probing teachers' narratives and experiences in utilizing EMI in multicultural classrooms and was administered to nine (9) participants selected at random to ensure the transferability of the results.

The interview guide was rigorously validated before administration. A licensed psychometrician reviewed the questionnaires to ensure participants could comfortably share their lived experiences. On the other hand, two (2) English language experts checked the face validity of the questionnaires, and a Filipino major translated the questions accurately since the interview questions are available in both English and Filipino to aid comprehension. The comments and recommendations provided by the validators were carefully reviewed and incorporated into the instrument. Revisions included the refinement of question wording for clarity, the improvement of question sequencing to promote a more natural narrative flow, and modifications to ensure alignment with the research objectives and the principles of narrative inquiry. The interview guide underwent an iterative validation process, with revised versions being re-examined by the experts until consensus was reached regarding its content validity, linguistic appropriateness, and contextual relevance.

The semi-structured interview guide was piloted with 2 (two) non-English majors EMI teachers who were not part of the official participants of the study. Feedback obtained during pilot testing led to minor revisions in question phrasing and probing prompts to improve comprehensibility and facilitate richer narrative responses during the actual interviews.

Data Collection

During the process, the participants were informed about their invitation to participate in the study as randomly chosen participants from their respective strata: Primary, Intermediate, and Junior High School. The invitation included a copy of the Informed Consent Form, which provided details about the study's background, rationale, procedures, and ethical considerations. After the invitation, the participants were informed and requested to interview at their respective free times to avoid disruptions to their teaching schedules.

Data gathering occurred from January 2026 to February 2026. Interviews were held in a quiet and private location within the school premises, as agreed upon by both the researcher and the participants, to ensure confidentiality and minimize interruptions. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted in English, Filipino, or a combination of both languages, depending on the participants' preference and comfort level. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data collected. The recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and transcripts in Filipino or mixed languages were translated into English when necessary for analysis while preserving the original meaning and context of participants' responses.

Treatment of Data

The researcher conducted thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) and consistent with the principles of narrative inquiry. The analysis began with familiarization with the data through repeated reading and review of the interview transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of the participants' narratives.



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This was followed by the generation of initial codes that captured meaningful segments of the data related to EMI challenges, coping strategies, language use, and experiences in multicultural classrooms.

Subsequently, similar codes were grouped and refined into broader categories to facilitate theme generation. Emerging themes were then reviewed, compared across participants' narratives, and refined to ensure coherence, distinctiveness, and alignment with the research questions. The finalized themes were interpreted in relation to the participants' experiences and the broader EMI literature.

The researcher conducted thematic analysis, consistent with the principles of narrative inquiry. Themes were developed by identifying recurring patterns across stories—such as shared challenges, common emotional responses, recurring coping practices, and reflections on multicultural classroom realities. These themes were then interpreted within Clandinin and Connelly's (2006) Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space, which includes temporality (past, present, and future experiences), sociality (personal feelings and social interactions), and place (the multicultural classroom context). These analytic dimensions guided the interpretation of how teachers constructed meaning from their experiences across time, relationships, and environments. The analysis aimed not only to categorize experiences but to preserve the continuity and coherence of each teacher's story, ensuring that the narrative texture remained intact.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the conduct of the study, permission to undertake the research was formally obtained from the school administration and relevant school authorities. Participants received an informed consent form that explained the study's goal, its voluntary nature, its methods, potential risks and benefits, and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. These forms were made available in participants' preferred languages to respect their linguistic preferences and ensure comprehension.

Participants' identities were maintained in confidence, and their personal data will be encrypted, securely retained, and utilized exclusively for academic purposes. The study adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the ethical management, preservation, and disposal of all collected data. The study aimed to preserve participants' dignity and rights throughout the research process. Audio recordings and transcripts were made available only to the researcher and are destroyed after the study ends. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The analysis and interpretation of the participants' narratives were presented in this section. The results and discussion were divided into four (4) parts, corresponding to the statement of the problem, to ensure coherence and clarity and to support a thorough analysis. Each part of the discussion includes the lived experiences of EMI teachers from primary, intermediate, and junior high school.

Themes

1. EMI Challenges in Multicultural Classrooms

1.1. Perceived Linguistic Insecurity in English-Mediated Instruction

Delivering content and sustaining English communication emerged as a central challenge among EMI teachers (Elkhayma, 2022), particularly for non-English majors in multicultural classrooms. All participants experienced linguistic insecurity, shaped by the use of English as the medium of instruction across grade levels and subject areas.

Linguistic insecurity was primarily reflected in limitations in language proficiency, including difficulty elaborating ideas, grammar uncertainty, truncated explanations, and limited lexical repertoire. These constraints affected teachers' ability to provide clear and sustained explanations, especially in instruction-heavy contexts. Participants also encountered challenges in spontaneous oral communication, such as conversational difficulty, hesitation and rephrasing issues, and reduced confidence in classroom interaction. Further manifestations included pausing during speech, overuse of fillers, self-monitoring during utterance construction, and phonological misarticulation, indicating the cognitive load associated with real-time language processing.

PI: "Pero kapag ipapaliwanag na siya—kunwari may tanong sila, doon ako nahihirapan na parang—paano ko i-elaborate yung... as answer ko na sa English."

(However, when I already need to explain it—for instance, when students ask questions—that is when I experience difficulty, particularly in figuring out how to elaborate my response in English.)



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P4: *“Minsan hindi ko namamalayan kung he or she... minsan what have you seen? what have you saw?”*

(At times, I do not notice whether I should use 'he' or 'she'... sometimes I say, 'What have you seen?' or 'What have you saw?')

P5: *“Iniisip-isip ko pa kung is, are, has, have.”*

(I still have to think carefully about whether to use 'is,' 'are,' 'has,' or 'have.')

Overall, linguistic insecurity among non-English major EMI teachers is influenced by specialization, EMI background, and classroom demands, ultimately affecting both language proficiency and content delivery.

1.2. Learners' Multilevel English Language Proficiency

Learners' multilevel linguistic proficiency emerged as a central challenge among non-English EMI teachers in multicultural classrooms.

This challenge was primarily reflected in the coexistence of learners with different levels of fluency, including English-dominant learners with early exposure to English media, fluent speakers such as foreign students, and those with limited proficiency. These differences affected teachers' ability to deliver instruction effectively, as they had to accommodate both fluent and struggling learners within the same classroom.

P8: *“May American, South African... fluent sila mag-English.”*

(There are American and South African students... they are fluent in speaking English.)

P6: *“Yung iba kaya mag-English dire-diretso, yung iba hindi.”*

(Some students can speak English fluently and continuously, while others cannot.)

P8: *“Meron magaling sa English, meron ding nahihirapan.”*

(Some are proficient in English, while others experience difficulty with it.)

Many studies have highlighted students' language inadequacy as one of the most common challenges EMI teachers face, in which students often struggle with the vocabulary teachers use to communicate concepts (Aizawa et al., 2020). While this is true, teacher participants in this study also revealed that EMI is affected not only by language inadequacy but also by students' varying levels of fluency, including those with intermediate proficiency and those who are proficient in the language. This highlights how varying proficiency levels, not only language inadequacy, shape the challenges of EMI implementation.

1.3. Psychological and Identity-Related Implications of English-Medium Instruction on Teachers

Previous studies have mostly focused on the physical manifestations of teachers' challenges; however, few have examined the psychological impact of EMI on their identity. EMI creates conflicts among teachers' professional, personal, and institutional identities (Corrales et al., 2025). These implications were reflected in teachers' narratives in terms of diminished self-efficacy and performance anxiety, including fear of linguistic errors, perceived scrutiny from learners, perceived inferiority, reduced professional self-worth, and lowered self-esteem. These experiences suggest that teachers' confidence is closely tied to their English proficiency, particularly for those who did not specialize in the language.

P8: *“Parang hindi ako ganun katalino.”*

(It makes me feel as though I am not that intelligent.)

P9: *“Dun po pumasok yung pagiging anxious ko tapos yung confidence ko sa sarili na bumaba talaga yung self-esteem ko sa sarili ko. Ang gagaling ng teachers dito eh, tapos ako hindi ko magawa kahit simpleng grammar, sentence ganun.”*

(That was when my anxiety developed, and my confidence in myself significantly decreased—my self-esteem was greatly affected. The teachers here are very competent, whereas I sometimes struggle even with simple grammar and sentence construction.)



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1.4. Adjustment Processes in Transitioning to English-Medium Instruction

Teachers experienced culture shock when transitioning to EMI, particularly those from non-EMI schools. Participants described difficulty adjusting to English-only instruction and EMI demands. This was reflected in reduced communicative confidence and disruption of prior practices such as code-switching, alongside initial speaking difficulty. Transitioning to EMI affected early teaching performance.

P1: “Na-culture shock—kasi dun sa dati yung pagpapaliwanag Taglish... dito kailangan English lahat.”

(I experienced culture shock because, in my previous setting, explanations were delivered in Taglish, whereas here, everything must be in English.)

P7: “Nahirapan talaga ako, especially during my first and second year in the school, is unimaginable. 2 years bago ako nakapag-adjust.”

(I truly experienced difficulty, especially during my first and second year in the school—it was unimaginable. It took me two years to fully adjust.)

These findings suggest EMI transition requires sufficient preparation and structured support, consistent with Prabjandee & Nilpirom (2022), particularly for teachers without prior EMI experience.

1.5. Curricular-Linguistic Misalignment in English-Medium Instruction

Participants noted a new challenge in the field of EMI in multicultural classrooms, which is the curricular-linguistic misalignment. In the Philippine context, where curricula and instructional materials are primarily designed in Filipino, misalignment occurs when subjects are taught in English despite being intended for Filipino-medium instruction. This challenge was reflected in the experiences of participants, particularly in subjects where content is culturally and linguistically grounded.

Under the MATATAG Curriculum, Grades 7–10 employ both Filipino and English as media of instruction, with learners' first language utilized as needed to promote comprehension and inclusivity in linguistically diverse settings. Filipino, Values Education, and Araling Panlipunan are intended to be taught in Filipino (Department of Education [DepEd], 2024). However, in schools that cater to foreign students, English often becomes the primary medium of instruction, creating a mismatch between the intended curriculum language and classroom practice. Consequently, teachers are required to navigate and bridge this gap in their daily instruction.

P7: “Why do I have to teach this subject in English when Araling Panlipunan is Filipino talaga?”

(Why do I have to teach this subject in English when Araling Panlipunan is inherently in Filipino?)

P8: “Sa CLE, wala masyado reference na English sa DepEd kaya Bible Talaga ang ginagamit.”

(In CLE, there are very few English references from DepEd, so the Bible is primarily used as the main instructional reference.)

2. Coping and Adaptation Strategies

2.1. Pedagogical Adaptations in English-Medium Instruction Contexts

Non-English major EMI teachers employ diverse coping strategies to teach effectively in multicultural classrooms, adapting their pedagogical approaches to accommodate students' varying linguistic proficiencies. Key strategies include lexical simplification, multimodal instructional practices, and bilingual scaffolding. Teachers often use simplified vocabulary and high-frequency lexical items to enhance comprehension.

P3: “Hindi dapat words lang... kailangan may action at pictures.”

(First, you need to adjust your words—the way you use your voice, the way you teach the children—adjust when it comes to the choice of words, choice of instructions. Mostly, words will not suffice for them; they need actions and pictures.)

P4: “Mas maganda yung hands-on kasi ginagawa rin nila.”

(Hands-on activities are better because students are actively doing them as well.)

These adaptations emerge in response to the linguistic diversity of learners, varying levels of English proficiency, curriculum demands, and the need to ensure meaningful content comprehension in multicultural



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classrooms. Such pedagogical adjustments contribute to EMI effectiveness by promoting learner engagement, improving accessibility to content, and facilitating communication between teachers and students. Furthermore, these practices align with language learning theories such as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which emphasizes the role of social interaction and scaffolding in learning, as well as translanguaging and multilingual pedagogy perspectives that recognize flexible language use as a valuable instructional resource.

2.2. Collaborative and Scaffolded Learning Mechanisms in EMI Classrooms

Relevant to one of this study's supporting theories, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory includes interactive strategies for classroom use, such as productive discussions, constructive feedback, collaboration, and scaffolding, which promote cognitive growth and enhance learning (Kurt, 2020). Teachers reported using peer tutoring to enhance learning, pairing proficient students with those struggling, facilitating academic improvement, and social-emotional development. Additionally, teachers noted enhanced observational skills that aid in evaluating student performance, leading to informed instructional decisions. They employed strategic grouping in learning stations, aligned activities with student intelligence types, and integrated technology into lessons to maintain engagement and facilitate understanding.

P2: "Ayun, yung peer tutoring—yung parang buddy buddy. Oh, ikaw naintindihan mo, oh, you help your classmate. Halimbawa, ito alam ko na good friends sila tapos may isa na struggling, dun sama ka sa group na 'to... May isa akong student na lagi siyang na-a-out of focus. Ngayon may kaklase siya na medyo brainy, disciplined—alam niya yung time ng laro, alam niya pag mag-aaral na, so every time may activity kahit individual na activity, sila ang magkatabi. Siya na yung nagre-remind."

(Peer-tutoring or buddy-buddy. It's like, you understand the lesson, so you help your classmates. For example, I know students who are good friends, but one is struggling, so I will ask them to be grouped... I have a student who would often be out of focus. Now, this student has a classmate who is smart and disciplined—she knows the playtime and when it is study time, so every time we have an activity, they are seated together. She would remind her classmate.)

2.3. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in English-Medium Instruction

In multicultural educational settings, cultural adaptation plays a vital role in subjects like Arts and Christian Living Education. Teachers emphasize cultural sensitivity, ethical responsiveness, and relational pedagogy to connect with students. These practices align with the principles of CLIL, particularly its emphasis on the integration of content, communication, cognition, and culture—the four interconnected dimensions of the 4Cs Framework (Coyle et al., 2010). By incorporating students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into classroom interactions, teachers facilitate not only content learning but also intercultural understanding and meaningful communication, which are essential components of effective EMI implementation in multicultural contexts.

P8: "Kapag ka medyo nararamdaman ko na hindi aligned yung paniniwala nila dun sa tinuturo ko, I respect na lang sa part na yun. Sinasabi ko naman sa kanya na, I'm here to teach the Word of God, pero I'm not here to force you to believe what I'm teaching to you."

(Whenever I assess that their beliefs do not align with what I teach, I respect that. I would just tell them that I am here to teach the Word of God, and not to force you to believe what I teach you.)

2.4. Self-Regulated Language Development Among EMI Teachers

Non-English major EMI teachers developed self-regulated language development strategies to address their personal challenges, especially limitations in English. These are summarized as autonomous language learning strategies, text-based language exposure and practice, utilization of digital tools for language feedback, proactive instructional preparation, sustained habitual practice, conscious fluency regulation, and reciprocal learning from students. The coping strategies resulted from the personal challenges they encountered, particularly in using English. It implies that all of them put greater effort into resolving the issues they faced to improve their teaching effectiveness.

P1-P8-E6: "So, siyempre, unang-una ang ginagawa ko diyan until now, nagse-search ako ng ways on how to improve my writing skills, my pronunciation, tapos pinapalawak ko rin yung vocabulary through the internet. Tapos... siyempre, pina-practice ko rin siya every day."

(The first thing I do, until now, is to search for ways to improve my writing skills and my pronunciation. I also expand my vocabulary online. Most importantly, I practice every day.)



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These findings align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which highlights the importance of social interaction and collaborative learning in language development.

3. Input for Teacher-Support Framework (Training and Professional Development)

3.1. Institutional and Professional Support Needs in English-Medium Instruction

Teachers identified the skills and support they need, specifically from school management, to navigate the complex linguistic and cultural landscape of EMI use in multicultural classrooms, including conversational English support and fluency, demand for practice-oriented professional training, institutional constraints on professional development, mentorship and guided professional support, policy implementation and reinforcement mechanisms, institutional language program and approaches, and preservice and pre-assignment EMI preparation. This implies that educational institutions must acknowledge these requirements and provide appropriate professional development training and support for teachers.

P4: "Kailangan ng mentor na magtuturo."

(A mentor who will provide guidance is needed.)

P7: "The teacher must have this training before they handle the class."

These findings align with the principles of CLIL, which emphasize the integration of content expertise, language competence, and pedagogical knowledge for effective instruction (Coyle et al., 2010).

3.2. EMI as Practice-Oriented Skill Development

Teachers believed that EMI is a matter of practice and habit formation. The importance of practice-oriented language acquisition for non-English major EMI teachers is emphasized, noting that language development is an individual responsibility requiring self-driven efforts. Participants also advocated for comprehensive school-wide language exposure and integration of English across subjects, suggesting a continuous practice approach rather than a singular focus on English classes. Morton (2025) argues that EMI should be viewed as a "practical assemblage" that responds to its own problem-situations rather than as a fixed discipline. This perspective aligns with the teachers' lived experiences, emphasizing that competence in EMI develops gradually through sustained practice and adaptation.

P7: "It's a matter of practice."

P8: "Personal development 'yan... ikaw talaga mag-ta-trabaho niyan."

(That is personal development... you are the one who will truly work for it.)

4. Proposed Teacher-Support Framework

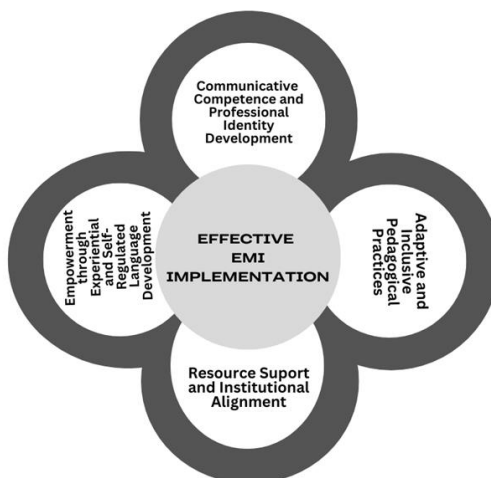


Figure 2. EMI-CARE Framework



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The EMI-CARE Framework is grounded in the teachers' lived experiences, highlighting the challenges they faced, the coping and adaptation strategies they employed, and their expressed need for professional training and institutional support. At the core of the framework is effective EMI implementation, which represents the ultimate goal of supporting teachers and enhancing student learning outcomes.

Teachers often encounter EMI-related challenges in multicultural classrooms that affect the teaching and learning process, due to its multifaceted demands. Unlike previous studies, which are solely confined to a few subject areas utilizing EMI and mostly focused on students' challenges (Pun & Thomas, 2020), this study has identified new themes, based on the teachers' case stories, which describe the challenges encountered by non-English major EMI teachers in multicultural classrooms across grade levels and subjects. Thus, this study developed the EMI-CARE framework for effective EMI implementation, which encompasses communicative competence, adaptation strategies, affective support, resource provision, and empowerment. This framework is foregrounded in the participants' narratives and is anchored on the main theories of this study, which are the integration of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Coyle et al., 2010), Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory (1987), and the Intercultural Communicative Competence Model (Byram, 1997). Participants demonstrated intercultural interaction through culturally responsive communication, adaptation of instructional language, sensitivity to learners' cultural backgrounds, and the use of flexible linguistic strategies to promote mutual understanding and participation. Consequently, the EMI-CARE framework recognizes intercultural competence not merely as an additional skill but as a fundamental component of effective EMI implementation in linguistically and culturally diverse educational contexts.

The overlapping spheres surrounding the core represent the key fundamentals of effective EMI implementation, as revealed in teachers' narratives. Firstly, Communicative Competence and Professional Identity Development (Psychological–Identity Dimension (C), which refers to developing teachers' language proficiency and confidence in English-mediated instruction.

Secondly, Adaptive and Inclusive Pedagogical Practices (Pedagogical–Linguistic–Cultural Dimension) (A) includes strategies to manage psychological, emotional, and identity-related challenges in EMI teaching.

Third, Resource Support and Institutional Alignment (Structural–Organizational Dimension) (R) means the availability of instructional materials, curricular alignment, and systemic support for EMI.

Lastly, Empowerment through Experiential and Self-Regulated Language Development (Language Development Dimension) (E), which refers to continuous training, mentorship, and skill development opportunities for EMI teachers.

Together, these spheres form the EMI-CARE Framework, illustrating how challenges, coping strategies, and professional support converge to enable effective EMI teaching in multicultural classrooms.

Conclusions

This study illuminated the complex realities teachers face when implementing EMI in multicultural classrooms. The findings demonstrate that EMI is not merely a linguistic practice but a multidimensional instructional experience shaped by teachers' communicative competence, professional identity, multilingual classroom communication practices, language policy implementation, teacher confidence, student diversity, pedagogical flexibility, and institutional support.

In response to these findings, the EMI-CARE Teacher-Support Framework was proposed, emphasizing Communicative Competence and Professional Identity Development, Adaptive and Inclusive Pedagogical Practices, Resource Support and Institutional Alignment, and Empowerment through Experiential and Self-Regulated Language Development. This framework highlights the need for holistic, context-sensitive interventions that recognize teachers as both language users, intercultural communicators, policy implementers, and instructional leaders navigating multilingual educational environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, non-English major EMI teachers may continue to enhance their communicative competence in the English language through professional development and self-regulated practice. They may also adapt to the multifaceted needs of EMI students in the subjects they teach by being willing to use the coping and adaptation strategies identified by other non-English major teachers. They may also continue to leverage digital tools and AI as assistive tools to refine their skills. EMI teachers may continue to support students with language inadequacies so they, too, can improve their academic performance and adapt to EMI.

Educational institutions may evaluate the needs of multicultural classrooms and provide EMI-focused professional development programs, language coaching, and intercultural communication workshops, especially in designing a more inclusive, context-based curriculum for schools that utilize EMI. They may establish curriculum review



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committees and consider developing institutional language policies to improve EMI implementation and overall education quality in the Philippines. They may consider adopting the EMI-CARE framework proposed in this study to support EMI implementation in multicultural classrooms.

School administrations in multicultural classrooms may reassess their educational policies regarding the use of EMI to ensure more effective implementation that supports the teaching-learning process despite classroom diversity. They may also provide the support that teachers need to improve teaching quality, including professional development, mentoring systems, language coaching, and coaching sessions. They are also encouraged to utilize and adopt the EMI-CARE Framework developed in this study, especially in culturally sensitive and Filipino-based subjects.

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