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Implementation of English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy: Adoption, Language, and Behavior Responses of Junior High School Students

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to examine the level of acceptance, perceived language response, and behavioral response mechanisms of junior high school students, specifically the Grade 7 students, toward the English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in Tantaran District I for the school year 2024–2025. It sought to identify how the policy influenced students' attitudes, language development, and classroom engagement, and to assess the effectiveness of EMI as a tool for enhancing English proficiency in a multilingual educational context.

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design with a quantitative approach. A total of 113 Grade 7 students from Tantaran District 1 participated. A researcher-made survey questionnaire assessed the students' acceptance of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in language skills training, rewards, punishment, and academic development; gauging the language adoption in language use, engagement, participation and language proficiency; assessing the perceived language response in terms of confidence to speak, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency; and evaluating behavior response mechanisms in aggression, regression, and compromise—all measured on a 5-Point Likert scale. Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson-r) was employed to identify significant relationships between the level of acceptance and students' language and behavioral responses, assessing the strength and direction of these associations.

Results: The correlational analysis indicated significant relationships between language skills training, rewards and punishment, academic development, and the level of acceptance, with language response showing the strongest correlations with educational development and level of acceptance, reflecting that improvements in language proficiency and positive behavioral responses are closely linked to students' overall academic outcomes and acceptance of the policy.

Conclusion: Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that junior high school students moderately accept the EMI policy, showing positive engagement and behavioral adjustment, with language skills training emerging as a key factor in enhancing both academic development and policy acceptance.

Keywords: EMI Policy, Language Adoption, Perceived Language Response, Behavior Response Mechanism

INTRODUCTION

Imagine entering a classroom where students are hesitant to speak, not because they lack ideas, but because they struggle with the language they are expected to use to express themselves. This scenario is common in many junior high schools across the Philippines, where the mandated English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy often creates a barrier rather than a bridge to learning. The policy, intended to promote English proficiency, can sometimes have unintended consequences, particularly for students more comfortable using their native language.

In today's interconnected and globalized world, English is a lingua franca, facilitating communication among people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It is critical in many areas, including economic opportunities, education, technology, social networking, diplomacy, and cultural exchange (Jenkins, 2017).



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As such, schools are essential in fostering English proficiency among students, equipping them with the skills needed to thrive in a global society.

Globally, English proficiency is increasingly seen as a vital skill for academic success and real-life applications. As the world's third most widely spoken language, English is taught in over 118 countries and is a primary language in fields such as trade, science, aviation, and technology (Runde & Nealer, 2017). Proficiency in English provides individuals with significant personal and professional advantages, especially when these skills are nurtured through formal education from a young age (ETS Global, 2020).

In the Philippines, English is a subject of study and the primary medium of instruction in schools. The K to 12 curriculum strongly emphasizes developing English literacy skills, enabling Filipino students to use English across various fields, including trade, science, mathematics, and the arts (Department of Education, 2019). The national education system actively supports the development of English-speaking skills through both curricular and extracurricular activities (Turmudi & Hajan, 2020).

Despite this emphasis, many students in the Philippines exhibit negative attitudes toward English language learning. These attitudes manifest in reluctance to use English, anxiety during English classes, and a preference for speaking their native languages (Mancilla & Hisona, 2019). Such attitudes can hinder proficiency development and negatively impact academic performance, highlighting the need to address students' perceptions of English learning.

To address these challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) introduced DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2006, in alignment with Executive Order No. 210, mandates the use of English as the primary medium of instruction in public and private secondary schools. The policy stipulates that English should be used for at least 70% of the total instructional time across all subjects and grade levels. This directive is aimed at fostering English proficiency among students. However, it also assumes that behaviorist techniques, such as rewards and punishments, can help enforce the policy's acceptance (Wantina & Widya, 2019).

In response to the challenges of implementing this policy, schools have adopted initiatives such as the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy, which aims to immerse students in an English-speaking environment to help them internalize the language. One such initiative is the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy, implemented at Tantangan District I, serving around 365 learners. This policy encourages students to use English in all academic and social interactions.

Given the importance of English proficiency and the challenges students face, exploring how the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy is being received and implemented in schools is crucial. This study investigates the level of acceptance, perceived language response, and behavior response mechanisms related to the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy at Tantangan District I for the 2024-2025 school year. By examining students' attitudes and behaviors toward this policy, the study aims to provide valuable insights into its impact on language development and classroom management.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the acceptance, perceived language response, and behavior response mechanism related to the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy of the Junior High School students in Tantangan District I 2024-2025.

The research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of acceptance of the respondents on the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in the classroom in terms of:
 - 1.1 language skills training;
 - 1.2 rewards and punishment; and
 - 1.3 academic development?
2. What is the extent of adoption of English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy among the learners in terms of:
 - 2.1 language use;
 - 2.2 engagement and participation; and
 - 2.3 language proficiency?
3. What is the extent of the perceived language response of the learners as to:
 - 3.1 confidence to speak;
 - 3.2 pronunciation; and
 - 3.3 fluency?
4. What is the behavior response mechanism of the Junior High School students in terms of:



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- 4.1 aggression;
- 4.2 regression; and
- 4.3 compromise?
5. Is the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy's acceptance level significantly associated with language response?
6. Is the behavior response mechanism significantly related to the level of acceptance of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy?
7. What managerial approach is best fitted based on the result of the study?

Hypothesis

Given the stated research problems, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_0 : The level of acceptance of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy is not significantly associated with the perceived language response of Junior High School students.

H_a : The behavior response mechanism is not significantly related to accepting the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy of Junior High School students.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the implementation of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy among Junior High School students in Tantaran District I. The descriptive aspect aimed to capture students' levels of acceptance toward the EMI policy, while the correlational component explored the relationships between acceptance, perceived language responses, and behavioral response mechanisms.

Population and Sampling

This study was carried out in five junior high schools located in the northern area of the South Cotabato Division, involving a total of 113 participants. The respondents were selected through random sampling technique using draw lots method in selecting student respondents.

Instrument

This study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire to assess the students' acceptance of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in language skills training, rewards, punishment, and academic development; gauging the language adoption in language use, engagement, participation and language proficiency; assessing the perceived language response in terms of confidence to speak, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency; and evaluating behavior response mechanisms in aggression, regression, and compromise—all measured on a 5-Point Likert scale.

Data Collection

The data-gathering process began with approval letter from graduate school dean. Once approval is granted, the next step is to seek permission from the South Cotabato Schools Division Superintendent and District Superintendent to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researchers send a letter of information to the principals and school heads of the selected schools. After, the researchers explained the study's purpose and the proposed data collection activities, ensuring transparency and building trust. The environment during the data collection was conducive and supportive. Participants accomplished the survey in their respective schools during non-instructional hours to avoid disrupting teaching schedules. Adequate time was allotted for respondents to complete the questionnaires to ensure thoughtful and accurate responses. Once collected, the responses were reviewed on-site to check for completeness and consistency. In cases where clarifications were needed, follow-up communication was conducted through the school contact person.

Treatment of Data

The gathered data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation to describe the students' level of acceptance, perceived language response, and behavior response to the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy. Responses were interpreted using a 5-point Likert scale with predefined mean ranges to

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determine the extent of each variable. Additionally, Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson-r) was employed to identify significant relationships between the level of acceptance and students' language and behavioral responses, assessing the strength and direction of these associations. The resulting data were systematically presented through tables, charts, and graphs to enhance clarity and emphasize the significance of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers ensured that all ethical guidelines were followed, including obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of their responses throughout the study. The entire process upheld ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights were integral to the study's design and execution. These measures were taken not only to comply with ethical guidelines but also to ensure that the participants were treated with the utmost care and respect, safeguarding their autonomy and privacy throughout the research process.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section provides an overview of the respondents' level of acceptance, perceived language response, and behavior response mechanisms of junior high school students specifically the Grade 7 Students toward the English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy. Here, the results, discussions, and analysis of the data gathered that sought to answer the study's objectives.

To interpret the data, the researcher applied the following mean range for evaluating the level of acceptance, perceived language response, and behavior response to the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy:

Interpretation for the Level of Acceptance, Perceived Language Response, and Behavior Response on English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy

Range	Interpretation
4.51-5.00	Very High Extent
3.51-4.50	High Extent
2.51-3.50	Moderate Extent
1.51-2.50	Low Extent
1.00-1.50	Very Low Extent

Level of Acceptance of English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in the Classroom

The succeeding tables and discussions show the acceptance of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in the classroom among the surveyed junior high school students.

Table 1. Summary of Level of Acceptance of EMI Policy Among Learners on Language Use

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1 Language Skills Training	3.58	1.04	High
2 Rewards and Punishment	3.39	1.07	Moderate
3 Academic Development	3.51	1.06	High
Overall Mean	3.49	1.06	Moderate



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The data in Table 1 presents the Level of Acceptance of the EMI Policy Among Learners in terms of Language Use. The highest mean score of 3.58 was recorded for the Language Skills dimension, indicating a strong level of acceptance regarding the impact of the EMI policy on language proficiency. The second-highest mean of 3.50 was observed for Academic Development, suggesting that students believe the policy positively influences their overall academic performance. The lowest mean score of 3.39 was for Rewards and Punishment, which still falls within the "Moderate" range, reflecting a more neutral or moderate acceptance of how rewards and punishments contribute to English use. The overall mean is 3.49, with a standard deviation of 1.06, which places the general level of acceptance at a moderate level.

The results suggest that students generally accept the EMI policy, particularly its contributions to Language Skills and Academic Development. However, the moderate acceptance of the Rewards and Punishment system indicates that while students recognize its role, they may feel its influence is less significant than the other dimensions. The result suggests that further refinement in how rewards and punishments are applied might enhance the overall acceptance of the policy.

Extent of Adoption of English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy Among the Learners

The succeeding tables and discussions discuss the extent to which the surveyed junior high school students adopted the English Language as Medium of Instruction (EMI) Policy in the classroom.

Table 2. Summary of the Extent of Adoption of the EMI Policy among Learners

	Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1	Language Use	3.48	1.11	Moderate
2	Engagement & Participation	3.27	1.48	Moderate
3	Language Proficiency	3.48	1.22	Moderate
	Overall Mean	3.41	1.11	Moderate

The data in Table 2 presents the Extent of Adoption of EMI Policy Among Learners across three key dimensions: Language Use, Engagement and Participation, and Proficiency. The highest mean score of 3.48 was recorded for the Engagement and Participation and Language Proficiency dimensions, indicating that students moderately engage and participate in EMI-related activities. The lowest mean score of 3.27 was found for Language Use, suggesting that students engage in the use of English at a moderate level. However, there is still room for improvement in consistently incorporating English in various academic contexts. The overall mean is 3.27, with a standard deviation of 1.11, indicating a generally moderate adoption of the EMI policy across all dimensions.

The results suggest that students have moderately adopted, particularly regarding Language. Language students are engaged and active in the classroom, but their use of English in different academic contexts varies. This may indicate that while students understand the value of English for their academic success, their application of English in everyday interactions and tasks may not be as consistent. The higher variability in Engagement, Participation, and Proficiency suggests that while many students embrace these aspects of EMI, some still face challenges in fully adopting English across all dimensions.

Extent of Perceived Language Response of the Learners

The succeeding tables and discussions extend the perceived language response among the surveyed junior high school students.

Table 3. Summary of the Extent of Adoption of Perceived Language Response

	Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1	Confidence to Speak	3.22	1.11	Moderate
2	Pronunciation	3.44	1.12	Moderate
3	Fluency	3.41	1.07	Moderate



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Overall Mean

3.35

1.10

Moderate

The data in Table 3 presents the extent of adoption of perceived language response across three dimensions: Confidence to speak, pronunciation, and fluency. The highest mean score of 3.44 was recorded for the pronunciation dimension, indicating a moderate level of adoption in students' pronunciation in English-related activities. The second-highest mean of 3.41 was observed for Fluency, suggesting that students moderately adopt English in terms of fluency. The lowest mean score of 3.22 was recorded for Confidence to Speak, which reflects a moderate level of adoption. It indicates that while students use English, there is room for further integration in their academic tasks and activities. The overall mean is 3.35, with a standard deviation of 1.10, indicating a moderate level of adoption of perceived language response overall.

The results suggest that students generally adopt moderate confidence and pronunciation and develop fluency in English. The higher scores for Pronunciation and Fluency reflect students' recognition of the importance of English in both academic and participatory contexts. However, the moderate score for confidence in speaking suggests that while students speak confidently in English, there may still be challenges in fully adopting the language across all academic tasks. The standard deviation indicates that while many students show a positive response, there is some variability in how confidently they adopt English.

Extent of Behavior Response Mechanism of the Junior High School Students

The succeeding tables and discussions present the extent of junior high school students' behavior response mechanisms.

Table 4. Summary of Behavior Response Mechanism of the Junior High School Students

	Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1	Aggression	3.30	1.10	Moderate
2	Regression	3.31	1.10	Moderate
3	Compromise	3.52	1.58	High
	Overall Mean	3.37	1.26	Moderate

The data in Table 4 presents the Behavior Response Mechanism of Junior High School Students regarding the EMI policy. The highest mean score of 3.52 was recorded for the compromise dimension, indicating that students tend to adapt and adjust to the challenges presented by the EMI policy through compromise. This suggests a high level of flexibility among students, where they find ways to navigate the policy's demands without significant resistance. The mean scores for aggression (3.30) and regression (3.31) were rated as moderate, suggesting that some students show signs of aggression or regression when confronted with difficulties related to the EMI policy, but these responses are not widespread. The overall mean is 3.37 (SD = 1.26), reflecting a generally moderate level of behavioral response mechanisms, with a higher tendency toward compromise than aggression or regression.

The results suggest that while most students show signs of adapting to the EMI policy through compromise, there is still moderate resistance, reflected in the aggression and regression dimensions. The higher variability (indicated by the standard deviation of 1.26) points to a wide range of responses across students, with some students more likely to compromise and others exhibiting more aggressive or regressive behaviors. This variability indicates that while compromise is the most common response, implementing the EMI policy still presents challenges that some students struggle with.



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Relationship between the Level of Acceptance of EMI and Perceived Language Response

The table below presents the correlational analysis between EMI's acceptance level and perceived language response.

Table 5. Correlational Analysis Between the Level of Acceptance of EMI and Perceived Language Response

Variables	Stat.	Language Skills Training	Rewards & Punishment	Academic Development	Level of Acceptance
Confidence to Speak	Pearson's r	0.435	0.327	0.35	0.479
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Pronunciation	Pearson's r	0.419	0.417	0.491	0.57
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Fluency	Pearson's r	0.326	0.427	0.528	0.549
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Language Response	Pearson's r	0.482	0.475	0.554	0.65
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001

Note: df=111, p<.05 is significant

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships among the study variables: Confidence to Speak, Pronunciation, Fluency, Language Response, and their interplay with Language Skills Training, Rewards and Punishment, Academic Development, and Level of Acceptance. Table 5 shows that all correlations are statistically significant at $p < .05$, with degrees of freedom (df) equal to 111.

Language Response exhibits the strongest correlations with all dependent variables, particularly with the Level of Acceptance ($r = .65$, $p < .05$), followed by Academic Development ($r = .554$, $p < .05$). These results suggest that a better response to language challenges, likely facilitated by the EMI policy, is strongly linked to higher levels of acceptance and overall academic development. Similarly, Pronunciation also demonstrated a strong correlation with the Level of Acceptance ($r = .57$, $p < .05$), implying that improvements in pronunciation are positively associated with students' willingness to accept the EMI policy.

Moreover, Fluency has moderate to strong correlations with all variables, most notably with Academic Development ($r = .528$, $p < .05$) and Level of Acceptance ($r = .549$, $p < .05$). This implies that fluency in English is an important factor in fostering both student adaptability and academic success under the EMI policy. In contrast, Confidence to Speak shows the weakest correlations among the independent variables, though still significant, with the highest association being with Level of Acceptance ($r = .479$, $p < .05$). While confidence in speaking English remains an important factor, its influence on broader academic and policy acceptance outcomes appears to be less pronounced compared to other variables such as fluency and language response.

The findings indicate that language resources, pedagogical strategies, and faculty involvement substantially influence key academic outcomes and students' adaptability to EMI policies. The strongest relationship between Language Response and Level of Acceptance underscores the importance of addressing students' ability to respond effectively to language challenges, fostering greater acceptance of the EMI policy. Moreover, the significant role of fluency and pronunciation emphasizes that improving these areas can enhance academic development and students' willingness to engage with the EMI policy.

A Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationships between the Extent of Behavior Response (Aggression, Regression, Compromise, and Behavior Response) and various study variables: Language Skills

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Training, Rewards and Punishment, Academic Development, and Level of Acceptance. Table 6 shows that all correlations are statistically significant at $p < .05$, with degrees of freedom (df) equal to 111.

Table 6. Correlational Analysis Between the Extent of Behavior Response and Level of Acceptance of EMI

Variables	Statistics	Aggression	Regression	Com-promise	Behavior Response
Language Skills Training	Pearson's r	0.405	0.385	0.456	0.493
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Rewards & Punishment	Pearson's r	0.404	0.453	0.523	0.545
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Academic Development	Pearson's r	0.415	0.439	0.488	0.531
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001
Level of Acceptance	Pearson's r	0.527	0.55	0.632	0.675
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001

Note: df=111, $p < .05$ is significant

Level of Acceptance exhibits the strongest correlations with all dimensions of Behavior Response, particularly with Compromise ($r = 0.632$, $p < .001$) and Behavior Response ($r = 0.675$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that higher acceptance levels are strongly linked to more positive and adaptive responses to the EMI policy, particularly when students engage in a compromise behavior. Similarly, Rewards & Punishment also demonstrated strong correlations with Compromise ($r = 0.523$, $p < .001$) and Behavior Response ($r = 0.545$, $p < .001$), implying that students' perceptions of the reward system and disciplinary measures are positively associated with their behavioral responses.

Moreover, Academic Development has moderate to strong correlations with all behavior dimensions, with the highest correlation observed with Behavior Response ($r = 0.531$, $p < .001$), suggesting that academic progress is a significant factor in shaping students' behavioral reactions to the EMI policy. Language Skills Training showed moderate correlations with Aggression ($r = 0.405$, $p < .001$) and Compromise ($r = 0.456$, $p < .001$), implying that better language training is linked to more balanced responses in terms of aggression and compromise.

The findings indicate that the Level of Acceptance has the most significant impact on Behavior Response, with higher acceptance leading to more constructive and adaptive responses (e.g., compromise and positive behavioral reactions). The strong correlations between Rewards and punishment and behavioral responses underscore the importance of an effective reward system in encouraging positive student behavior (Amihan & Sanchez, 2023; Amihan, et al., 2023; Carvajal, et al., 2025). The moderate to strong correlations with Academic Development further suggest that students' academic experiences under the EMI policy play a vital role in shaping their responses, with academic success potentially fostering more positive and engaged behavior.



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Suggested Managerial Approach for EMI Policy Implementation

Based on the study's findings, the managerial approach best suited for successfully implementing the English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy in junior high schools would be supportive, flexible, and collaborative. This approach would foster student engagement, promote interactive and collaborative learning environments, and provide targeted support for language skills development, particularly in writing and speaking.

The study indicates that while students generally accept the EMI policy and show positive responses towards language skills improvement and academic development, there are areas for further enhancement, particularly regarding peer collaboration and the consistent use of English in informal settings. The key to improving these areas lies in promoting collaborative learning and providing interactive teaching strategies that encourage peer discussions and project-based tasks in English. Additionally, students' moderate confidence in writing and speaking suggests a need for a targeted language training program focusing on writing techniques, vocabulary building, and fluency improvement.

A flexible managerial approach is also recommended. This approach allows teachers to adopt adaptive teaching strategies that balance policy adherence with flexibility, fostering an environment where students can comfortably engage in English across different contexts. By incorporating culturally relevant teaching materials, the approach ensures that students feel connected to their learning, making English a formal medium of instruction and a tool for meaningful communication.

Lastly, a robust monitoring and feedback system should be implemented to regularly assess the effectiveness and adoption of the EMI policy. Continuous feedback from both students and teachers will help identify specific policy implementation challenges and highlight areas where additional support is needed.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the level of acceptance of the EMI policy among junior high school students is generally moderate to high, with students recognizing its benefits in language skills and academic development. Although the adoption of the policy shows positive engagement, there is room for improvement in peer collaboration and consistent language use. Students report tolerable improvement in language proficiency, especially in fluency and pronunciation, though challenges persist in speaking confidently.

Regarding behavioral responses, most students exhibit a positive adjustment, primarily through compromise, despite some initial resistance. Language skills training is a good predictor of academic development and acceptance, highlighting the critical roles of student engagement, teacher support, and educational success in successfully adopting the EMI policy.

Recommendations

In light of the key findings and conclusions discussed above, the study recommends To enhance student acceptance and effectiveness of the English Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy, the study recommends implementing targeted language skills training focused on listening, speaking, and writing, supported by interactive activities. A rewards system should be established to motivate English use, while curricular integration of English language learning can promote academic development. Encouraging peer collaboration and using interactive teaching strategies like flipped classrooms can boost engagement. For improved writing proficiency, specific training in vocabulary and grammar is advised. To address behavioral responses, teacher training in classroom management and student support services are recommended. Lastly, future research should examine the long-term impacts of EMI, comparing outcomes across school types, regions, and incorporating teacher perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding.

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