



English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)

Module 1: Task 2 – Read 5 Articles

Article 1.2: *The Roles and Responsibilities of the EMI Instructor*

The teacher’s role in an EMI course is crucial. EMI courses will be less effective if teachers simply take their existing practices and behaviors and teach their classes the same way as they always have, but simply switching out the native language for English. Teaching in English gives you an opportunity to improve your teaching style and the tasks you assign to students. For example, when you teach in English you will find that your students are able to learn more material and succeed in the course when lessons are interactive; you will want to reduce the amount of time that you lecture and increase the amount of time you ask students to be more actively involved, such as with discussions, presentations, or group work. Teaching in English also allows you to continue to strengthen your own proficiency in the language, which can be professionally and personally satisfying. In fact, taking a moment to reflect on our own teaching can be very rewarding, as we see how even small changes in our teaching can lead to improved learning and outcomes for our students and increased student motivation.

Looking forward to the opportunities that EMI offers you is a great first step in keeping your motivation high for this exciting yet demanding task.

EMI Instructor Roles

Teaching your content in English will require roles that are new or expanded for most instructors. One of the most important considerations when you begin planning for how you will develop and teach a course in English is your role as teacher. In some content areas or in some cultures, instructors are expected to spend the majority of class time lecturing so that they can cover a large amount of material in a short amount of time. Students are expected to sit passively and take notes, perhaps answer a question or two during class, and then do their homework largely without assistance from the professor. This structure can be called a “teacher-fronted classroom” because the focus is on the teacher, who makes the decisions and leads all aspects of the class. With EMI, more successful roles for the lecturer are as a Facilitator, Content Expert, Support Coach, Bridge Builder, and Role Model:

1. **Facilitator:** In this role, the lecturer is still in control of planning the class, but more control is given to the students. For example, instead of lecturing for most of the class period, start your class with a mini-lecture of about 15 minutes, and then ask students to analyze a case study in groups based on the lecture content. Next, students can discuss the topic in the large class before moving to another mini-lecture. You can also add student presentations or in-class reflective writing to allow students to be more engaged with the course material. For many EMI



instructors, this new role of facilitator is one of the most challenging parts of their course development and delivery.

2. **Content Expert:** Even though students in EMI courses are generally more involved in active learning than they are in traditional class formats, you as the instructor will still be the content expert. What will shift is how the students learn the content. Instead of only lecturing, you will identify strategies for students to learn the content in a more active way—but you will still be the one who identifies what content students need to know, who guides learning, and who assesses students.
3. **Support Coach:** Another new role in EMI courses is instructor as Support Coach. This means that you will assume that students will be challenged by learning the content in English, anticipate the difficulties they have, and plan ways to support them along the way. For example, when students read in English, they will likely have difficulties in identifying the main idea of the text and focusing on that main idea instead of reading every word carefully and getting distracted with too many small details. To help them, at the beginning of the course you can give them brief training sessions on how to read their English texts in a way that is efficient and focuses on main ideas. You can ask students to reflect on the strategies they use and share with a peer in order to learn from each other.
4. **Bridge Builder:** Many EMI instructors look to their larger field in order to connect their students to professionals in their career. These connections can be crucial for helping students realize the importance of English and find jobs after graduation. If you work in Computer Science, for example, you can connect students with a computer programmer in the area. The professional can visit class to speak about current topics or to answer students' questions. Professionals or content area experts can even attend student presentations and give field-based feedback.
5. **Role Model:** You will be a powerful role model for your students, as you demonstrate confidence and professionalism in your EMI course. Students will build their own confidence as they see examples of instructors from their own country who are taking risks in trying new ways of teaching. Remember to stay positive and focused on the goal of helping your students succeed with the course content but also in their communication of that content in English. These communication skills will give your students many more opportunities once they leave the university.



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Responsibilities of EMI Instructors

Your responsibilities when you teach in English will be similar to when you teach in your native language. But pay attention to these areas when you teach EMI courses, as responsibilities can differ.

1. **Plan your course based on your students' needs:** Obviously you will have curriculum requirements for the material that you cover in class. However, you will have many options in how students can demonstrate that they have learned that content. If your students will need to be able to speak clearly in English for their future career, then assignments that require them to speak in English will be most useful for them. If they will need to be able to read technical manuals in English, then reading will be important. If they will need to write reports in English, then writing assignments are a good idea. In addition to curricular requirements, consider your students' language proficiency in English, their intercultural competencies (or abilities to communicate with people from different cultures), and any cultural considerations from the situation you are in. It can be difficult to prioritize what students will need, since you cannot do everything in one class. Work with your department to identify how each course will contribute to students' overall development in communicating in English within their field.
2. **Give authentic assignments and assessments:** EMI courses rely on a strong connection between the content area and the English-speaking world, particularly the English-speaking careers that students may join. This means that assignments must not only be connected to the core content goals, but also be related to "real life." Authentic assignments will be more motivating to students and help them put in the extra effort that it takes to learn and communicate in English. Assessments should also be authentic whenever possible. Instead of giving students long multiple-choice tests, assessments can be presentations, reports, or portfolios. Choosing the right assessments for your course will of course also depend on class size and other factors.
3. **Prepare and reflect:** Preparation for teaching an EMI course includes both content and delivery. Content is likely the area of preparation that you are most comfortable with. You are an expert in your field and know the content that you need your students to learn. Delivering an EMI course can be more challenging. If you can, find a group or other EMI instructors who you can meet with regularly in order to share challenges and strategies for success. Building a community of EMI professionals can be very rewarding. Professional support is particularly important given that, for many instructors, teaching in English can be intimidating and exhausting. Delivery concerns not only your teaching style and methods, but also your use of English. Many professionals suggest that a CEFR rating of C1 provides instructors with the English proficiency they need to feel comfortable teaching an EMI course. A C1 level means, according to the Council of Europe (2018), a proficient user who:

can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex

subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

Being at a C1 level is not required for teaching EMI courses, but you can use this description to guide you in your own development of English and areas you might want to focus on as you prepare to teach in EMI. Of course, you will want to pay the most attention to English as it relates to your content area, but you will also want to learn useful phrases for teaching in English as well. And you might want to look at more informal English for socializing with students before or after class. After you begin teaching your EMI course, you will want to reflect on your lessons and how students are responding to them. You might consider asking a colleague to observe your class and give feedback, or keep a journal of successes and challenges as you teach. Gaining exposure to other teaching methods and receiving feedback on your own teaching are crucial components to preparation and reflection for EMI courses (Fenton-Smith, Stillwell, & Dupuy, 2017).

References¹

Fenton-Smith, B., Stillwell, C., & Dupuy, R. (2017). Professional development for EMI: Exploring Taiwanese lecturers' needs. In B. Fenton-Smith, P. Humphreys, & I. Walkinshaw (Eds.), *English medium instruction in higher education in Asia-Pacific: From policy to pedagogy* (pp. 195-217). Dordrecht: Springer.

Council of Europe (2018). *Global scale - Table 1 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference levels*. Retrieved from <https://www.coe.int>.

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