



English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)
Module 1: Task 1 – 4 Video Lectures
Video 1.1: Introduction and Benefits to EMI Courses

Welcome to our video lecture “Introduction and Benefits to EMI Courses”! I’m Dr. Dawn Bikowski from Ohio University.

In this video, I will introduce and give an overview of EMI, or English as the Medium of Instruction; I’ll compare EMI to other models for instruction, such as ESP or CLIL. And we’ll look at the main goals and benefits for EMI programs. Please take notes on areas that you think you’ll need more information on so that you can use it for your course plans.

What is EMI? According to Dearden in 2015, EMI is “The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English.” This means that a group of people don’t speak English as their first language, but they’re using English when they learn. It is a rapidly-expanding global trend that requires new ways of teaching and learning. That’s why we’re here together!

You have probably heard of other ways that English is taught in relation to content. Let’s briefly compare those to EMI. For example, maybe you’ve heard of CLIL, or Content and Language Integrated Learning. How is this different from EMI? CLIL doesn’t just focus on content. The second language students are learning is an equal goal of instruction. In other words, both language and content are goals of a CLIL course, and in fact, the language of instruction can be something besides English. It could be Spanish, for example. And CLIL is a term generally used for primary and secondary levels. It is usually for pre-university education. With EMI, however, the content is the focus and it’s at the university level.

Another term you may have heard is ESP, or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). With ESP, the purpose of the classes is to help students improve their level of English. These are language courses more than content courses. Therefore, the students’ English proficiency in an ESP course should be lower than the English level of students in EMI programs. ESP courses focus on the English students need in their field. In sum, EMI courses prioritize learning the content and require higher English language proficiency than either CLIL or ESP courses.

Let’s talk about why we have EMI. You’ve probably heard some of these goals and benefits already, and of course the purpose of using English for instruction depends on the context and country where it is being implemented. In countries that have widespread English outside the classroom, goals and practices will be different from contexts where there is less English in the community. But, in general, we can consider 5 main goals or benefits for EMI courses.

1. The first is to raise the English proficiency level of the country and provide a well-qualified, bilingual workforce. Much of the content in many fields these days is written in English. Knowing



English helps workers stay up-to-date. Professors think that EMI improves understanding of science, in particular, written in English, and that it builds the potential for their students to share research or projects internationally [screen: Zare-ee & Gholami, 2013].

2. The second builds on the first—to promote international exchange or to internationalize a campus, which is important not only at an individual level, but for countries as well. With EMI, universities can attract international students, and having a diverse student body can offer many benefits to the instructor and all the students.
3. The third is to raise the quality and prestige of educational programs, and often generate revenue through charging higher tuition.
4. The fourth goal is an important one—to help students be competitive in the job market. Not only does English help graduates find jobs and often ones that have higher salaries, but it also helps existing students obtain high-quality internship opportunities, gain competitive scholarships, or participate in study abroad programs.
5. The final goal or benefit is students' attitude and motivation—students can be very positive about learning in English [screen: Kim, Son, & Sohn, 2009]. Some research has even found that students in EMI courses had a more positive attitude towards instruction in general [screen: van Splunder, 2010].

I recommend that you keep these main goals in mind when you plan and teach EMI courses. Remember that the focus is on students developing English and content, and that they will use this English in their future careers. This is an important part of EMI instruction. These courses should be very practical for your students. And in addition to these goals, many EMI professors find that they experience personal fulfillment when they teach these courses. Not only are they teaching in English, which can be very challenging but rewarding, they are also learning new teaching methods. So enjoy the experience of planning and teaching your course in English! You are helping your students join a professional community that will offer them many benefits for years to come. Maybe you aren't surprised, given the goals I just mentioned, that Science and Engineering programs adopt EMI more rapidly than other majors [screen: Kim & Sohn, 2009].

Ok, we've discussed what EMI is and its goals and benefits, and we've discussed where it's more common. I think that you'll agree that teaching an EMI course is far more than just transferring your regular course content and teaching style from your native language to English. Thanks for joining me in this video!

References¹

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