Examining English as a Medium of Instruction in Vietnam: Policies and Challenges in Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper is a literature-based review that critically examines the implementation of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Vietnam's higher education (HE). Drawing on policy documents and previous studies in the EMI domain, this paper provides a review of the EMI policies and sheds light on the challenges that could negatively impact the success of the project. The findings indicate a misalignment between the policies and actual implementation, as teachers and students face various challenges in the EMI classrooms. Such challenges include the insufficient supply of qualified teachers, low English proficiency, educational inequality, and irrelevant materials dominated by westernized perspectives. It can be argued that perceptions of teachers, students, and non-educational bodies, such as employers and recruiters, should be considered to ensure the sustainability of EMI implementation. In addition, this article also questions the validity of the monolingual ideology embedded in the EMI policy and discusses implications based on recent development in language education to present an alternative scholarship that transcends the English-only ideology and embraces the multilingual practices in the EMI classrooms.

Keywords: EMI, higher education, educational reform, language policies, internationalization

Introduction

The prominent role of English as an international language is well-documented in the literature. In multilateral scenarios, English is well-attested as the most effective language for "comprehensive international communication" in a myriad fields, including science, politics, business, sport, and media (Ammon, 2003, p. 23). In fact, the spread of English in today's world is not only restricted in the so-called "elite usage" of the language adopted in academic publishing or business conducts, but also penetrates people from all walks of life (Mauranen, 2018). Social-economic and technical transformations have established optimal conditions that propel the status of English as a dominant shared code and a symbol of neoliberalism (Kedzierski, 2016). The influence of English expansion on the domain of international education leads to the increasing use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) even in non-English speaking countries (Vu & Burns, 2014).

The educational landscape of Asia has witnessed a large growth of programs instructed in English, especially in higher education (HE) (Kirkpatrick, 2011). The high demand for EMI in Asia can be illustrated by the education policy adopted in China, where English is introduced from the third year of primary school (Kirkpatrick, 2014). EMI as "the new

normal" in HE is also evidenced by the early acceptance of EMI policy in Korean universities where EMI programs were first introduced in the 1990s and since then have exploded in quantity thanks to enormous funding (Kim, 2017). The driving force behind the spread of EMI on an international scale cannot be separated from the belief that EMI could be the shortcut to bringing prestigious status to HE institutions (Lin & Lo, 2018). With HE institutions striving for prestige and respect, American universities, such as Harvard, Stanford, or Berkeley, have been regarded as the role models for success (Mohrman, 2008).

It is not surprising that Vietnam also joined the trend of globalizing the tertiary sector with the adoption of the EMI policy to fulfill various political, economic, and socio-cultural motives (Tran et al., 2018). As a response to the increasingly challenging global competitiveness, the promotion of the EMI policy in the HE sector in Vietnam is a strategy to improve the position of local educational institutions in the international ranking system, enhance the quality of education, attract both local and international students to join these programs, and increase the institutions' income (Nguyen et al., 2016). The plans to implement the EMI programs were officially initiated in 2008 with the introduction of the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (NFL 2020).

In the same year, Decision number 1505/QĐ-TTg presented a plan to establish the advanced programs, focusing mainly on the enactment of EMI policy in the HE system. Subsequently, circular 23/2014/TT-BGDĐT introduced high-quality programs and joint programs which also use English as a vehicle for delivering lessons. Against this backdrop, the EMI policy was expected to bring about educational outcomes, boost research capability, and develop talents who can work in English. However, unfavorable reports on the implementation of EMI policies in Vietnam's tertiary sector have thrown the EMI programs in a negative light. Previous studies have demonstrated a detachment between top-down policy and the reality of institutional and classroom practices (Nguyen & Tran, 2017; Pham & Doan, 2020).

Research Methodology

This paper employs literature review as its methodology to critically examine the implementation of EMI policy in HE in Vietnam. Drawing on policy documents and recent studies, this article examines the EMI policies promulgated by the Vietnamese government and addresses the challenges related to the enactment of such policies. Studies from other countries have related the practices of EMI in Vietnam with other non-English speaking contexts. Data were comprised of a number of policy documents obtained from the official portals of the Vietnamese Government and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), relevant research articles, and book chapters. Data coding was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis. Codes were developed from the data and relevant codes were collated to construct the themes. While there have been many studies that shed light on EMI implementation in Vietnam, comprehensive reviews devoted to examine the policies and challenges in this area are scant. In addition, a synthesis of EMI-related documents and studies can generate a holistic picture of the EMI landscape, provide an insight into recent scholarship in language education that might inform EMI practices,

and serve as a reference point for future research.

Defining English as a Medium of Instruction

EMI is defined as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro et al., 2018, p. 37). It differs from another educational approach called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the sense that while CLIL has a dual focus on both language and content via the use of an additional foreign language (Marsh & Martín, 2012), EMI places its emphasis on the delivery of content to students. As EMI does not have any explicit language goal (Walkinshaw et al., 2017), it also differs from English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which focuses on specific language, genres, and skills to address the academic or occupational needs of learners (Anthony, 2018). English learning is only considered a "happy by-product" of EMI rather than being positioned at the forefront of the learning process (Taguchi, 2014).

Policies and Motives Behind the Implementation of EMI in Vietnam

Vietnam's language policies have constantly been subjected to shifts in the country's socio-political landscape. The adoption of various official foreign languages in Vietnam reflects different historical periods of the country (Lam & Albright, 2019). As the country regained its independence after the Vietnam War, the attitude toward English was primarily negative for more than a decade after the event (Dang, 2021). During this period, Vietnam demonstrated its closely-tied alliance with the Soviet Union by adopting Russian as the predominant foreign language in the educational system (Dang, 2021). However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Vietnam entered a period of rapid transformation and reformation called "Doi Moi" in which the country transitioned from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy (Ngo, 2020).

The transition underscored an opening to the era of a regulated market economy, which contributed to the rapid development of Vietnam's economic landscape (Hayden & Lam, 2009). In alignment with the economic changes, the educational system was also reshaped in response to the call for more programs relevant to the economy's needs (Oliver et al., 2009). Educational reform in this era led to new language policy and marked the emergence of English as the major foreign language in Vietnam (Lam & Albright, 2019). Russian soon became the dead language in Vietnam, followed by the rise of English as the most dominant foreign language in the country (X.N.C.M. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). English in Vietnam, once the language of the enemy, re-emerged as the shortcut for economic growth, educational reform, and the facilitation of a higher-skilled workforce.

The National Foreign Language 2020 (NFL2020) launched by the Prime Ministerial Decision number 1400/QĐ-TTg demonstrated Vietnam's willingness to engage in the educational globalization by taking further steps in reforming foreign language teaching and learning in the period of 2008-2020 (Vu & Burns, 2014). Some major objectives included in the NFL2020 project were: (1) initiating the 10-year foreign language program in which English becomes a compulsory subject starting from grade 3, (2) initiating intensive English training programs in vocational education, (3) initiating intensive English

training programs in HE, and (4) constantly updating the English teaching and learning practices according to the needs of students to enhance the foreign language proficiency of the workforce (Vietnamese Government, 2008a). To fulfill these objectives, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) specified some important missions, including (1) implementing a unified language framework that corresponds to the six-point scale for language proficiency referred to as The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), (2) building and implementing EMI programs to teach mathematics in some high schools, (3) building and implementing EMI programs to teach foundational, specialized, and optional subjects in the senior year of university (Vietnamese Government, 2008a).

The project was estimated to cost USD500 million to fulfill the goals of providing highly skilled individuals and promoting the process of modernization and internalization of the country (X.N.C.M. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). Since the implementation of the ambitious NFL2020, Vietnam has witnessed tremendous changes in English education, including earlier introduction to foreign language, change in language of instruction from Vietnamese to English, reform of classroom materials, increased time dedicated to English teaching, and training and retraining on a national scale (Dang et al., 2013). Changes were the most notable in the tertiary sector with the introduction of advanced training programs which emphasized the use of EMI. The scheme of implementing advanced training programs in HE launched by The Prime Ministerial Decision number 1505/QĐ-TTg aimed to initiate the advanced programs as a strategic step to reform HE in Vietnam (Vietnamese Government, 2008b).

Advanced programs are cooperative programs that partner with prestigious Anglophone universities in the US and the UK (Nguyen et al., 2018). The programs were inclined to embrace training programs from the top 200 universities ranked by prestigious organizations. To accommodate the establishment of advanced programs, the Vietnamese government promulgated a set of criteria for implementing the programs, including (1) conducting training programs using EMI, (2) importing training programs from the world's top 200 prestigious universities, (3) recruiting teachers who have a masters or higher degree to teach the courses, (4) admitting students who are proficient in English to meet the language requirements of the program (Vietnamese Government, 2008b). It was expected that with the implementation of EMI in HE, the educational system could achieve the goals of improving the quality of the tertiary sector and promoting the ranking of some universities on the international ranking system.

In 2014, MOET issued Circular Number 23/2014/TT-BGDĐT, marking the introduction of joint programs and high-quality programs in HE. Joint programs refer to transnational programs that allow students to go to foreign campuses in their third or fourth year, giving them the opportunity to obtain a double degree upon graduation. High-quality programs refer to localized EMI programs established by local universities. One major characteristic of these programs is the import of materials, course content, and assessment plans from prestigious universities (Nguyen & Tran, 2017). As a result, with the promotion of the

EMI policy and programs imported from top-ranked universities, students are expected to acquire content knowledge and improve their English proficiency.

In addition, these programs were navigated towards research-based training in which students and teachers were encouraged to produce scientific outputs. EMI teachers ought to have one publication in the area of advanced training programs on an annual basis while students were required to form research groups led by EMI teachers. In addition, the regulation also foregrounded the need to maintain connections between the academic world and the world of work. Teachers and students were required to collaborate with organizations, corporations, and businesses to produce studies on the success of the advanced training programs (MOET, 2014).

Changes in language education policies in Vietnam denoted the government's responses to the country's socio-political shifts and the influence of globalization. The reform of HE programs might bring about tangible assets, such as the flourishing of research capacities, highly-skilled human resources, and other intangible assets, including the connection with the wider world and the promotion of educational prestige. In fact, the adoption of EMI was proven to be effective in attracting foreign investment and maintaining scientific and technical links with the wider world (Le & Chen, 2019). The import of the language curriculum and materials from the top global universities reflected the country's ambitious goal of promoting the ranking of local universities on the international ranking system, ideally reaching the position of top 200 leading positions in the world by 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008b).

Motives behind the promotion of universities' ranking were attracting both domestic and international students to the programs and stimulating the country's stagnant area of research publishing. It was proposed that by 2015, 100 scientific works under the advanced programs would be published in leading scientific journals (Vietnamese Government, 2008b). Although the HE research landscape of Vietnam has not achieved the expected vibrancy (Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020), it was evident that the policies acknowledged the influence of EMI programs and research productivity on the process of educational internalization.

Challenges of English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education
Despite various efforts to implement EMI as a strategic step to enhance the quality of HE, research has shown that there is a disconnect between the EMI policies stipulated by the government, university language policies, and the actual practices of EMI coursework in classroom contexts. For example, Aizawa and Rose (2018) investigated the gaps between university policy and classroom practices in the Japanese context. The findings suggested that the university policy did not trickle down to classroom practices due to the low English proficiency of both teachers and students.

In the context of Bangladesh, Saleh and Morgan (2022b) used a "Russian doll approach" to analyze the macro, meso, and micro levels of policy decisions and how such decisions were implemented within the university context. The findings indicated mismatches between

language policy and the decisions made in four universities and eight classrooms. While the macro-level analysis of existing literature revealed that public universities employed Bangla, bilingual, or a mixture of Bangla and English, and private ones adopted EMI, mesolevel analysis demonstrated that one public university used English as the vehicle for delivering lessons and put an embargo on using Bangla. Meanwhile, micro-level analysis indicated that seven out of eight teachers resorted to the use of translanguaging in their classroom rather than adhering to the EMI policy.

The same issues can be observed in the implementation of EMI in Vietnam. Studies on the implementation of EMI in Vietnam share some commonalities on the clash between expectations and reality, resulting from the fact that policy envisions were not translated well to the institutional and classroom levels. The main challenges that hinder EMI success result from the insufficient supply of qualified teachers, the low English proficiency, material-related issues, and potential tensions related to educational inequality (Nguyen et al., 2016; Pham & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2018).

Insufficient Supply of Qualified Teachers

One major concern of the implementation of EMI in the tertiary sector is the insufficient supply of qualified teachers. Teachers who participate in EMI programs should be masters of discipline-specific knowledge, proficient users of English, and well-qualified educators (Doiz et al., 2012; Wilkinson, 2012). Although teachers were reported to be moderately skilled in English writing and reading, lecturing in English to Vietnamese students was a different story (Vu & Burns, 2014). Teachers elaborated that their accent might dissatisfy students who preferred native speakers' accent. Teachers also expressed their concerns about giving oral presentations and explaining content area concepts in English as their pronunciation errors could lead to understanding difficulties encountered by their students (Vu, 2020).

In fact, the study by Le (2019) indicated that teachers' concerns were not baseless. Students pointed out that their teachers' unclear and incorrect pronunciation also contributed to their difficulties in understanding the lectures. Meanwhile, teachers also recognized that their low level of English proficiency could be an impediment to students' understanding of subject content and might negatively affect students' English development (Pham & Doan, 2020). However, from the lens of World Englishes, where the unquestioning position of native language norms is challenged by the varieties of English originating from different sociolinguistic contexts, students need to understand that learning English variations is no less important than conforming to native linguistic rules. As the idealized Standard English could no longer accommodate the fluid and dynamic use of the language in the expanding-circle contexts, appreciation for linguistic diversity should be promoted instead of native-speakerism (Fang & Baker, 2021). In this sense, rather than viewing the teachers' pronunciation as less than ideal, students should embrace it as a model of English for global communication that might enable effective communication with individuals from different sociolinguistic backgrounds (Hino, 2017).

In a case study conducted in a public Vietnam university, the criteria for recruiting lecturers

for EMI courses, as reported by an executive, were having graduated abroad, having a disciplinary degree from a foreign university to teach a core course, having experience in teaching in Vietnamese and English, and being able to adopt Western pedagogical approaches (Nguyen et al., 2016) However, even teachers who possessed postgraduate certificates from English-speaking countries asserted that they were having major difficulties in delivering lectures to students in a comprehensible manner as "academics cannot present all their knowledge to the students and students cannot understand what the academics teach them" (Nguyen et al., 2017, p.45). Teachers expressed that knowing English did not mean they could deliver EMI courses as teaching and explaining technical and abstract concepts were not easy tasks (Pham & Doan, 2020). Such issues not only deprive students of the mastery of content knowledge, but also put them at a disadvantage as English learners. Recruiting lecturers who have obtained overseas degrees does not guarantee the successful implementation of EMI in tertiary education.

Thus, a shortcut to promote content learning that was frequently practiced by EMI teachers was the code-switching strategy in which Vietnamese was used when introducing abstract concepts or when students started to have problems understanding the content. Common code-switching practices in EMI classrooms include using additional materials in Vietnamese and the reversal of the prohibition of using Vietnamese in classroom activities as compensation for the low English proficiency (Pham & Doan, 2020). The study of Dang and Moskovsky (2021) confirmed that despite the regulations on strict adherence to EMI, use of EMI in formal policy documents, teachers and administrators admitted that the code-switching strategy was negotiated in the classroom to maximize the student's understanding of the content knowledge.

According to teachers, Vietnamese was necessary when explaining jargon or disciplinary terminologies as the meanings of such terms were beyond the students' ability to understand (Dang & Moskovsky, 2021). However, the use of code switching also encountered objections from students as they stated that random mixing of Vietnamese and English made them lose their concentration on lessons (Nguyen et al., 2017) and lose motivation to improve their English (Trinh & Conner, 2019). Thus, teachers usually found themselves in a vicious dilemma in which either direction can lead to potential disruptions in the EMI classrooms. It is obvious that prohibiting the use of L1 and implementing an English-only policy in EMI in Vietnam HE is simply unrealistic given the reality of classroom practices revealed in previous studies.

Students' Low English Proficiency
When students enroll in EMI programs, high English competency is one of the indicators for success in their academic study. Yet, the compatibility between EMI programs' English entry tests and the language level for academic pursuit in the EMI environment is being questioned. For instance, in a case study at a university in Vietnam, the minimum language requirement for students who wanted to join EMI programs was scoring 500 out of 990 in a modified version of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) administered by the university's English faculty (Nguyen et al., 2016). However, the fact

that higher institutions are using results from English for professional purposes test such as TOEIC as the gatekeeper for EMI programs has provoked various concerns. This is because the results of the TOEIC test might denote the ability to manage English in daily activities rather than the ability to function successfully in the academic domain.

It is no surprise that students struggle to comprehend discipline-specific knowledge embedded in the lectures. Rather than promoting students' English proficiency, the use of EMI in tertiary programs was said to be a double barrier, negatively affecting the students' ability to learn (Yao et al., 2021). Yao et al. (2021) examined the influence of EMI on students' learning experiences in a transnational university and revealed that the implementation of EMI policies brought various challenges to the learning process of the students. The students reported that they could not fully understand the lessons due to the speech rate of their teachers and the fact that they had to listen and write down the content simultaneously. Thus, the students had to seek other resources, such as course materials and slides to compensate for their lack of understanding (Yao et al., 2021).

Additionally, the students also faced challenges in academic writing tasks, since they were not equipped with knowledge of professional genres and technical vocabulary for their written assignments (Le, 2019). The language of English was also perceived as a negative factor in the learning experiences as they could not express their ideas and opinions fluently and clearly when they encountered topics in the content area. Consequently, they did not participate in speaking activities that involved the use of English (Le, 2019). Furthermore, since the students were accustomed to passive learning styles in high school where they assumed the role of listeners and receivers of knowledge, they lacked the communicative skills required to conduct conversations in English and were afraid of losing face when making mistakes, leading to their reluctance in taking part in classroom discussions (Tran et al., 2021).

This state of affairs points to the fact that despite the monolingual ideology of an English-only environment specified in the policy documents, institutional and classroom practices demonstrated certain deviations from the EMI policy envisions. This also calls for a shift in classroom linguistic practices that moves beyond the static boundaries of languages and embraces the fluid and dynamic nature of language use as the English-only policy might have unfavorable effects on teaching and learning.

The Issues of Educational Inequality

The implementation of EMI programs has been the leading cause of inequality in the domestic educational landscape as only a marginal group of students who can afford higher tuition fees and meet the English language requirements are qualified to join the programs (Trinh & Conner, 2019). The equality problems of HE internationalization might result from the labeling of EMI programs. With the label of "advanced programs," these programs create the impression of being a more privileged or elite educational opportunity while students from the Vietnamese-as-a-medium-of-instruction (VMI) programs are just "normal students" in "normal programs" (Tran & Nguyen, 2018). In one instance, the tuition fee of high-quality programs was five times higher than that of VMI programs at a

local university. The rationale for this, as explained by an executive, was that higher-quality product required a higher price point (Nguyen et al., 2016). Thus, there is an apparent dichotomy between the high-quality program and the VMI program (Wilkinson, 2012), in which the VMI program is essentially portrayed as poor quality when compared with its counterpart.

Differences in resource allocations could result in a further division between students and illustrate the manifestation of inequality in HE (Nguyen et al., 2018). This has sparked an even greater division between VMI and EMI students, underpinning the marginalization of students taking VMI programs. High level of educational discrimination might bring about negative consequences in the near future (Nguyen et al., 2018) as the socioeconomic gap between VMI and EMI students is increasing. An example of high tension between EMI students and students of mass programs occurred in Bangladesh HE where EMI students voiced their dissatisfaction with the false stories and hatred thrown towards them by the anti-English-medium people (Hamid & Jahan, 2015). In another account, Bangla-medium students reported that they suffered from emotional discomfort and a sense of inferiority as they failed to understand lectures and express their ideas in English, leading to English proficiency-based discrimination in the EMI classroom (Saleh & Morgan, 2022a). These incidents in the Bangladeshi context call for a reconsideration of the elite labeling and an investigation into the current polarization of Vietnam's HE to prevent discrimination between individuals and communities.

Materials-Related Issues

Aside from the mentioned challenges, imported materials also act as a barrier to the successful enactment of EMI. In response to students' learning needs, the adoption of materials in Vietnamese depicts the attempt to assist the students in solving their language issues. Teachers resorted to using equivalent materials and articles in Vietnamese as a cross-linguistic strategy, as they believed that academic materials in English could hinder students' ability to understand content knowledge (Pham & Doan, 2020). Accommodating changes in the language of instruction means that teachers have to update the slides for lesson presentations (Vu & Burns, 2014) and gain access to foreign materials (Tran et al., 2018). However, updating previous materials for the new curriculum was overwhelming for EMI teachers, as they often found themselves overwhelmed with little time to create new materials in English (Nguyen et al., 2017).

As a result, a university executive admitted that some EMI lecturers resorted to outdated materials used in their overseas study as resources for teaching (Nguyen et al., 2016). Other academics asserted that they had to translate Vietnamese materials into English while facing the language barrier as certain discipline-specific concepts were untranslatable (Nguyen et al., 2017). Furthermore, as imported materials were mainly westernized, students also reported a sense of disconnect between the international conversations included in the textbooks and the local reality of Vietnam's economy (Phan et al., 2019). The fact that materials are overwhelmingly informed, driven, and dominated by the westernized perspectives poses a potential threat as the knowledge provided in such materials might bear little relevance to

the students' reality (Leask & Bridge, 2013). In this sense, forcing the interaction with the international arena is not equal to devaluing students' home culture by integrating foreign materials into the EMI curriculum without adapting the content to accommodate the local cultural and socioeconomic background. Materials adopted from prestigious universities, regardless of their quality, may not reflect the practices of the local market and meet the learning needs and target needs of Vietnamese students.

Discussion and Implications for the Current Practices of EMI in Vietnam

Among the disputes about EMI in the HE of Vietnam, appropriate adjustments and careful planning based on continuous feedback from stakeholders, empirical research, and needs analysis could facilitate better implementation of the EMI policy in HE. On an institutional scale, the establishment of a support system where learning and self-improvement opportunities are available for teachers to adapt to a new environment is vital (Byun et al., 2011). In the same vein, Duong and Chua (2016) argue that setting up departmental units to supervise and facilitate EMI programs is beneficial, as these units allow timely responses to teachers' needs. Training on EMI teaching methods and techniques should be provided beforehand as having been trained in native English educational contexts does not equal the ability to teach in English. Cañado (2020) conducted a needs analysis to address the training needs of EMI teachers and found that teachers were not sufficiently supported professionally and linguistically when they were assigned to teach EMI courses. Therefore, they expressed the need for mobility programs, methodological training, and language training as compensation for their shortcomings as EMI teachers. Teacher training should be long-term and provided continuously throughout the programs so that teachers can reflect on their teaching practices and exchange expertise with their colleagues.

As teachers are the central agents who instruct EMI programs, education administrators should provide teachers with opportunities to raise their concerns in terms of resistance, demotivation, and disappointment in the new language policies to further investigate the limitations of the top-down language policies (Nguyen & Bui, 2016). Teachers hesitated to teach EMI courses as they were not ready to adopt English as a vehicle for delivering lessons despite their PhD training in English-speaking countries (Pham & Doan, 2020). As a result, teachers mentioned that they felt a sense of obligation towards the EMI policies since they had no choice but to respond to national and institutional regulations (Pham & Doan, 2020). However, Byun et al. (2011) warns that the unilateral enactment of EMI policies might lead to unwanted side effects and policy makers should take into account human resource availability and students' language proficiency before enacting EMI policies on a national scale.

It is also apparent that EMI policy operates under several key assumptions, such as English should be the only language permitted in the classroom, any deviation from the native-like English is seen as less than ideal, and the cross-contamination of L1 is regarded as an impediment to the deliverance of EMI. EMI promotes the inherent superiority of native-speakerness, monolingual policy, and the native/non-native dichotomy despite the call for an alternative approach that reflects the multilingual practices in Global Englishes (Sahan

et al., 2022). In contrast, Global Englishes marks a shift toward an alternative paradigm that emphasizes the use of English as an international language, challenges the established native norms, and promotes the flexible and dynamic nature of language (Rose et al., 2020). This paradigm shift stemmed from the fact that English has transcended beyond monolingual ideology and encompassed diverse English varieties as it spread across borders. Given the prevalence of Global Englishes, the translanguaging approach in education has gained momentum.

Unlike code-switching which views bi-multilingualism as autonomous linguistic systems (Rahman & Singh, 2021), translanguaging is defined as an approach to language use that regards the language practices of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire (García & Wei, 2014). In this sense, translanguaging has transformed teaching and learning by normalizing multilingual practices in the classroom, valuing linguistic varieties, and validating students' L1 and local culture (Tian et al., 2020). Under the ideology of translanguaginng, English is seen as 'a social practice that is (re)negotiated and (re)configured by multilingual speakers over time according to their values, interests, and language repertoires in various communicative situations' (Sembiante & Tian, 2020) rather than as a connotation of the monolingual orientation of standard English.

In the context of Vietnam, Ngo's (2021) study revealed that translanguaging in the EMI classroom was a natural phenomenon as suggested by observations and interviews with the students. For example, in an observation of a group presentation, rather than struggling with expressing ideas in English, a student decided to shuttle between L1 and English to convey meaning, which represented a typical episode of translanguaging. In another account, students were found to utilize both Vietnamese and English online resources to answer questions posed by their classmate instead of following the prohibition of translanguaging practices imposed by their teacher.

In the context of Bangladesh, Rahman and Singh (2021) investigated the language ideologies of STEM teachers and students about translanguaging at a private university where English had been adopted as the official medium of instruction. The authors found that although STEM teachers and students acknowledged the rationale and motives behind the implementation of EMI policies in tertiary education, they reported that strict compliance with the ideology was detrimental to content teaching and learning outcomes. Looking through the micro lens of classroom practices, it was evident that the stakeholders adopted translanguaging by using both Bangla and English in the classroom to engage in the meaning-making process and develop a deeper understanding of the content knowledge (Rahman & Singh, 2021).

Similarly, Rafi and Morgan (2022a) found that despite the mixed reactions towards translanguaging practices in academic writing instruction, the translanguaging pedagogical approach helped the students improve their metalinguistic awareness and multicompetence, encouraged students' engagement in classroom activities, and allowed them to form more comprehensive responses in their writing task. In the sphere of reading, Rafi and Morgan (2022b) investigated the influence of translanguaging pedagogical intervention on reading

comprehension. The authors aimed to set up a translanguaging space where students could use bilingual resources in classroom activities and enlighten themselves with the cultural, ideological, and identity factors embedded in the act of reading comprehension. The results indicated that the translanguaging practices led to greater participation of students, improved reading comprehension, and a transformation in the stereotypes and prejudices. The intervention's success resulted from the fact that when emerging in the translanguaging space, students were able to question their preexisting knowledge, draw on their linguistic and cultural background, and build a bridge between languages, identities, and local culture.

Evidence from previous studies in the sphere of translanguaging questions the validity of the English-only policy and legitimizes the cross-contamination practice between languages in the EMI classroom. In light of the post-multilingual era, the translanguaging approach emerges as a shift away from monolingual bias and recognizes English as "socially constructed with emergent characteristics in real-life communicative contexts" (Tian et al., 2020, p. 9). Although translanguaging practices provide a non-threatening environment that encourages the co-construction of meaning among stakeholders and promote students' language and content learning, there are further questions that need to be addressed. For example, Morales et al. (2020) emphasizes that if "what gets tested gets taught," then how do we make assessments inclusive of translanguaging practices? This suggests that more work needs to be done to bring translanguaging ideologies from the margin to the forefront of the EMI practices.

Conclusion

With a short period of enactment and an expansion to a rather small selected group of students, the implementation of EMI in Vietnam tertiary education is only in its primitive stage. Previous research in EMI has predominantly focused on exploring the perceptions of teachers, students, and administrators to elicit possible limitations of the programs and difficulties faced by the stakeholders. However, there has not been any research that aims to explore the level of satisfaction and evaluation of non-educational bodies, including recruiters and managers, on the use of English in their workplace. As one objective of EMI enactment in the tertiary sector is to prepare students for the global workplace, feedback from the industry will provide a more holistic picture of students' readiness to join the marketized economy. Furthermore, there should be more studies examining translanguaging practices in the EMI classroom in Vietnam since such practices have not been thoroughly documented.

The fact that the road to internationalize Vietnam HE sector is paved with challenges does not denote the elimination of EMI policy. In contrast, EMI policy in Vietnam is constantly being revised and adapted according to the current state of practices, marking the country's changing education landscape and a transformation of the country as a rising force in the HE sector. Instead of focusing on non-educational goals, Vietnam needs to reconsider its reform agenda by situating the students at the forefront of the educational system. Without substantial reform on the current curriculum, it is uncertain that Vietnam can

secure the growth of HE and the supply of a highly-skilled labor force. A reform agenda is necessary but not enough if its implementation is mandated from a top-down approach. Conversations with relevant stakeholders and frequent updates on novel scholarships that might inform the EMI practices are needed to navigate EMI policy and shape the future landscape of Vietnam's HE.

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