

EXPLORING EMI READINESS IN VIETNAMESE HIGHER EDUCATION: BETWEEN TEACHER AGENCY AND SYSTEM CONSTRAINTS

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Research Aim & Question

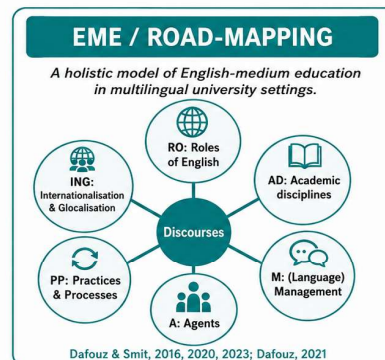
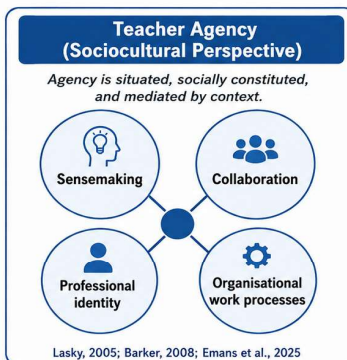
Responding to this gap, the present study brings teacher agency to the foreground of EMI implementation by examining how practitioners perceive and navigate readiness in their everyday educational contexts. Specifically, it aims to explore EMI readiness as experienced by teachers involved in teaching and curriculum development, while connecting their situated actions and perceptions with the wider institutional and policy structures within which EMI is implemented. In doing so, the study seeks to provide a more practice-based and ecologically situated understanding of EMI readiness that accounts for both individual agency and the conditions that enable or constrain it.

Accordingly, the study asks:



How is EMI readiness experienced, negotiated, and constrained by teachers and university systems in Vietnam?

Integrated Theoretical Framework



EMI Readiness

An ecological, multi-level construct shaped by teachers' perceived capacity, language policy, institutional support, disciplinary demands, and everyday classroom practice.

Focus: how readiness is experienced, negotiated, enabled, and constrained.



Literature Review

Research on English-medium instruction (EMI) in Vietnam has largely examined its development at the level of policy and stakeholder perceptions. Using the ROAD-MAPPING framework, Tri and Moskovsky (2019) explored how Vietnamese policymakers conceptualise EMI, while Pham and Doan (2020) characterised Vietnam's approach as a 'policy of encouragement' that provides limited guidance for EMI pedagogy.

Existing studies have also identified tensions between policy expectations and the beliefs and perceived capacities of teachers and students to engage with EMI in practice. However, less attention has been paid to how teachers themselves exercise agency as EMI is implemented and how such agency may indicate their readiness to work within emerging EMI environments. This leaves an important gap between structural understandings of EMI policy and the everyday experiences of practitioners responsible for enacting it.



RESEARCH GAP: Addressing this gap also responds to Galloway and Kiran's (2021) call for greater engagement with core stakeholders so that EMI policy can be better informed by classroom and institutional realities.



METHODOLOGY

We employed **collective autoethnography** to explore our lived experiences of EMI readiness. The study involved:



Research team
Two practitioners from private universities in Vietnam: a content-based lecturer/curriculum specialist and an English lecturer/quality control officer.



Data sources
Reflective journals, teaching vignettes, and collaborative dialogues documenting our EMI experiences.



Data analysis
Thematic analysis informed by the four domains of teacher agency (Emans et al., 2025) across the six ROAD-MAPPING dimensions (Dafouz & Smit, 2016).



Approach
An iterative, collaborative process of coding, discussing, and co-constructing themes to capture shared patterns and differences.

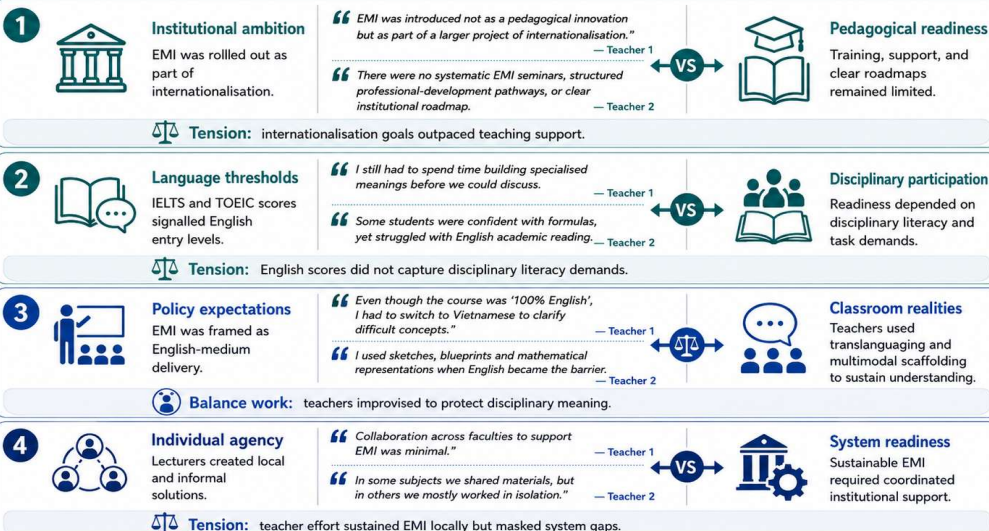


This multivocal approach enabled us to interrogate how teacher agency is exercised, constrained, and sustained within the institutional and pedagogical realities of EMI implementation.



Key Findings

Our collaborative autoethnography shows that EMI readiness is negotiated through tensions between teacher agency and system conditions.



Discussion & Implications

- This extends previous discussions of the EMI **policy-practice gap** by foregrounding how **teachers interpret, negotiate and respond to these conditions in practice**, rather than treating readiness primarily as individual competence.
- Integrating **teacher agency** with the **ROAD-MAPPING framework** therefore provides an analytical lens for examining how individual capacity interacts with institutional structures across EMI implementation (Emans et al., 2025; Dafouz & Smit, 2016, 2020).
- Future research should extend this inquiry into EMI readiness to **larger and more diverse groups of teachers and other key EMI stakeholders**.



Practical implication
Practically, EMI development should therefore address not only teachers' language or pedagogical competence, but also the **institutional conditions that enable informed pedagogical decision-making and teacher agency**.

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