

CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING: THE CASE OF THANH DONG UNIVERSITY

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WHY SFL? — MAPPING TDU'S STRATEGY COMMITMENTS TO THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE

The Strategy defines WHAT (KPIs) and WHO ("6-clear" accountability) — SFL and the Teaching-Learning Cycle supply the missing HOW

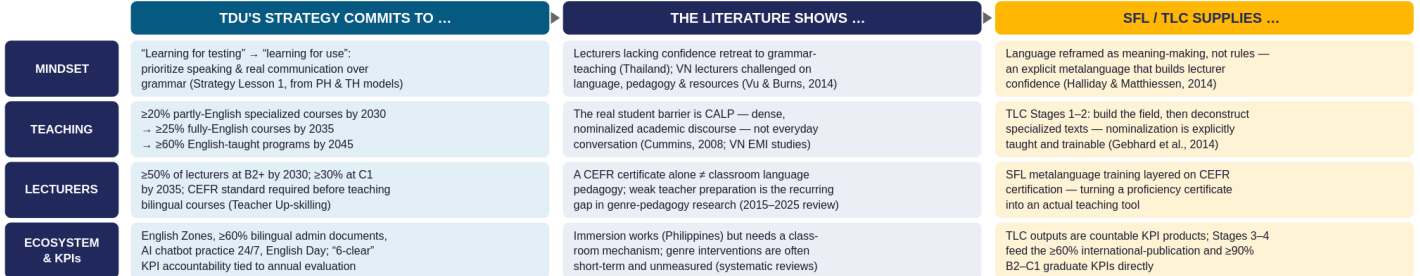


Fig. 1 - Alignment of institutional commitments (translated from TDU's Strategy, 2026) with SFL/CLIL research evidence

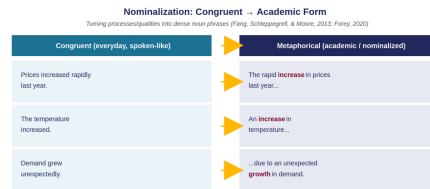
1. INTRODUCTION

Policy driver. Decision No. 2371/QĐ-TTg (27 Oct 2025) approves the national project
"Bringing English to become a second language in schools, 2025-2035, vision to 2045."
TDU's Strategy answers it institutionally, on the legal basis of the 2019 Education Law
and the 6-level national framework.

Institutional diagnosis (TDU Strategy). English at TDU is still "mainly taught as a
subject" with uneven use in teaching, management and learning — the project's stated
reason for the shift to a working second language.

The problem. The bottleneck is not general English but **academic language
proficiency** — dense, abstract disciplinary discourse. "Learning-for-testing" EFL cannot
deliver this.

Nominalization — converting verbs/adjectives into abstract noun phrases — "packs"
information densely, creating the objectivity of academic prose (Fang, Schleppegrell &
Moore, 2013; Forey, 2020). SFL metalanguage lets lecturers explicitly teach students to
"unpack" it (Gebhard et al., 2014).



The Teaching-Learning Cycle (TLC) operationalizes SFL as four scaffolded stages —
Building the Field → Modeling/Deconstruction → Joint Construction → Independent
Construction (Feez, 2002; Martin & Rose, 2008) — a replicable procedure, not just a
mandate.

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES: KEY OUTCOMES

EMI in Vietnam: a four-part challenge

Two-year study of a new EMI program (Vu & Burns, 2014): lecturers challenged by (1) own
language abilities, (2) students' competence & learning styles, (3) pedagogy, (4) resources.
Later work adds unsystematic code-switching and scarce language-focused professional
development (Nguyen et al., 2017).

Students' EMI barrier is discipline-specific

EMI students in Vietnam struggle with specialized terminology, dense English textbooks, and
fast lecture pacing — the gap is academic (CALP), not conversational (BICS).

Genre/TLC instruction improves writing

Mixed-methods intervention (32 EFL undergraduates, 4 trained teachers): writing scores rose
from **12.97 → 14.90** ($p < .001$) after genre-based instruction, with greater writing confidence.

CLIL + genre pedagogy beats conventional EAP

CLIL learners taught with genre-focused methods outperformed peers in writing — especially
clarity and depth of analysis — and reviews find CLIL/EMI writing generally equals or
exceeds traditional language classes (accuracy gains lag).

A decade of evidence (review, 2015-2025)

Genre-based pedagogy **consistently improves writing performance** — strongest gains in
organization, cohesion and genre awareness, plus motivation and confidence. Recurring gaps:
short-term designs, weak teacher preparation — structured lecturer up-skilling is needed.

Honest caveats from the literature

A quasi-experiment (90 students) found Joint Construction alone produced **no measurable
effect** — the cycle works as an integrated whole. Genre pedagogy in CLIL curricula still lacks
rigorous evaluation — the gap this study addresses.

... **Synthesis:** the gap is documented; TLC/genre pedagogy has robust outcome evidence;
nominalization is teachable. Missing: a model tying these to an institutional EMI rollout —
this study's contribution.

4. SFL APPLIED TO TDU'S STRATEGY

SFL-Based Teaching-Learning Cycle at TDU
Feez, 2002; Martin, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2008 — applied to specialized course delivery

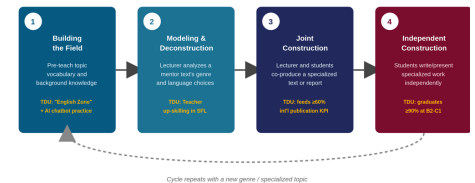


Fig. 5 - Four-stage scaffolding cycle mapped onto TDU's existing KPIs and infrastructure

- **Nominalization first.** C1 certification is paired with SFL metalanguage training so lecturers can teach "unpacking" of dense prose.
- **Built on the Strategy's own infrastructure.** Stage 1 uses English Zones + 24/7 AI chatbots; Stages 3-4 feed the publication and graduate KPIs.
- **No new bureaucracy.** TLC outputs are countable products that slot into the Strategy's "6-clear" KPI evaluation (clear person-task-time-responsibility-product-authority).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

CLIL & the BICS-CALP gap. CLIL integrates content and language as mutually
reinforcing (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). Students gain conversational English (BICS)
easily but struggle with abstract academic English (CALP) (Cummins, 2008) — exactly
where the Strategy's course-percentage KPIs create pressure. Closing the gap requires
deliberate scaffolding (Vygotksy, 1978).

SFL as the decoding tool. SFL treats language as a meaning-making resource (Halliday
& Matthiessen, 2014) with three simultaneous metafunctions (Fig. 3):

Systemic Functional Linguistics: Three Metafunctions
Language as a meaning-making resource (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)



Nominalization sits at the Textual/Ideational interface:
packing processes and qualities into dense noun phrases for academic objectivity and authority

Fig. 3 - The three metafunctions of language in SFL

5. CONCLUSION

Policy sets the target; SFL supplies the mechanism. The TLC gives lecturers an explicit
metalanguage and students a scaffolded path to independent academic production —
anchored to the Strategy's own KPIs and timeline, building a substantive "English
ecosystem," not a compliance exercise.

6. KEY REFERENCES

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