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English as the medium of instruction

Англійська мова як засіб навчання

Summary. *English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms is a transformative teaching approach that integrates language acquisition with subject matter learning. This paper analyzes the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and implications of EMI, as well as focuses on its relevance to globalized education and, specifically, on its implementation in the Ukrainian educational system.*

The authors of the article hold that EMI enhances students' linguistic abilities by immersing them in authentic communication and, simultaneously, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Using English as the primary language of instruction, learners benefit from direct exposure to diverse academic and professional resources, which equip them for international collaboration and competition. However, the use of EMI in EFL classrooms is not without challenges.

Students with limited English proficiency struggle with the comprehension of complicated notions, which leads to their loss of motivation, while educators often encounter the dual challenge – mastering subject-specific content and language fluency. The dominance of English in academic settings can sometimes obliterate the native language raising concerns about cultural identity preservation.

The authors come to conclusions that implementing EMI in Ukraine, where English is seen as a foreign language, necessitates addressing teacher and student competency gaps as well as overcoming the country's sociocultural emphasis on Ukrainian in the educational sphere, especially in primary and secondary schools. Well-designed tactics including inclusive pedagogical approaches, teacher training programs, and linguistic support systems should be considered as essential to maximize EMI's potential.

The use of EMI in Ukraine supports the nation's educational reforms and integration into the international academic scene while providing access to possibilities abroad, in line with global trends. Ukraine can guarantee long-term growth in implementing English as a teaching language by harmonizing EMI with the preservation of cultural heritage.

Key words: *the English language, globalized education, linguistic immersion, a foreign language, educational reforms.*

Анотація. *Англійська мова як засіб навчання – це інноваційний підхід до викладання, який інтегрує вивчення мови з вивченням предмета. У цій статті проаналізовано теоретичні засади, практичне застосування та результати використання англійської мови як засобу навчання, а також зосереджено увагу на її релевантності для глобалізованої освіти та впровадження в українську освітню систему.*

Автори статті стверджують, що викладання англійською мовою покращує лінгвістичні здібності студентів, оскільки занурює їх в автентичне спілкування і водночас розвиває критичне мислення та уміння знаходити шляхи розв'язання проблем. Застосовуючи англійську мову як основну мову навчання, студенти безпосередньо отримують доступ до різноманітних академічних і професійних ресурсів, які сприяють їхній підготовці до міжнародної співпраці та конкуренції. Однак її використання на заняттях як іноземної не позбавлене деяких викликів. Студенти з низьким рівнем володіння англійською мовою можуть відчувати труднощі з розумінням, що може призвести до втрати мотивації, тоді як викладачі часто стикаються з подвійним викликом: опанування змісту предмета та вільне володіння мовою. Домінування англійської мови в академічному середовищі іноді може призвести до витіснення рідної мови, що спричиняє занепокоєння щодо збереження культурної ідентичності.

Автори статті доходять висновку, що впровадження англійської мови як мови навчання в Україні, де англійська розглядається як іноземна, вимагає подолання прозалин у компетентності вчителів та учнів, а також соціокультурного тяжіння до української мови в освітній сфері, особливо в початковій та середній школі. Ретельно розроблена тактика, що включає інклюзивні педагогічні підходи, програми підготовки вчителів та системи мовної підтримки, має розглядатися як необхідна умова для максимального використання потенціалу англійської мови.

Використання англійської як мови навчання в Україні спрямовано на підтримку освітніх реформ та інтеграцію країни в міжнародний освітній простір, а також відкриває доступ до можливостей за кордоном, що відповідає світовим тенденціям. Україна може забезпечити довгостроковий розвиток англійської як мови навчання, гармонійно поєднуючи цей процес зі збереженням культурного надбання.

Ключові слова: англійська мова, глобалізована освіта, мовне занурення, іноземна мова, освітні реформи.

Introduction. Nowadays English plays a major role in fields like business, education, and cross-cultural communication [22, p. 3]. This situation has increased the need for English language skills and encouraged the use of creative teaching strategies in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), which places this lingua franca as the main language for teaching academic disciplines outside of language learning itself, is one of these strategies [17, p. 697]. Thus, a thorough analysis of its origins, goals, and wider impacts is necessary given the growth of EMI, which reflects the transformation of the language from a basic communication tool to a potent instrument for knowledge exchange across linguistic and cultural barriers.

According to Canagarajah, the ascent of English as a universal language is firmly linked to the development of EMI [11, p. 506]. Teachers and institutions realized that English could be used as a medium for teaching a variety of academic subjects as its popularity grew in global settings. In higher education, this strategy has acquired much traction as institutions have looked to increase their worldwide appeal by providing English-taught programs to attract foreign students [1]. EMI began as a pragmatic language solution and has since developed into a strategic educational model that promotes international communication and equips students with the language proficiency necessary for success in the classroom and the workplace.

There are several plausible reasons to use EMI as a teaching methodology. Graduates are expected to excel academically and to interact successfully overcoming language boundaries in our globalized times [7]. EMI creates an immersive learning environment to meet this need, where students are exposed to English on a regular basis, and enables them to acquire the language naturally. Additionally, Dafouz-Milne notes that EMI satisfies the demands of the contemporary labor market, where the ability to communicate in English is sometimes a condition for being employed abroad [13, p. 361]. Therefore, the goal of EMI is to educate students for success in a globally connected professional world, which transcends simply improving language proficiency.

English is not categorized as a second language (ESL) in Ukraine, but rather as a foreign language (EFL). Even though English is usually taught in schools, learning the language is rather complicated because Ukrainian is a dominant national language that plays an important role in politics, economy, scholarly discourse, and society. Effective English learning is hampered by people's greater reliance on Ukrainian. Due to a lack of supportive linguistic factors outside of the school setting, teachers and students find it difficult to speak English fluently when it is used as the language of instruction.

Consistently using the target language in instruction may prove difficult for English teachers, but it is essential to language learning. Dickson stresses the importance of speaking the target language in the classroom for several reasons [14]. First, it greatly expands students' exposure to the language, which is especially important in foreign language sessions where there are few possibilities for them to hear the target language outside of the classroom. Second, learners gain a deeper comprehension of an intricate linguistic system when the target language is used to give them more understandable feedback. Employing this method, students can learn the language through both study and application in real life. Their learning is significantly improved when certain tasks and expressions are repeated. Last but not least, instructors set an example for students by using the target language consistently themselves, showing good language use and a positive attitude toward the language. Thus, learners are more likely to appreciate the language more when teachers demonstrate their proficiency in it and emphasize its value via its use.

Nunan notes that because of the limited opportunities in their surroundings, foreign language learners frequently only use English in classroom settings and hardly ever use their language proficiency in real-world situations [21]. According to his findings, to properly model the language, teachers should make the most of their usage of English in the classroom. According to Broughton, students can mimic and imitate, which helps them to become proficient in the target language, which is taught in the classroom, with its regular exposure and practice [9].

According to recent research, teachers use English as a teaching language and apply a variety of techniques to impart knowledge to their students [15]. In numerous countries, English is now the main language of instruction and is a required subject for all students. In addition, English is frequently used purposefully as a teaching tool to promote learning and increase motivation.

Methodology/Methods. The methodology uses a qualitative research approach with a focus on contextual analysis and a thorough literature review. A strong theoretical framework and useful observations regarding

the application of EMI are provided by the synthesis of these sources. Additionally, the article employs a comparative analysis to examine the effectiveness of using native language versus English as instructional mediums in EFL classroom. It also incorporates SWOT analysis to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of EMI.

Results and Discussion. *Advantages of English as a Medium of Instruction in EFL Classrooms.* There are numerous benefits to using English as the essential language of instruction in EFL classes. The most significant advantage of EMI is the notable improvement of students' language skills since it exposes them to English through real-world situations pertinent to their setting. Students can improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities more cohesively and genuinely because of this experience. Furthermore, EMI is an effective tool used for preparing students for global participation, giving them the skills that they require to communicate effectively in many academic and professional settings [4, p. 119].

The development of communication skills is another important advantage. Students who interact with English in an academic context develop cross-cultural competency by learning not just the grammatical mechanics of the language but also its cultural and contextual aspects. Additionally, EMI gives students unmatched access to a myriad of scholarly materials in the English language, such as research papers, journals, and online tools. As Murray believes, students can actively engage in international scholarly discussions owing to this accessibility, especially in fields where English is the primary language of intellectual exchange [20, p. 642]. Since English proficiency is becoming more and more recognized as a requirement for international professions, students' employability is immensely improved when EMI is in line with labor market demands.

Challenges of Implementing EMI in EFL Classrooms. Despite the advantages listed above, there are a number of significant obstacles to using EMI in EFL lessons [2, p. 97]. The language barrier among students is one of the major challenges, especially for those who are not very proficient in English. Their inability to understand the English-taught, complicated academic material leads to comprehension gaps, and poorer learning outcomes. According to Zolotko, a lack of language proficiency might also prevent students from actively participating in class activities, which will impact their performance and level of engagement [3, p. 305].

A key factor in the effective usage of EMI is the proficiency of the educators. Macaro confidently states that in order to effectively communicate academic material and encourage meaningful student conversations, teachers need to be highly proficient in English in addition

to having subject-specific competence [19, p. 439]. The quality of instruction and student comprehension are jeopardized if teachers are not proficient in the language.

Cultural ramifications are another important issue. Students may feel alienated and less motivated as a result of the dominance of English, which can also marginalize the native language and undermine cultural identities [12]. The integration of EMI may be proven more difficult by this disparity, which could also result in a devaluation of regional languages and customs.

A variety of specialized tactics are required to solve these issues. First, learners with different levels of proficiency will benefit from linguistic support systems including glossaries, simplified reading materials, and vocabulary-building tools that help to eliminate the language gap. These resources may promote active engagement and facilitate understanding.

Programs for teachers' professional development are of equal significance. Bolton emphasizes that teachers may be prepared to successfully traverse EMI situations via attending frequent training sessions that emphasize both subject-matter competence and English language improvement [8, p. 293]. Teachers' ability to meaningfully engage students is further enhanced by workshops and seminars intended for increasing their confidence in the use of English as a teaching medium.

Creating an inclusive learning environment requires striking the right equilibrium between the advantages of EMI and cultural preservation. Students should be encouraged to resort to their native language when interacting with English using strategies like code-switching and "trans-languaging" [18]. It is believed that classroom discussions are significantly enhanced and mutual understanding is fostered if learners are inspired to communicate their cultural and linguistic ideas. Furthermore, establishing regulations that value and acknowledge the native language guarantees that students will continue to be connected to their cultural heritage, simultaneously taking advantage of EMI.

Comparing the Use of Native Language and English as the Medium of EFL Instruction. The debate between the use of native language (L1) and English as the medium of instruction in EFL classrooms reveals significant pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic considerations. Each approach advocates distinct advantages and challenges, which must be analyzed taking into account language learning objectives and societal factors. Using the native language in EFL instruction provides several benefits, particularly in contexts where learners' exposure to English outside the classroom is minimal. The native language, in this case, serves as a bridge to understanding complex concepts, reduces the cognitive load and enables students to comprehend abstract ideas more effectively. Teachers can

use L1 to clarify grammatical rules, explain new vocabulary, and ensure comprehension of instructions, which can accelerate the learning process, especially for beginners. However, overreliance on L1 may inadvertently limit students' use of English. According to Nunan, students often rely solely on classroom instruction to practice English, making it crucial to maximize the target language's use [21]. Overusing L1 hinders learners' ability to think and communicate directly in English, which impedes their progression toward fluency and confident use of English.

In contrast, with EMI, learners are engrossed in the target language. This fosters a situation where English becomes not only the subject of study but also the primary tool for acquiring knowledge. This approach is supported by Bruthiaux, who emphasizes on providing consistent and meaningful exposure to English, enabling students to internalize linguistic structures and develop functional proficiency [10, p. 10]. When teachers conduct classes in English, they model language use, reinforce vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structures in real-time. However, as we have already mentioned, the use of English as the instructional medium poses challenges, particularly for students and teachers with limited proficiency. According to Idris, the absence of supportive linguistic context beyond the classroom can exacerbate comprehension difficulties [16, p. 693]. Additionally, cultural resistance to prioritizing English over the native language may undermine students' motivation and engagement.

English As the Medium of EFL Instruction in Ukrainian Context. In Ukraine, the role of EMI should be considered in its unique sociolinguistic and educational framework. The Ukrainian dedication to include English as a crucial medium for promoting global communication and raising educational standards is emphasized in the law "On the Use of the English Language in Ukraine" [6]. In particular, the law demands English competence for professionals in important industries and compels the use of English in educational processes at all levels, from early childhood to higher education. In addition to emphasizing the mandatory study of English in schools and universities, the legislative framework supports Ukraine's goals for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, demonstrating its commitment to boosting global competitiveness and promoting wider cultural and professional interaction.

Classified as a foreign language in Ukraine, English enjoys less societal prominence compared to the Ukrainian language. However, despite its limited use in people's daily life, English is assuming more and more importance due to globalization and the increasing demand for language skills in the job market. Consequently, we observe a gradual shift in educational policies and practices towards integrating EMI into the curriculum.

However, EMI's implementation in Ukraine faces distinct challenges. Many educators and students lack advanced English proficiency, which is the result of a situation compounded by the absence of immersive environments outside the EFL classroom. The heavy reliance of society on Ukrainian reduces opportunities for consistent English use, which creates gaps in language acquisition. Thus, EMI can address this inconsistency by immersing students in English, providing repeated exposure and fostering natural language development.

The advantages of EMI in Ukraine are consistent with worldwide trends [5]. Students can access global academic resources, improve their intercultural competency, and get ready for professions demanding English fluency owing to the use of EMI in the EFL classroom. Additionally, the implementation of EMI supports the country's goals to become a part of the international academic and professional world, with English as the dominant language.

Ukrainian educators must overcome obstacles like resource constraint and language challenges in order to properly implement EMI. To empower teachers, professional development programs that emphasize instructional techniques and English language ability are imperative. In addition, maintaining the sustainability of the EMI in society will require creating a conducive atmosphere that ensures a proper balance between teaching English and preserving Ukrainian cultural identity.

SWOT Analysis of English as the medium of EFL instruction. The capacity of the English language to provide access to international opportunities is among its most impressive advantages as a medium of instruction in Ukraine. Ukrainian students have unmatched access to academic exchanges, professional networks, and career trajectories in a variety of sectors thanks to English, the universal language of international communication. In addition to being widely available, resources for teaching and learning English are also becoming more and more specialized to meet the demands of different skill levels, giving teachers and students access to a multitude of resources. EMI also acts as a conduit for cultural enlightenment. Students gain intercultural competency and a broader knowledge of global viewpoints by getting involved in an English-speaking academic sphere. Students get the ability to operate in and make significant contributions to a globalized society as a result of this experience.

In Ukraine, EMI meets a lot of obstacles despite its potential. The low level of English proficiency among students and teachers is viewed as a widespread problem. Language fluency is a concern for many instructors, especially in areas with little resources, which makes it difficult for them to successfully teach the material. In a similar vein, learners frequently



Fig. 1. SWOT analysis of English as the medium of EFL instruction

fail to receive enough practice outside of the classroom, which would solidify their knowledge.

Financial limitations add to these problems. The lack of financing in public educational institutions often limits access to professional development programs, technology, and contemporary teaching aids that are necessary for EMI implementation. Furthermore, social conventions in Ukraine, where English is not commonly spoken or used in day-to-day interactions, create a gap in immersive experiences and hinder language learning.

The use of EMI into Ukraine's educational framework offers a plethora of opportunities, the main of which is the chance to adhere more closely to the global academic and professional trends. Since the country aspires to deepen its connections with international communities, EMI may serve as an important tool for equipping the future specialists with the skills needed to thrive in the competitive, multicultural world.

The viability of EMI is further supported by policy changes targeted at modernizing education. The government's focus on bringing Ukraine's educational system into line with international norms creates optimal conditions for the creation of programs that integrate EMI at several levels.

Opportunities for this are also presented by technological improvements. Digital tools, such as language-learning apps and online courses, can offer resources and creative methods to enhance EMI in the classroom.

There are risks associated with the EMI implementation process. The possible weakening of native linguistic and cultural identity is a significant worry. Communities that seek cultural preservation may object if Ukrainian and other regional languages are marginalized due to an overemphasis on English.

The lack of highly qualified teachers may be another significant obstacle. The long-term viability of the program may be at risk if teachers are not given enough opportunities to improve their language proficiency and instructional strategies. Budgetary restrictions may prevent the implementation of comprehensive EMI programs, leaving many schools ill-prepared to handle the demands of such a rigorous program. As a result, economic constraints continue to be a significant barrier.

Conclusions. In EFL classrooms, using English as a medium of instruction has become a game-changing strategy that has both advantages and difficulties which should be carefully considered. Immersing students in English for both academic and practical reasons, EMI promotes notable gains in language proficiency. This approach improves learners' employability and gives them the essential abilities for global communication. Additionally, teachers' implementation of EMI prepares students for international scholarly and professional interaction since it provides them with access to a multitude of English-language academic resources.

Despite its benefits, we observe significant obstacles, which need to be overcome while implementing EMI. Students' poor language command frequently discourages them from participation in the learning process. Furthermore, the perceived superiority of English over the national tongue may lead to linguistic and cultural unease, as well as teachers' poor proficiency in the language can lower the quality of instruction. Thus, the efficacy of EMI should be supported by targeted support networks, teacher professional development, and culturally sensitive instruction.

Moreover, EMI becomes essential when it comes to coordinating educational objectives with Ukraine's aspirations for international integration. Although the legal framework encourages learning English, there are particular challenges because Ukrainian is a more widely used language of communication in the country. A well-designed strategy that would respect native linguistic and cultural identities while using EMI to improve students' global competencies is required to address these issues.

All things considered, we believe that EMI has a lot of potential as a teaching method for EFL classes. To ensure that it acts as a link to global

prospects rather than a barrier to inclusivity and engagement, its success hinges on careful implementation that takes into account linguistic, cultural, and educational factors.

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