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IMPLEMENTING ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

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Abstract. *The article attempts to analyse some approaches to the use of English as the main language of instruction (EMI) in the system of higher education. The purpose of EMI programs is both to provide students with professional knowledge and to improve English language skills for further global integration. Studies of the EMI phenomenon can be divided into three main groups: studies of language policies and programs, especially in the field of higher education; the research focuses on students, their perceptions and attitudes towards EMI, language and speaking skills, learning strategies, outcomes, and expectations; the third field of research deals with the teachers of higher education and accordingly, how they perceive EMI, the levels of language proficiency and the availability of speaking skills, teaching strategies and procedures, the need for new pedagogical skills are analysed. There are three main models for implementing EMI programs, each of them having its advantages and disadvantages. Experts identify four main types of issues (challenges) that EMI teachers must overcome: teacher's language proficiency, students' language proficiency, acceptable teaching methods, and insufficient resources. Practically all works on the implementation of EMI emphasise the need to improve the language skills of students and teaching staff. Researchers point out a number of advantages for both an individual student and for the university in general, despite all the challenges of EMI implementation. The adoption of the EMI program is not just an automatic move to a different language policy. The implementation of such a method is possible with the joint activity of English language teachers and teachers of professional disciplines - professionals in their field.*

Key words: *higher education, English for special purposes (ESP), English as medium of instruction (EMI), teacher qualification, code-switching, language training, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning).*

УПРОВАДЖЕННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ЯК МОВИ ВИКЛАДАННЯ: ВИКЛИКИ Й ПЕРЕВАГИ

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Анотація. У статті розглядаються деякі підходи до використання англійської мови як мови викладання (ЕМІ) фахових предметів на вищому рівні освіти. Головною метою програм ЕМІ є як отримання студентами професійних знань, так і вдосконалення володіння англійською мовою для подальшої глобальної інтеграції. Дослідження феномену ЕМІ можна розділити на три основні групи: дослідження щодо мовної політики та програм особливо у вищій освіті; дослідження щодо студентів, їх розуміння і ставлення до ЕМІ, їхній рівень володіння мовою й наявні мовні навички, стратегії навчання, результати й очікування; дослідження, що стосуються вчителів вищої освіти та їхнього розуміння ЕМІ, володіння мовою й здібностей, стратегій і методів викладання, потреби в нових педагогічних навичках. Більшість досліджень стосовно впровадження ЕМІ наголошують на необхідності вдосконалення мовних навичок як викладачів, так і студентів. Деякі спеціалісти вважають, що ЕМІ було б ефективно впроваджувати разом із викладанням частини матеріалу й рідною мовою (code-switching), виділенням більше часу на вивчення теми, пояснення та відгуки студентів. Перефразування вважається більш доцільним прийомом, тому що передбачає не перехід на рідну мову, а вміння пояснити нове слово, використовуючи вже знайому лексику. Але всі ці методи можливі за умови глибокого знання ESP і хорошого володіння спеціалізованою термінологією. Існує низка переваг як для студентів, так і для викладачів, незважаючи на всі труднощі впровадження ЕМІ. Робота з програмами ЕМІ – це не просто рух у напрямі іншомовної політики. Реалізація цього методу навчання можлива за умови спільної діяльності й співпраці вчителів англійської мови та вчителів змісту – професіоналів своєї справи.

Ключові слова: вища освіта, англійська для спеціальних цілей, англійська як мова викладання, кваліфікація викладача, лінгвістична підготовка, перехід з одної мови на іншу (почергово), предметно-мовне інтегроване навчання.

English is predicted to become the second language (L2) for the majority of the world's population [1] by the middle or the XXI century, it is one of the levers of the globalization economy, and it carries the potential of unification. In times of globalization and internationalization, the development of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is significant for both linguists and language policy researchers.

Around the world, a considerable number of universities are increasing the volume of courses taught in English. One of the goals is to encourage foreign students to study at this university, thus contributing to the internationalization of the educational institution and increasing its rating. Another goal is that institutions of higher education offer their students such a training program that prepares them as best as possible for the globalized world [2; 3].

Ukrainian universities are also trying to implement and promote EMI in order to attract domestic and foreign students [4; 5; 6]. In implementing new strategies, they face the problem of adequate teacher training, as reported by

numerous studies on foreign language teaching methods such as CLIL and EMI [7; 8; 9].

The analysis of publications studying the experience of implementing EMI in European higher education institutions showed that the topic is quite controversial, since EMI is a rapidly developing global phenomenon and has both supporters and opponents [9; 10; 11; 12]. The study of the EMI phenomenon in the works of both domestic and foreign scientists can be conditionally divided into three main groups:

- research on language policy and programs, especially in the sphere of higher education (for example, the need to include a year of English language training in curricula, a language support system (English lessons should be sustained and even compulsory when taking EMI classes); some linguists fear that “Anglicizing” may undermine the status of the mother tongue, especially in the field of technical terminology, and some terms will not even be created in the mother tongue (L1);

- EMI is perceived differently by teachers in higher education; language proficiency,

available speaking skills, teaching strategies and procedures, the need for new pedagogical skills, and the importance of intercultural communication, along with teachers' identities, are the focus of the research sphere.

– the research focuses on students, on their perception and attitude towards EMI, on the level of language and speaking skills, learning strategies, results, and expectations, as well as on the student's personal identity;

Across Europe, EMI is currently experiencing a period of intense development and expansion, with EMI programs having tripled since the 2007 survey. With the assistance of the British Council, a survey and study was carried out in 54 countries, which showed that a significant number of countries, at the level of state policy, are aimed to increase the offered EMI courses and internationalize their universities [2]. But even these countries and universities do not have clear guidelines on how to introduce, implement or monitor and evaluate EMI programs.

Teacher training is one of the most urgent needs in EMI implementation, as teachers are the most important variable in the education system and the main determinant of success.

The primary goal of EMI programs is both to provide students with professional knowledge and to improve English language skills for further global integration. In practice, EMI programs significantly contribute to the assimilation of professional knowledge and competences in the English language, increase the chances of employment, improve international mobility, and promote national development in the long term.

In the early 2000s, EMI programs were created in universities in Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, and Turkey [2; 13; 14], and then spread to Asian countries, such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Japan and Korea. Meanwhile, certain problems related to the implementation of EMI have also been identified, including insufficient administrative support, difficulties in curriculum development, teaching methods, insufficient language skills of teachers and students, cultural differences, and social division [6; 11; 12; 13].

There are three main models of EMI program implementation. The university can provide a preparatory year (this is the case in Turkey and Saudi Arabia), high school graduates study English intensively before the teaching

of professional subjects in English begins. The second type does not involve a preparatory year, and all potential students have access to subjects with the EMI program, but students can receive concurrent support from English teachers at their university. The third model provides for a certain selection system: those who have a sufficient level of language proficiency will be admitted to the course, those who do not will be redirected to a course with the native language of instruction.

Experts identify four main types of issues (challenges) that EMI teachers must overcome: teachers' language abilities, students' proficiency, appropriate teaching methods, and insufficient/inadequate resources. Number of such issues can increase up to fifteen, for example: preparing for classes, preparing materials for classes, motivating students, establishing feedback with students, correct pronunciation of words, preparing and reviewing tests and exams, acquiring professional vocabulary in English, the ability to provide alternative explanations, the ability to translate professional knowledge into English [11; 12]. Also, among the challenges, teachers point out such aspects as: increasing the workload on teachers and students, increasing time for preparation, the quality of training in a professional major becomes very dependent on the language proficiency of the teacher, and unfortunately, the success rate of students may even decrease slightly at the beginning of the introduction of EMI.

The EMI methodology is the result of the development of the integration of foreign language learning and professional subject. A gradual transition can be represented as a step-by-step moving from ESP (through and with the help of CLIL) to EMI. Where ESP is English for special purposes, CLIL is Content and Language Integrated Learning, EMI is English as a medium of instruction. If we consider the difference between these methods, then ESP focuses, first of all, on learning a foreign language. The CLIL methodology in a certain way has an ambivalent nature, since it is aimed both at professional content (component) and at the foreign language itself.

In contrast to the abovementioned, the EMI method is not related to teaching a foreign language as such, as a particular subject. In ESP teaching, about 20–30% is allocated to professional (subject) content, and 70–80% is

language content itself, further on, in the CLIL methodology the ratio is already 50% and 50%, and when applying EMI, the main emphasis is on the professional subject, when English is the language of teaching and not of learning.

There exists an opinion that the EMI method appeared as a variation of CLIL, and is now actively used in many universities in countries where English is not the native language. Accordingly, if the ESP and CLIL courses have been well designed and implemented in a particular institution of higher education, the transition to the EMI program will be much more effective and faster, teachers and students will already have a good basic training (especially terminological), since the EMI program is possible with a sufficient level of language proficiency of the students and the main learning load shifts from the language component to the content of the professional discipline.

Actually, in the recommendations of the British Council and other studies regarding EMI [2; 6], there are no general requirements for the level of language proficiency of both teachers and students, but this fact can be considered both as a positive phenomenon (no restrictions and prohibitions) and a negative (it is difficult to teach in a group with different levels of language proficiency).

In teaching professional subjects in English as a second language (L2) for both students and teachers, and when the levels of language proficiency may be different, the issue of understanding terminology becomes particularly important. Almost all works on the implementation of EMI emphasise the need to improve the language skills of both local students and teaching staff.

Teachers report difficulties with language, they note that they start to speak more slowly, and notice reduced flexibility in dealing with unforeseen situations, difficulty in adapting their speaking and writing skills to different learning situations, and other challenges in using language. They also note problems in speaking effectively, especially in paraphrasing, finding words, and making statements.

The list of difficulties in mastering the language is quite voluminous, the following aspects are also added to it: pronunciation; it is difficult to adhere to the correct spelling when working on the board; phonological interference of the native language; grammar; correct use

of English vocabulary; direct translation from the native language (imposition of lexical-syntactic structure); adaptation to cultural understanding; inaccuracy/vagueness, which is the result of insufficient vocabulary.

Some language teaching methodologists believe that EMI will be effective if there is a transition and alternating use of the native language and English (code-switching between L1 and L2), also, if more time is devoted to studying the topic, explaining it, establishing feedback with students. It is clear that at the initial stage such alternating use of L1 and L2 can really simplify the adaptation period, but provided that the native language (L1) is the same for all students of the group and for the teacher, so the feasibility of using “code-switching” remains controversial, since the parallel use of several language systems will be more like a language slur. On the contrary, it is necessary to stimulate the unified use of names and concepts, similar descriptions of specific situations. The ability to paraphrase an incomprehensible word and explain it through familiar vocabulary, as well as the ability to reformulate, is considered more effective, but this is possible with sufficient knowledge of professional terminology and good training in ESP.

The works of F. Hoare and P. Stapleton provide effective recommendations and suggestions for the transition to EMI [16], as well as advice on the methodical strategies of R. Bolaito and R. West [5]. The main challenges for students are difficulties with professional terminology during lectures, difficulties in understanding the teacher's language, difficulties in listening and speaking, difficulties in simultaneous listening and writing (taking notes). Students study both language and content (professional discipline) at the same time, so all aspects of teaching need attention.

General recommendations for teachers to optimise the transition to EMI will include the following strategies: mandatory period of adaptation, control of rate and speed of speech, presentation new vocabulary, review of what has already been learned at the beginning of each lesson, handouts and visual aids, key words, reference literature in a foreign language, glossaries, English language (L2) is used both in lectures and in practical and laboratory classes, paraphrasing and reformulation, interactive approach, even in lectures, encouraging students

to discuss, group work, adequate assessment, establishing feedback with students, cooperation between language and subject teachers (source/content teachers).

All of the listed problems can be divided into certain categories, and accordingly, some researches [3; 12] point out three main needs that EMI teacher training programs should cover:

- communication and use of ESP;
- pedagogy and didactics;
- multilingualism and multiculturalism.

According to all the needs of EMI teachers, the University of Cambridge provides training within eight self-contained modules that can be taught in any order, and you can even choose some of them instead of studying them all:

1. Module 1. English for lectures.
2. Module 2. English for seminars.
3. Module 3. English for small groups and practical classes.
4. Module 4. English for tutorials and supervision.
5. Module 5. English for online communication.
6. Module 6. English for assessment and feedback.
7. Module 7. English for the developing and extending professional roles (functions).
8. Module 8. English for professional responsibilities [17].

Nevertheless, experts note a number of advantages, despite all the challenges of EMI implementation:

Personal benefits, or benefits for each individual student:

- the possibility of publications in academic journals;
- the opportunity to participate in international conferences;
- improving knowledge of English;

- career advancement, gaining access to a better job both at home and abroad;

- familiarization with another culture, participation in a multicultural and multilingual community [15, p. 30; 18, p. 23].

External benefits, i.e. benefits for universities:

- attraction of students from foreign countries;

- the country becomes a competitor on the global market;

- the status of local universities rises, the rating increases [15, p. 30; 18, p. 23].

The adoption of the EMI program is not just an automatic move to a different language policy. The implementation of such a method is possible with the joint activity of English language teachers and teachers of professional disciplines – professionals in their field. Therefore, among the positive results, it should be noted the strengthening of interaction between teachers of professional subjects and teachers of the English language. The challenge for teachers is their own insufficient level of language proficiency, students' language competence, teaching methods, pedagogical issues and availability of resources. It is clear that teachers of EMI programs in institutions of higher education have a key role in implementing the goals of EMI programs. Each institution should have a clear language policy consistent with the aims and principles of EMI, together with a language support strategy that ensures the necessary knowledge and skills are available to successfully implement EMI. The experience of teaching non-linguistic students of natural sciences proves that EMI implementation is not as complicated as it seems and is possible under cooperation, mutual willingness to achieve results and hard work of all the participants.

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