

INTEGRATING ACADEMIC SKILLS INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT UNETI FOR LEARNER READINESS IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION CONTEXTS

TÍCH HỢP KỸ NĂNG HỌC THUẬT VÀO GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH
TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC KINH TẾ - KỸ THUẬT CÔNG NGHIỆP
NHẪM NÂNG CAO KHẢ NĂNG SẴN SÀNG CỦA NGƯỜI HỌC
TRONG BỐI CẢNH GIẢNG DẠY BẰNG TIẾNG ANH

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Tóm tắt: English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has been growing rapidly worldwide, requiring learners to master not only English language skills but also a range of academic literacies. In Vietnam, many universities have yet to implement EMI programs. University of Economics - Technology for Industries (UNETI) has not yet widely implemented EMI in its domestic programs, although some international partnership programs involve English-medium components. However, students may encounter EMI in postgraduate programs or international employment settings. This study investigates how academic skills are currently integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT) at UNETI to prepare students for potential EMI contexts. The data was collected through a survey of 25 English teachers and semi-structured interviews with eight of them. The results show that while certain academic skills, like presentation skills, reading strategies, and vocabulary development, are embedded in ELT courses, others, including critical thinking and discipline-specific writing, receive less emphasis. Instructors cited several challenges, such as limited time within the curriculum, a lack of EMI-specific training, and the absence of clear institutional policies. Based on these findings, the research recommends curricular changes and focused professional development for teachers to better equip students for EMI demands in the future.

Từ khóa: English-Medium Instruction, Academic Skills, Academic Literacy, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English Language Teaching.

Abstract: Giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh (English-Medium Instruction - EMI) đang phát triển nhanh chóng trên toàn thế giới, đòi hỏi người học không chỉ nắm vững các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh mà còn phải sở hữu nhiều kỹ năng học thuật. Tại Việt Nam, nhiều trường đại học vẫn chưa triển khai các chương trình giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh. Trường Đại học Kinh tế - Kỹ thuật Công nghiệp (UNETI) vẫn chưa áp dụng rộng rãi chương trình giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh trong các chương trình trong nước, mặc dù một số chương trình hợp tác quốc tế có bao gồm các yếu tố giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, sinh viên có thể sẽ tiếp cận EMI trong các chương trình sau đại học hoặc trong môi trường làm việc quốc tế. Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu cách các kỹ năng học thuật hiện đang được tích hợp vào việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh (ELT) tại UNETI nhằm chuẩn bị cho sinh viên trước những bối cảnh EMI tiềm năng. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua khảo sát 25 giảng viên tiếng Anh và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc với 8 giảng viên trong số đó. Kết quả cho thấy, trong khi một số kỹ năng học thuật như kỹ năng thuyết trình, chiến lược đọc và phát triển vốn từ vựng đã

được lồng ghép vào các học phần ELT, thì các kỹ năng khác, bao gồm tư duy phản biện và kỹ năng viết học thuật theo chuyên ngành, lại chưa được chú trọng đúng mức. Các giảng viên cho biết họ gặp phải nhiều thách thức như thời lượng chương trình học hạn chế, thiếu đào tạo chuyên sâu về EMI và chưa có các chính sách rõ ràng từ phía nhà trường. Dựa trên những phát hiện này, nghiên cứu đề xuất điều chỉnh chương trình đào tạo và tăng cường bồi dưỡng chuyên môn cho giảng viên nhằm giúp sinh viên đáp ứng tốt hơn các yêu cầu của EMI trong tương lai.

Keywords: Giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh, kỹ năng học thuật, trình độ đọc viết học thuật, tiếng Anh cho mục đích học thuật (EAP), dạy tiếng Anh.

1. INTRODUCTION

English-Medium Instruction (EMI), defined as the use of English to teach academic subjects in countries where English is not the dominant language, has become a significant trend in higher education worldwide (Macaro, 2018). As Saldo and colleagues (2025) suggest, over the past two decades, universities around Asia have adopted EMI as part of broader strategies to internationalize their curricula, attract international students, and enhance graduates' employability in a global job market that is becoming more interconnected by the day. It is frequently associated with increasing institutional prestige, aligning programs with global academic standards, and providing students with greater access to global research and employment opportunities. Dang et al. (2024) argue that in Vietnam, EMI adoption has been uneven for instance, several large public universities such as Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST) and the National Economics University (NEU) have introduced EMI courses in selected disciplines. In contrast, many regional or specialized universities are still in a pre-EMI stage where English is primarily taught as a foreign language rather than used as the medium of instruction.

Preparing students for EMI involves more than developing general English proficiency. It requires explicit training in academic skills such as note-taking, academic writing, oral presentation, critical reading, and discipline-specific vocabulary (Coxhead, 2017; Wingate, 2015). However, limited research in Vietnam has examined how ELT teachers in pre-EMI universities integrate academic skills into their teaching. Existing studies tend to focus on EMI implementation challenges in institutions where EMI is already used, leaving a gap in understanding the integration of academic skills into English language teaching for learner readiness within pre-EMI universities.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey and interview were designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What academic skills are currently integrated into ELT courses at UNETI to prepare learners for EMI contexts?
2. How do English teachers perceive the importance of academic skills for EMI readiness?
3. What challenges and opportunities exist for integrating academic skills into ELT in a pre-EMI university context?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. English-Medium Instruction and Learner Readiness

EMI has been adopted in diverse contexts to enhance access to global knowledge and improve graduates' employability (Dearden, 2014). Strong self-belief and prior academic performance are significant predictors of success in EMI courses. Students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to actively engage and view challenges as chances for growth (Thompson et al., 2019). Success in EMI requires both linguistic competence and academic literacy abilities to engage with discipline-specific texts, participate in academic discussions, and produce scholarly writing (Macaro, 2018).

2.2. Academic Skills in ELT

According to Coxhead (2018), academic skills refer to the abilities needed to perform effectively in academic contexts, including critical reading, academic writing, oral presentations, and the use of discipline-specific terminology. Integrating these into ELT aligns with the principles of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Additionally, studies have highlighted the importance of note-taking and referencing skills in academic success. Effective note-taking, especially when strategic or structured, enables students to focus on high-importance concepts and integrate new knowledge more deeply, while referencing and citation practices are essential for maintaining academic integrity and engaging with scholarly discourse (Salame and Thompson, 2020), while referencing and citation practices are essential for maintaining academic integrity and engaging with scholarly discourse (Gasparyan et al., 2015). However,

these skills are often underrepresented in ELT curricula, particularly in pre-EMI contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was conducted at University of Economics - Technology for Industries (UNETI), a public university in Vietnam that does not currently offer English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programs. The participants were 25 English language teachers with between three and twenty years of teaching experience. All taught English for General Purposes (EGP) courses, and while none were involved with EMI teaching, several had experience incorporating academic skills into their classes.

3.2. Design of the Study

A mixed-methods research design was used, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, while qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews. This design enabled both the measurement of trends and the exploration of underlying perceptions and challenges.

3.3. Data Collection & Analysis

The questionnaire was piloted with three English teachers at a different institution to ensure clarity and reliability. Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated acceptable reliability across the three constructs. Data were collected during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. Surveys were distributed online via Google Forms, and interviews were conducted through video conferencing platforms to accommodate teachers' schedules.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Academic Skills Currently Integrated into ELT at UNETI

According to the data from Q1 - Q8, academic skills are integrated into ELT courses at UNETI at a moderate overall level (overall mean = 3.10, SD = 0.68 on a 5-point scale). This suggests that while such skills are present in the curriculum, they are not yet a consistent or central focus across all courses.

Survey results also indicated that the most frequently integrated skills were academic reading strategies ($M = 3.44$) and discipline-specific vocabulary ($M = 3.36$). Both of these align with the traditional strengths of ELT in academic contexts, where reading comprehension and vocabulary building are longstanding instructional priorities. The relatively higher frequency of these skills may reflect their direct link to established English language teaching practices and the availability of existing teaching materials. In addition, academic discussion/seminar skills ($M = 3.21$) and oral presentation practice ($M = 3.18$) were also partially integrated, suggesting that some communicative academic skills are being addressed, though perhaps not systematically. These oral-focused skills may be included more sporadically, depending on course objectives, teacher preference, and available class time. In contrast, critical thinking tasks ($M = 3.11$) and academic writing ($M = 3.05$) were reported less frequently. Finally, the least integrated skills were note-taking ($M = 2.92$) and referencing and citation ($M = 2.84$). These are highly specialized academic competencies that require explicit instruction and practice, often linked to EMI or EAP contexts rather than general English courses. Their low frequency suggests that students may have

limited exposure to the academic conventions and study strategies typical of EMI settings.

Table 1. Frequency of Academic Skill Integration in ELT at UNETI

Academic Skill	Mean	SD	Rank
Academic reading strategies	3.44	0.71	1
Discipline-specific vocabulary	3.36	0.74	2
Academic discussion/seminar skills	3.21	0.67	3
Oral presentation practice	3.18	0.65	4
Critical thinking tasks	3.11	0.69	5
Academic writing tasks	3.05	0.72	6
Note-taking practice	2.92	0.70	7
Referencing and citation practice	2.84	0.66	8

Scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always.

Furthermore, interview findings supported and expanded upon these survey results. Several teachers described how they integrated academic reading by summarizing articles and academic writing. Oral presentations were mentioned as common semester assignments, often conducted in groups to build presentation confidence. Teachers also reported incorporating discipline-specific vocabulary by drawing on materials from students' majors, such as economics, finance, information technology... to enhance relevance. However, more advanced academic skills, particularly referencing and note-taking, were rarely taught unless teachers intentionally incorporated them.

4.2. Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Academic Skills for EMI Readiness

As a result of the survey from Q9 - Q14, teachers rated all six academic skills as important or very important for EMI readiness (overall mean = 4.57 on a 5-point scale). The relatively small SD values (ranging from 0.37 to 0.46) indicate a high level of consensus among teachers, showing strong agreement that these academic skills are essential for EMI readiness.

Survey results showed that critical thinking was rated most highly ($M = 4.68$), reflecting teachers' recognition of the need for students to engage with content analytically rather than rely solely on memorization. This aligns with international EMI literature highlighting critical thinking as a key differentiator between general English proficiency and academic readiness. Similarly, academic writing ($M = 4.64$) and oral presentation skills ($M = 4.61$) followed closely, suggesting that teachers view both productive written and spoken competencies as vital for academic success in EMI settings. Moreover, discipline-specific vocabulary ($M = 4.58$) and academic reading strategies ($M = 4.53$) also scored highly, showing that teachers value targeted lexical development and reading comprehension as foundational academic competencies. In comparison, referencing and citation ($M = 4.40$) received the lowest score, though still above the neutral midpoint, suggesting that while teachers acknowledge its relevance, they may perceive it as less immediately necessary for their current student cohort.

Table 2. Perceived Importance of Academic Skills for EMI Readiness

Academic Skill	Mean	SD	Rank
Critical thinking skills	4.68	0.38	1

Academic Skill	Mean	SD	Rank
Academic writing skills	4.64	0.40	2
Oral presentation skills	4.61	0.37	3
Discipline-specific vocabulary	4.58	0.41	4
Academic reading strategies	4.53	0.43	5
Referencing and citation skills	4.40	0.46	6

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree / Not Important, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree / Important, 5 = Strongly Agree / Very Important

It is worth noting that interview findings reinforced these perceptions. Teachers repeatedly stressed that critical thinking is essential for success in EMI environments, as it underpins skills such as evaluating arguments, synthesizing sources, and engaging in academic debate. Several participants noted that academic writing and oral presentations are not only crucial for EMI but also for professional communication after graduation. While referencing and citation were acknowledged as part of academic literacy, some teachers considered it more relevant for students in research-oriented programs, which may explain its lower relative ranking.

4.3. Challenges and Opportunities for Academic Skills Integration in a Pre-EMI Context

As shown in the Table 3 and Figure 3, 72% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident integrating academic skills into their ELT practice, only 32% reported having

received any EMI-related training. Similarly, only 28% felt they had sufficient resources, and institutional support for such integration was reported by just 36% of respondents. Notably, less than half (44%) indicated familiarity with typical EMI academic tasks, yet 76% expressed interest in professional development opportunities in this area. One possible explanation is that while many teachers feel capable of introducing academic skills, their confidence may be based on general teaching experience rather than specific EMI-oriented pedagogical preparation. The low training and resource availability rates point to structural gaps that could hinder more systematic integration. These findings are consistent with those of Awad Alhassan (2021), who identified a lack of EMI-specific training and limited institutional support as key obstacles faced by lecturers in Omani higher education. Similar structural gaps are evident in the Vietnamese context, suggesting the universality of such challenges across pre-EMI settings.

Table 3. Perceived Readiness and Institutional Support

Indicator	% Agree/ Strongly Agree
Confident in integrating academic skills	72%
Received EMI-related training	32%
Have sufficient teaching resources	28%
Institution supports integration	36%
Familiar with EMI academic tasks	44%
Want further professional development	76%

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Significantly, interview data provided richer insight into these challenges. Teachers frequently mentioned curriculum constraints, noting that the existing general English syllabus leaves little room for sustained academic skill development. At UNETI, students complete only 16 compulsory English credits, and the graduation requirement is typically TOEIC 450–550. This structure mainly supports general English proficiency rather than extensive academic literacy development. As a result, teachers often prioritize core language skills and test preparation, leaving limited time for teaching advanced academic skills such as academic writing, critical thinking, note-taking, and referencing needed for EMI readiness. Many identified a lack of EMI-focused training, which left them unsure how to adapt teaching strategies for tasks like critical thinking development or discipline-specific writing. Several also highlighted limited access to authentic EMI materials, such as lecture recordings, discipline-specific readings, or case studies, which would help simulate EMI environments in the classroom. Finally, student readiness emerged as a recurring concern, with some learners lacking the foundational English proficiency necessary to benefit from advanced academic skill instruction.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings align with Nguyen and Hamid (2015), who found that in pre-EMI contexts, academic skills are often integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT) only partially and without systematic coverage. At UNETI, teachers clearly recognize the importance of academic skills for EMI

readiness, particularly in areas such as oral presentation skills and discipline-specific vocabulary development. This emphasis is consistent with global trends in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) practices, where communicative competence and subject-specific lexis are seen as critical for academic success (Coyle et al., 2010).

However, the relatively lower emphasis on critical thinking and discipline-specific writing identified in this study may limit students' capacity to fully engage with future EMI courses. Critical thinking is a key academic competency in EMI contexts, enabling students to process, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively. Similarly, the ability to produce discipline-specific written work is essential for demonstrating content mastery in higher education settings.

The challenges identified in this study curriculum constraints, lack of EMI-focused teacher training, and absence of institutional policy mirror issues reported in other pre-EMI contexts (Hu & Lei, 2014). These structural and pedagogical barriers reduce the likelihood that students will be adequately prepared for the demands of EMI.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how academic skills are integrated into ELT at UNETI, which has not yet widely implemented EMI in its domestic programs, in order to assess teacher readiness for supporting EMI-oriented learning. The findings reveal a strong awareness among teachers of the importance of academic skills particularly oral presentation and discipline-

specific vocabulary for EMI readiness. However, the integration of these skills remains uneven, with critical thinking, note-taking, referencing, and discipline-specific writing receiving less consistent emphasis.

Recommendations:

To address these challenges, the following prioritized recommendations are proposed, moving from immediate, practical steps to longer-term, systemic changes:

Immediate Action - Professional Development:

The most urgent step is to provide targeted professional development programs on EMI-oriented pedagogy. These workshops should equip teachers with strategies to integrate academic skills effectively into existing ELT courses.

Medium-Term Action-Curriculum Redesign:

Redesigning the ELT curriculum to explicitly embed academic skill objectives will ensure balanced coverage of both foundational (e.g., reading, vocabulary) and advanced skills (e.g., critical thinking, note-taking, referencing). Embedding these objectives will help standardize practice and reduce teacher-to-teacher variability.

Long-Term Action - Institutional Policy and Support:

The university should develop and implement formal policies that allocate time, resources, and institutional support for EMI readiness. Such policies would signal a strong institutional commitment and sustain long-term reforms

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