

ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM FOR INSTRUCTION TOWARDS GLOBAL COMPETENCE

by:

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One of the main goals of the K-12 curriculum is to develop future-ready, globally competitive graduates. While this may pertain to the alignment of curriculum with international standards, one of the essence of “global” education is the alignment of language. English, in particular, is the primary global lingua franca used in international communications, business, and science (Parimal & Gohil, 2013). In the context of Filipino classrooms, the use of English as a medium of instruction is the key to equip learners with knowledge and skills needed to thrive internationally.

It is argued that English became a global language due to its simplicity compared to other languages like Chinese, contributing to the historical roots of colonization of the British and USA. Today, English is everywhere; from television, film, music, and to social media. As Hollywood becomes popular, it reaches the international scene. Because of this, people from different countries started to learn English and it has become a way to break the barriers of communication around the globe (Parimal & Gohil, 2013). The Philippines is globally recognized as one of the largest English-speaking countries, with over 14 million Filipinos speaking the language and recognized as one of the official languages in the country (Cabigon, 2023).

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) pertains to how English is used to deliver instruction in academic subjects in countries where it is not the first language (Arellano Borres, 2025). In the Philippines, English has been mandated as the medium of instruction for English, Science, and Mathematics from at least the third grade level through the Executive Order No. 210, s. 2003.

Literature reviewed by Arellano Borres (2025) revealed that the consistent use of English as the medium of instruction improves comprehension, language proficiency, and even vocabulary. Standardized examinations administered in the Philippines such as PISA are also in English, and through EMI, students may gain higher scores. With better scores in PISA, the Philippines would make its way up the ranking in comprehension. Additionally, EMI also paved the way for inter-cultural awareness and understanding as students will understand English in different contexts as well (Elkhayma, 2022).

However, along with these benefits, Arellano Borres (2025) also recognized challenges in using English as a medium of instruction. Firstly, some students find that using English leads to judgment due to grammatical errors, which causes them to be reluctant in speaking the language (H. Said & Omar, 2023). This could be attributed to the low background of students in the language, especially since it is not usually used in their households. Additionally, Elkhayma (2022) found there may also be a lack of teacher proficiency and command of the language, which may result in inaccuracies in teaching the subject content. Teachers may also find communication difficult, so they resort to code-switching in order to deliver the terms and explain the concepts more effectively.

To address these challenges, Harrison (2021) recommends support mechanisms such as professional development based on EMI. Budiman et al., (2023) also recommended that teachers may incorporate English in authentic materials and promote the use of English even outside the classroom to train their use of the language. Together with constructive feedback, these strategies aim to empower the students in practicing English and therefore achieving the benefits that it entails.

English as a medium of instruction plays a significant role in preparing Filipino learners for an increasingly interconnected world. By strengthening students' communication skills, improving access to academic knowledge, and fostering intercultural understanding, EMI equips learners with competencies that are valued in the global workforce. Although its implementation presents challenges, these barriers can

be addressed through continuous professional development, effective instructional strategies, and a supportive learning environment. Ultimately, English should be viewed not as a replacement for Filipino or local languages but as a tool that broadens opportunities and empowers learners to become globally competitive while remaining grounded in their national identity.

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