

**Implementation and Challenges of 2030 Bilingual Policy in  
Taiwan: A Study of EMI through Wenzao's  
International Students**

By

**Jennifer Sidney**

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This senior paper was presented

by

Jennifer Sidney

It was defended on

November 16, 2024

and approved by

Reviewer 1: Philipp Fluri, Visiting Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer 2: Yuan-Ming Chiao, Assistant Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: Yu-Hsuan Lee, Assistant Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **Implementation and Challenges of 2030 Bilingual Policy in Taiwan: A Study of EMI through Wenzao's International Students**

Jennifer Sidney, B.A

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2025

## **Abstract**

Transforming Taiwan to become a bilingual nation has been Taiwan's government vision since 2018. Opinions across the country vary in terms of the benefits towards the Taiwanese future generations. It is either a win-win situation or a lose-lose situation. One of its strategies to achieve this bilingual goal is the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Taiwan's higher education. EMI has been introduced not only to enhance Taiwan's global competitiveness but also to attract international students, whose numbers have gradually grown, both in Taiwan and at Wenzao University.

This thesis explores the implementation and challenges of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy, focusing on EMI through the experiences of 10 international students at Wenzao University whose native language is not Chinese. Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, this study explores how international students adapt to EMI courses. The findings reveal that while international students generally appreciate the consistent use of English in EMI courses, they face challenges such as communication barriers with local students, unclear instructions from teachers due to accents, and oversimplified course content. However, many students also found the courses engaging and beneficial for their academic growth. Local students' lack of confidence in English further complicates classroom interactions. Despite these challenges, students believe that the Bilingual 2030 Policy has the potential to internationalize Taiwan, though many express concerns about its feasibility by 2030.

Keywords: Taiwan Bilingual 2030 Policy, EMI, international students, language barriers

# 臺灣雙語 2030 政策的實施與挑戰：以文藻國際學生的英語授課研究為例

## 摘要

自 2018 年以來，打造台灣為雙語國家已成為台灣政府的願景。針對此政策將對台灣的未來世代帶來的影響，各界有不同的看法，咸認為這可能是一個雙贏，也可能是雙輸的局面。為達成雙語國家的目標，政府推動了以英語為授課語言（EMI）的高等教育政策。EMI 的實施不僅旨在提升台灣的全球競爭力，還希望吸引更多國際學生，這些學生的人數在台灣及文藻外語大學與日俱增。

本論文探討了台灣 2030 雙語政策的實施與挑戰，特別聚焦於文藻外語大學 10 位母語非中文的國際學生的經歷。透過半結構式的訪談，本研究探討國際學生如何適應 EMI 課程。研究結果顯示，儘管國際學生普遍認同 EMI 課程中持續使用英語的做法，但他們仍面臨一些挑戰，如與本地學生的溝通障礙、教師因口音導致理解不清楚以，以及課程內容過於簡化。然而，許多學生也發現這些課程具有吸引力，並對他們的學術進步有所裨益。本地學生缺乏英語信心，加劇課堂互動的困難。儘管存在這些挑戰，學生們仍相信 2030 雙語政策有潛力使台灣國際化，但許多人對該政策能否在 2030 年達成仍表示懷疑。

關鍵字：台灣 2030 雙語政策，EMI，國際學生，語言障礙

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	2
Background .....	2
Motivation .....	5
Research Purpose .....	6
Research Questions .....	6
Contribution .....	6
Limits .....	7
Delimits .....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
2.1 Overview of Taiwan’s Bilingual 2030 Policy .....	9
Historical Context of Bilingual Policy in Taiwan .....	9
Rationale for the Policy .....	10
Details of the Bilingual 2030 Policy.....	10
Perceptions and Reactions .....	11
2.2 Overview of EMI in Global and Taiwanese Contexts .....	11
Defining EMI.....	11
EMI and its role in the internationalization of education .....	12
Challenges of EMI in Other Countries: Expanding Circle Countries .....	13
EMI and its Stakeholders: Macro, Micro, and Meso.....	15
2.3 Previous Studies on International Students in EMI .....	16
International Students’ Challenges in EMI .....	16
2.4 EMI Implementation in Taiwan's Higher Education System .....	17
Detailed Implementation Strategies and Institutional Efforts .....	17
Challenges of EMI for Students in Taiwan .....	18
Taiwanese Students’ Attitudes on EMI .....	18
2.5 Barriers and Facilitators in EMI .....	19
2.6 EMI in Wenzao .....	19
International Students in Wenzao.....	21
METHODOLOGY .....	23
Research Design.....	23
Participants Selection .....	23
Data Collection.....	24
DATA ANALYSIS.....	27

4.1 Research Question 1: International Students’ Academic and Social Experiences in EMI Courses .....	27
Academic Experiences .....	27
Social Experiences.....	33
4.2 Research Question 2: International Students’ Challenges at Wenzao encounter in EMI Courses .....	36
Language Accent .....	36
Challenges with Instructional Clarity .....	38
Oversimplified Materials .....	39
Local Students’ Lack of Confidence .....	41
Interviewees’ Proposed Solutions .....	42
4.3 Perspectives on the Bilingual 2030 Policy in Taiwan.....	44
Positive Attitudes toward the Policy .....	44
Too Ambitious? .....	45
CONCLUSION.....	47
APPENDIX A.....	51
APPENDIX B .....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	54

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 International Students in Wenzao in the 112 academic year .....	22
Table 2 Demographic Information of Interviewees .....	26



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 EMI implementation at the three levels (macro, meso, micro level) .....	15
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## PREFACE

*“In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.”*

— Proverbs 16:9

When I first began thinking about the topic of this project, I had my heart set on a topic that was quite similar, though slightly different. However, as fate would have it, a classmate ended up choosing that exact subject, which made me rethink my approach. Although it was frustrating and unexpected, looking back, I realize it is a blessing in disguise. It led me to choose different subjects, which allowed me to explore another subject that is more related to my own experience as an international student involved in EMI courses.

I would like to sincerely thank my advisor, 李宇軒 Yu-Hsuan Lee, for his guidance throughout this project. I would also like to thank my former English teacher, 劉儒燕 Sally Liu, for her valuable feedback during an important phase of my data analysis, which helped me build my confidence in this project. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their unstoppable emotional encouragement and support in finishing this project. Additionally, I would also like to thank Wenzao SOSA for providing the essential data that I need. Lastly, to improve the flow of my writing, I utilized ChatGPT as a writing assistant to help enhance the content.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

*“Taiwan’s economy is strong, but it needs to reduce its dependence on China.”*

— The Economist Newspaper <sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon of globalization and internationalization has shifted the world into a more interconnected and interdependent state. Globalization has significantly increased economic activities and higher levels of economic growth.<sup>2</sup> “The only way to thrive is to compete relentlessly in this cruel survival game of global capitalism.”<sup>3</sup> The Taiwanese government has made efforts to face this challenge of globalization. As economic partnerships are an alternative way and a trend to strengthening international relations, the Taiwanese government introduced initiatives, such as the New Southbound Policy (NSP hereinafter) in 2016. The policy aims to diversify Taiwan’s economic partnerships by encouraging and deepening Taiwan’s relations with countries in South and Southeast Asia to Australia and New Zealand.<sup>4</sup> The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP hereinafter), the ruling party in Taiwan, sought to establish Taiwan’s independence from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) by initiating the NSP as both to divert Taiwan’s economic sources and to emphasize Taiwan’s identity internationally.

The government’s efforts to respond to globalization did not stop with the New Southbound Policy, but the government also responded by transforming Taiwan to become a bilingual nation in 2030 through the education system. This initiative is expected to enable

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<sup>1</sup> "It is time to divert Taiwan’s trade and investment from China," *The Economist* 2023, <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2023/03/06/it-is-time-to-divert-taiwans-trade-and-investment-from-china>.

<sup>2</sup> "The Effects Of Globalization On Economic Development," 2023, accessed March 10th, 2024, <https://researchfdi.com/resources/articles/the-effects-of-globalization-on-economic-development/#:~:text=Increased%20trade%20and%20investment%20opportunities%3A,higher%20levels%20of%20economic%20growth>.

<sup>3</sup> I-Chung Ke, *Globalization and English Education in Taiwan* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Executive Yuan, *New Southbound Policy*, (2019).

the Taiwanese next generation to thrive and enhance their international competitiveness.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the next generation would be able to enjoy better job and salary opportunities.

To promote Taiwan becoming a bilingual nation, EMI courses have been used as an alternative as well as to internationalized higher education (HE hereinafter) in Taiwan. The EMI courses are believed that its existence would attract international students.<sup>6</sup> That is, it eases challenges that international students might face in cross-border learning and facilitate on-campus multicultural teaching.<sup>7</sup>

Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy appears to be a great breakthrough which to enhance Taiwan's global competitiveness. However, it has sparked controversy in the academic field. Several experts from different fields, such as a National Taiwan University (NTU) professor, Sebastian Liao (廖咸浩), at a conference, questioned whether this policy is necessary.<sup>8</sup>

Teachers and lawmakers argued that this policy could bring a negative impact for students' learning progress. Their argument was that the purpose of this policy remains unclear.

Professor Liao also warned that this policy would result in a "lose-lose" situation where students could have a poor command of both languages, English and Chinese.<sup>9</sup> Instead of increasing global competitiveness, this policy could worsen the economic class differences in society since students will be less competitive due to the inability of both languages. A proposal was also made by non-governmental organizations, immediately supported by 5,000 people registered in less than three days, stating that the Bilingual 2030 policy should be

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<sup>5</sup> National Development Council NDC, Bilingual 2030, (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Julie Dearden and Ernesto Macaro, "Higher education teachers' attitudes towards English medium instruction: A three-country comparison," *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* 6 (09/29 2016), <https://doi.org/10.14746/sllt.2016.6.3.5>.

<sup>7</sup> Yi-Hsuan Huang, "'The majority are left behind': the promotion of bilingual education 2030 policy in Taiwan and its potential to widen horizontal inequalities," *Higher Education* (09/20 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01106-9>.

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Lin and William Hetherington, "Teachers, lawmakers challenge bilingual policy," *Taipei Times* 2023, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2023/04/26/2003798637>.

<sup>9</sup> Keoni Everington, "Teachers union urges rethink of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 policy," *Taiwan News* 2022, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4589690>.

eradicated to preserve Taiwan's linguistic ecology and protect students' right to education.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the plan to make English as an official language in 2019 in Taiwan was postponed.<sup>11</sup>

As critiques and objections appear from several scholars, questions arise whether Taiwan is ready to embrace internationalization in the academic field. According to a recent study by David Chou, the implementation of EMI does not guarantee that Taiwanese academic culture or society has been globalized.<sup>12</sup> Hence, perspective from international students on the EMI practice could be considered as an indicator to evaluate whether EMI is successful in enhancing the level of internationalization in higher education.

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<sup>10</sup> Lo Te-Shui 羅德水, "Bilingual policy must be stopped," *Taipei Times* 2023, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2023/04/26/2003798617>.

<sup>11</sup> 蔡智欣 et al., "Transforming into a Bilingual Nation: Perspectives of College Students and Teachers in Taiwan," [台灣轉型為雙語國家：大學生與教師的觀點.] *弘光學報*, no. 88 (2021), [https://doi.org/10.6615/har.202109\\_\(88\).0003](https://doi.org/10.6615/har.202109_(88).0003).

<sup>12</sup> Sung-Chun Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty" (Kent State University, 2023), [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=kent1698745277136929](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=kent1698745277136929).

## Motivation

As an international student in Taiwan, language differences between me and locals are the barrier to communicate effectively. Even though I attend a language university and take English as a medium of instruction (EMI hereinafter) courses, it does not guarantee that the communication between me and the local students using English is effective. In practice, I still encounter difficulties in communicating with the Taiwanese. It leads to several miscommunications and conflicts in both class and daily life setting in college, as English is neither my nor their first language.

Not only the interaction between me and my classmates in class, but based on my experience in EMI courses, several instructors are sometimes also more comfortable to use Chinese to explain the materials of the class due to the students' varied comprehension level of English. Thus, although the class is held primarily in English, sometimes materials are still explained in both languages, English and Chinese. Hence, from my observation, Taiwanese students naturally rely on materials that are provided in Chinese rather than English.

These issues on the bilingual policy affect my decision on my future career in Taiwan. I wonder if Taiwan's environment might be really international, compared to other bilingual nations in Asia, for example, Hong Kong and Singapore. The Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy suggests job opportunities for foreigners will increase, but my experience in the Taiwan's bilingual environment leaves me wondering on the feasibility of the implementation of this bilingual policy. This research intends to share experiences from international students practicing the EMI courses of Taiwan Bilingual 2030 Policy.

Additionally, I was inspired by the work of David Chou on EMI, he pointed out in his recommendations for future research on international students' experiences in EMI

environments.<sup>13</sup> His work highlighted the need for further research into the experiences of students who do not speak Chinese as their first language, which significantly shaped my research direction.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to explore policy effect. The researcher aims at examining the way in which a language university practices the EMI classes in response to policymaker's expectation and examining the challenges encountered by international students. Understanding the experiences and needs of international students would help stakeholders to develop better strategies in practicing EMI courses and in internationalizing higher education.

### **Research Questions**

Given these challenges and my personal experiences, this study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. How does EMI influence the academic and social experiences of international students at Wenzao?
2. What challenges do international students at Wenzao encounter in EMI courses?

### **Contribution**

The findings of this research may offer insights into international students' experiences, obstacles, and needs in EMI classes. It is aimed at Wenzao's administrator who is responsible for the EMI and Bilingual 2030 program and policymakers. Although there

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<sup>13</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

have been many studies that offers insights on the obstacles of the implementation of EMI, for example from the faculty's perspectives by Chou and Wu; and higher educations' students and faculty perceptions on the Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 policy by Tsai et al.<sup>14</sup> Yet there are few studies on international stakeholders' perspectives towards EMI courses as a tool for Taiwan's internationalization.

### **Limits**

As the research would be conducted in 2024, the year when the first target, “25-20-20”, of the Bilingual 2030 policy is set to be achieved, it is considered as the initial stage of the implementation of this policy. Therefore, these findings cannot be generalized to predict how the international students would be experiencing in 2030, as the policy would be evaluated and developed before its implementation. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling – focusing on undergraduate international students whose first language is not Chinese – limits the generalizability of findings to all international students in Taiwan. While several studies identify three stakeholders in the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) at the macro (policy), meso (institutional), and micro (individual) levels, this study will focus solely on the micro level due to limited time and connections, thus excluding perspectives at the macro and meso levels.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."; Chiu-Hui Wu, "EMI as a problem, a right or a resource: Exploring misalignments in stakeholders' views at one university in Taiwan," *Language Teaching Research* (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221146427>; 蔡智欣 et al., "Transforming into a Bilingual Nation: Perspectives of College Students and Teachers in Taiwan."

<sup>15</sup> Ikuya Aizawa and Jim McKinley, "EMI Challenges in Japan's Internationalization of Higher Education," in *English-Medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Wu, "EMI as a problem, a right or a resource: Exploring misalignments in stakeholders' views at one university in Taiwan."



## **Delimits**

This research will delimit its focus to undergraduate international students in Wenzao who do not possess Chinese as their native language, following Chou's recommendation for further exploration on non-Chinese-speaking students in EMI contexts.<sup>16</sup> This study specifically examines their experiences with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) courses and the challenges they face. Hence, the results and findings may not represent all international students at Wenzao or those at other universities in Taiwan.

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<sup>16</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore how international stakeholders, particularly international students, have been affected, experienced, and adapted to the EMI environment at Wenzao University. To provide a contextual foundation, the literature review will begin with a summary of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy, including the history of English in Taiwan. It then discusses EMI within global and Taiwanese contexts, focusing on its role in internationalization and challenges encountered in other non-Anglophone countries. Moreover, this literature review will also discuss international students' experiences and challenges in EMI courses in other countries. Given that this study is conducted at Wenzao University, it will be concluded with a discussion of EMI implementation at Wenzao.

### 2.1 Overview of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy

#### Historical Context of Bilingual Policy in Taiwan

There is a scholarly work that outlined how Taiwan's Bilingual Policy has been developed.<sup>17</sup> The push towards bilingualism in Taiwan has evolved significantly over the past two decades. In 2002, President Chen Shui-bian proposed English as a quasi-official language. Following this, in 2017, Premier William Lai instructed the Ministry of Education (MOE) to form a committee to promote English as an official language. In August 2018, Premier Lai announced plans to officially recognize English as a language of the nation by 2019. However, in November 2018, Minister Chen Mei-ling of the NDC announced that Premier Lai's original plan would be postponed. Instead, the focus shifted towards making Taiwan a Chinese-English bilingual nation by 2030. Consequently, in December 2018, the

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<sup>17</sup> 蔡智欣 et al., "Transforming into a Bilingual Nation: Perspectives of College Students and Teachers in Taiwan."

NDC initiated the "Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030," outlining strategies to achieve this goal.

### **Rationale for the Policy**

The Bilingual 2030 policy aims to enhance Taiwan's global competitiveness and international engagement. As most of the multinational corporations are based in Taiwan, thus the need of bilingual talent have been increasing.<sup>18</sup> Hence, adopting and initiating a bilingual policy become a hope for Taiwan to attract foreign investment and employability, also to enhance the educational and technological sectors. The strategy is regarded as an essential move in encouraging cross-cultural communication and integrating Taiwan into the global economy.

### **Details of the Bilingual 2030 Policy**

According to the National Development Center (NDC), the Ministry of Education (MOE) has outlined several strategies to achieve the goals of the Bilingual 2030 Policy. Their strategies include creating beacon bilingual schools and colleges, using student performance as a key indicator, implementing “25-20-20” by 2024 and “50-50-50” by 2030, learning from past experiences such as providing training for both students and faculty, as well as establishing regional centers and expanding online resources.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Tom Severin, "Rich Points in Cross-Cultural Communication: An Interview Study of Foreign English Teachers' CrossCultural Adaptation in Taiwan" (Master Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2023), <https://hdl.handle.net/11296/24yt7d>.

<sup>19</sup> NDC, Short Bilingual 2030.

## Perceptions and Reactions

Higher education's faculty and students generally support the idea of this bilingual policy. "I believe this (bilingual policy) is the right thing to do, ..." said one of the Chou's study participants.<sup>20</sup> A study conducted by a group of researchers provides insight into the perceptions of higher education students and faculty towards the Bilingual 2030 policy.<sup>21</sup> The study revealed that both students and faculty express a support for the policy. However, as previously mentioned, while there is general support for the initiative, concerns remain about the feasibility of its implementation. Additionally, experts like Professor Sebastian Liao have expressed concerns about potential negative impacts on students' learning progress and linguistic abilities, as noted earlier. These different perspectives suggest that opinions about the policy are divided.

## 2.2 Overview of EMI in Global and Taiwanese Contexts

### Defining EMI

Dearden, the director of Oxford EMI Training Ltd<sup>22</sup>, defines EMI as

The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first (L1) language of the majority of the population is not English.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, both the direct teaching of English as a subject and the use of English as the medium for teaching other academic subjects in English-speaking countries are excluded as

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<sup>20</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>21</sup> 蔡智欣 et al., "Transforming into a Bilingual Nation: Perspectives of College Students and Teachers in Taiwan."

<sup>22</sup> Oxford EMI Training is an organization which supports academics in HE who teach their subject through the medium of English (source: <https://oxfordemi.co.uk/about-2/>)

<sup>23</sup> Julie Dearden, *English medium Instruction: A Growing Global Phenomenon* (2016).

EMI.<sup>24</sup> Hence, EMI helps students both on enhancing their English language proficiency and on preparing them for the interconnected global environment due to its status as a “global lingua franca”. Moreover, English has been adopted as the medium of instruction in universities of non-English speaking countries, notably in Europe and Asia.<sup>25</sup>

### **EMI and its role in the internationalization of education**

To understand how EMI plays a significant role in the internationalization of non-Anglophone countries, this study adopts de Wit’s definition of internationalization. In the study of the “*Internationalisation of Higher Education*”, internationalization is defined as

The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.<sup>26</sup>

Karen Lauridsen, an associate professor in EMI field, interprets the definition of internationalization that internationalization is “a driver for the quality of education.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, the existence of EMI which is used as a tool for internationalization in HE is a means to improve the quality of education. In a similar vein, a study by David Chou uses the theoretical framework of “*policy pushes education*”; the term “policy” indicates Taiwan’s

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<sup>24</sup> Jagdish Kaur, "Using English for Interaction in the EMI Classroom: Experiences and Challenges at a Malaysian Public University," in *English-Medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> B. Seidlhofer, *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca: A complete introduction to the theoretical nature and practical implications of English used as a lingua franca* (OUP Oxford, 2011).  
<https://books.google.com.tw/books?id=MnjnAQAACAAJ>.

<sup>26</sup> Hans de Wit, Fiona Hunter, Laura Howard, and Eva Egron-Polak, "Internationalisation of Higher Education," (2015), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)540370\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/540370/IPOL_STU(2015)540370_EN.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Karen Lauridsen, "It Does Not Happen by Osmosis: Creating an Internationalized Learning Opportunity for All Students Requires Careful Consideration and Specific Action," in *English-Medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

Bilingual 2030 policy.<sup>28</sup> Since its launch, higher education institutions (HEIs hereinafter) have been tasked to take charge of EMI implementation and promotion.<sup>29</sup>

There is an Indonesian saying “Tak ada gading yang tak retak” (literally. “There is no ivory without cracks”, that is, “Nothing is perfect”). It also applies to the implementation of EMI. Challenges and obstacles have been growing along with the trend of EMI. Vivian Wu, a professor in a university in Taiwan, pointed out that the implementation of EMI has generated great challenges for universities in non-Anglophone countries.<sup>30</sup> Chou’s study, incorporating Jayathilake’s findings, stated that “the implementation of EMI programs is not without challenges and negative effects.”<sup>31</sup> Research on the significant role EMI plays in the internationalization process has grown, particularly concerning the internationalization of education and its challenges that are faced by HEIs and stakeholders.

### **Challenges of EMI in Other Countries: Expanding Circle Countries**

According to Kachru Model, there are three circles of English which consist of inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle.<sup>32</sup> The inner circle indicates countries that first language is English and those who set the standard and rules of how English is being used (e.g. United States, United Kingdom). The outer circle refers to countries that use English as a second language, mostly due to colonialism (e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong). The expanding circle refers to countries where English is not usually spoken (e.g. China, Japan). In this context, Taiwan is also within the expanding circle’s countries. Thus, examining the

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<sup>28</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>29</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>30</sup> Wu, "EMI as a problem, a right or a resource: Exploring misalignments in stakeholders’ views at one university in Taiwan."

<sup>31</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."; Chitra Jayathilake, Sujeeva Hettiarachchi, and Sujeeva Sebastian Pereira, "'EMI Is a War' – Lecturers’ Practices of, and Insights Into English Medium Instruction Within the Context of Sri Lankan Higher Education," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 12 (11/02 2021), <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1206.02>.

<sup>32</sup> "Kachru Model “The Three Circles of English”," Medium, 2020, accessed May 24, 2024, <https://agvalpa.medium.com/kachru-model-the-three-circles-of-english-b53b86e63d46>.

experiences and challenges of EMI in other expanding circle countries provides valuable insights.

### ***China's Experience of EMI***

In China, the adoption of EMI in universities has led to several tensions, as identified by Wang.<sup>33</sup> EMI is often accessible only to a small percentage of students due to strict English proficiency requirements, creating an access gap. Additionally, conflicts arise between EMI's goals of enhancing academic knowledge and improving English proficiency, leading to unequal resource allocation and the marginalization of non-elite students. "... native Englishes have a role to play in granting access to high quality education resources, marginalizing disciplinary expertise, and dividing Chinese students into elite and non-elite groups."<sup>34</sup>

### ***Japan's Experience of EMI***

In Japan, Ikuya Aizawa and Jim McKinley's study stated that the practice of EMI is unable to meet the governmental and institutional expectations due to the stakeholders' lack of proficiency in English.<sup>35</sup> This highlights the inconsistency that exists between Japan's EMI policy and its practical application.<sup>36</sup> They concluded that the government and universities have to state the policy clearer so that the policy is able to be practiced more effectively by the stakeholders. Clearer communication and collaboration among stakeholders is also needed to address these challenges.

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<sup>33</sup> Ying Wang, "The Role of English in Higher Education Internationalization: Language Ideologies on EMI Programmes in China," in *English-Medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>34</sup> Wang, "The Role of English in Higher Education Internationalization: Language Ideologies on EMI Programmes in China."

<sup>35</sup> Aizawa and McKinley, "EMI Challenges in Japan's Internationalization of Higher Education."

<sup>36</sup> Wu, "EMI as a problem, a right or a resource: Exploring misalignments in stakeholders' views at one university in Taiwan."

In summary, EMI theoretically and initially serves as to prepare HE’s students in the non-Anglophone countries facing internationalization. EMI aims to bridging the gap of language barriers by using English as the common language. Hence, feedback from the students is essential.

**EMI and its Stakeholders: Macro, Micro, and Meso**

Several studies adopted a theoretical framework developed by Ali in Malaysia.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, there are three levels of stakeholders in EMI: “*macro, meso, and micro*”. Figure 1 below shows the level of policy implementation of EMI. The macro level belongs to the policies of the governmental stakeholders; in Taiwan it belongs to Taiwan Ministry of Education (MOE). The meso level belongs to the university administration. The micro level belongs to teachers and students. Accordingly, this study belongs to the micro level as it will address the international students’ experiences on EMI.

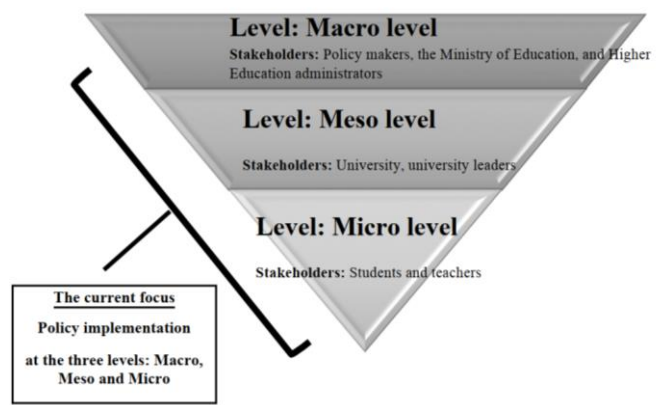


Figure 1 EMI implementation at the three levels (macro, meso, micro level)

Source: Aizawa and McKinley (2020)<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Wu, "EMI as a problem, a right or a resource: Exploring misalignments in stakeholders’ views at one university in Taiwan."; Aizawa and McKinley, "EMI Challenges in Japan's Internationalization of Higher Education."; Nor Liza Ali, "A changing paradigm in language planning: English-medium instruction policy at the tertiary level in Malaysia," *Current Issues in Language Planning* 14, no. 1 (2013/02/01 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2013.775543>.

<sup>38</sup> Aizawa and McKinley, "EMI Challenges in Japan's Internationalization of Higher Education."



## 2.3 Previous Studies on International Students in EMI

International students have been described as “desirable skilled migrants” and an “increasingly attractive human capital resource (to the host country).”<sup>39</sup> EMI was developed to facilitate international students’ challenges in host countries and to attract international students.<sup>40</sup>

### International Students’ Challenges in EMI

However, several studies highlight the challenges faced by international students in EMI courses. For instance, a study on "*Challenges to English-medium instruction (EMI) for international students in China: A learners’ perspective*" revealed that communication remains a significant issue.<sup>41</sup> This challenge primarily arises from language difficulties, notably the lecturers’ insufficient English proficiency, which can adversely affect the teaching approach of non-native English-speaking (NNES) instructors. This study also pointed out that the major difficulty for international students is the medium of instruction (MoI), the language used by the teacher. As Taiwan is a Chinese speaking country, thus, MoI creates a bigger problem than in an English-speaking country.<sup>42</sup> It is due to in comparison to English, Chinese is taught less widely worldwide. Additionally, Wu’s study on EMI in Taiwan found

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<sup>39</sup> Professor Leslyanne Hawthorne, "The Growing Global Demand for Students as Skilled Migrants," (01/01 2008); Professor Leslyanne Hawthorne, "Global Demand for International Students As Skilled Migrants," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (01/01 2014), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2808883>.

<sup>40</sup> Huang, "“The majority are left behind”: the promotion of bilingual education 2030 policy in Taiwan and its potential to widen horizontal inequalities."; Dearden and Macaro, "Higher education teachers’ attitudes towards English medium instruction: A three-country comparison."

<sup>41</sup> Ji-Jun He and Shiao-Yun Chiang, "Challenges to English-medium instruction (EMI) for international students in China: A learners' perspective: English-medium education aims to accommodate international students into Chinese universities, but how well is it working?," *English Today* 32, no. 4 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078416000390>, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/59B5E47787F972937CD4966B59FA369B>.

<sup>42</sup> He and Chiang, "Challenges to English-medium instruction (EMI) for international students in China: A learners' perspective: English-medium education aims to accommodate international students into Chinese universities, but how well is it working?."

that international students complained when Chinese was being used too much during an EMI class, preferring fully English-conducted classes.<sup>43</sup>

## **2.4 EMI Implementation in Taiwan's Higher Education System**

In Taiwan's EMI courses, English serves as a transactional language between instructors and international students as both have different native languages.<sup>44</sup> In her article, Cindy Chang discussed that EMI has been a priority for the Taiwanese government in 2002, after the country joined the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the number of EMI degree programs and courses has increased significantly, with the EMI degree programs rising from 115 programs in 2005 to 332 programs in 2014.<sup>46</sup>

### **Detailed Implementation Strategies and Institutional Efforts**

Taiwanese universities have adopted various strategies to implement EMI effectively. These include redesigning curricula to integrate EMI, establishing language support programs, and conducting faculty training workshops. Wenzao, for example, offers professional development programs focused on teaching in English and adapting course materials for EMI.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Wu, "EMI as a problem, a right or a resource: Exploring misalignments in stakeholders' views at one university in Taiwan."

<sup>44</sup> Dani Pusspitasari, Cathy Weng, and Yu-Fen Hsieh, "English Medium Instruction in Taiwan: From the Perspective of International Students as Thesis Writer," *International Journal of Language Education* 4 (10/13 2020), <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v4i2.12930>.

<sup>45</sup> Cindy Chang 張心瑜, "Not all classes need be in English," *Taipei Times* 2017, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2017/09/07/2003677946>.

<sup>46</sup> Hintat Cheung Lily I-Wen Su, Jessica R. W. Wu, *Rethinking EMI Multidisciplinary Perspectives from Chinese-Speaking Regions* (London: Routledge, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429352362>.

<sup>47</sup> For more information, please visit <https://best.twaea.org.tw/report2en.html> and <https://emicenter.wzu.edu.tw/index.php?lang=en>

## Challenges of EMI for Students in Taiwan

Although various strategies are used to enhance the EMI quality, it does not guarantee that students will experience EMI smoothly. Tzu-Ling Hua, an assistant professor in a Taiwanese university, pointed out in her study that the students have to spend more energy, effort, and concentration in order to understand EMI courses.<sup>48</sup> Thus, only few students could actually understand the content. Lack of attention from the lecturers also caused them to lose focus. Another study on EMI in Taiwan also revealed that students struggle to express themselves.<sup>49</sup>

## Taiwanese Students' Attitudes on EMI

Despite the challenges in EMI classes, students' attitudes toward EMI are generally positive, similar to the reception of Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Policy. They believe that EMI would bring numerous benefits.<sup>50</sup> EMI can significantly enhance their English proficiency, which is increasingly viewed as essential for both academic success and future career opportunities. This improvement in language skills is seen as a critical factor in gaining a competitive edge in the global job market. Additionally, students appreciate the opportunity to engage with course materials in English, as it helps them to develop a more international perspective and better prepares them for potential studies or work abroad. Hence, it can be concluded that the students are willing to embrace these courses as a means to achieve greater academic and professional success.

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<sup>48</sup> Tzu-Ling Hua, "Understanding the Learning Challenges of English-Medium Instruction Learners and Ways to Facilitate Their Learning: A Case Study of Taiwan Psychology Students' Perspectives," *Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning* 12 (05/11 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5294/laclil.2019.12.2.6>.

<sup>49</sup> Hui-Ju Tsai Jia-Han Yang, "International students' learning strategies and challenges under an English as a medium of instruction (EMI) setting: A case study at National Taipei University," *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities* 6, no. 10s (08/14 2023), <https://jrtd.com/index.php/journal/article/view/1154>.

<sup>50</sup> Chun-Chun Yeh, "Taiwanese Students' Experiences and Attitudes towards English-Medium Courses in Tertiary Education," *RELC Journal* 45, no. 3 (2014/12/01 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688214555358>.

## 2.5 Barriers and Facilitators in EMI

Previous studies on EMI highlight both barriers and facilitators that influence learning outcomes. For example, teachers, particularly in early education, often struggle with their own capabilities and the educational environment, requiring specific strategies to address these issues.<sup>51</sup> Kyeyune's study on EMI in Uganda pointed out that using only English in multilingual settings can limit student understanding, showing a need for a bilingual approach and improved teacher training.<sup>52</sup> Another study by McKinley and Rose also highlighted that language issues are key obstacles in EMI, thus English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses and collaboration between language and subject instructors are needed.<sup>53</sup>

Despite these challenges, certain facilitators have proven beneficial in EMI settings. For instance, language-supportive teaching methods, customized textbooks, and flexible instruction have proven to boost student engagement and learning outcomes.<sup>54</sup> These findings emphasize the importance of well-designed language support and careful planning to address EMI challenges effectively.

## 2.6 EMI in Wenzao

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages stands out in Taiwan's higher education landscape due to its early adoption and commitment to EMI. Before 2004, Wenzao had already begun offering EMI courses, aiming to attract international students and enhance the global competencies of its local students. As a language university, Wenzao has been chosen as one of the universities that offer courses on EMI teaching to the Taiwanese faculty

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<sup>51</sup> Pauline Swee Choo Goh et al., "Preschool teachers' use of English as a medium of instruction: A systematic review of barriers and strategies," *Issues in Educational Research* 30 (2020).

<sup>52</sup> Robinah Kyeyune, "Challenges of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Multilingual Contexts: A View from Ugandan Classrooms," *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 16 (2003).

<sup>53</sup> Jim McKinley and Heath Rose, "English language teaching and English-medium instruction," *Journal of English-Medium Instruction* (2022).

<sup>54</sup> Lizzi O. Milligan, John Clegg, and Leon Tikly, "Exploring the potential for language supportive learning in English medium instruction: a Rwandan case study," *Comparative Education* 52 (2016).

members.<sup>55</sup> In the academic year of 112, Wenzao offered 180 EMI courses; with 168 EMI courses are under the College of International Culture, Education, and Foreign Affairs and the other 12 EMI courses are under the College of European and Asian Language.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, to enhance the bilingual education, the university provides several programs to motivate students in learning English:

1. Study Buddy Program

This program is initiated by the Department of International Affairs which employs international students as teaching assistants to help local students in understanding the EMI courses material as well as their speaking proficiency.

2. Language Diagnostic and Consulting Center (LDCC)

A center which provides English learning software for the students to improve their English skills.

3. Incorporating Software Usage into Assessment

Cooperating with the Center of English Language Teaching (CELT) to determine whether LDCC's software usage can be included as a bonus point in assessments.

4. Expanding the "Meet with Foreign Friends" Activity

Wenzao also promotes activities that involve interactions with foreign friends, aiming for local students to increase opportunities for speaking practice.

As Wenzao has been focusing on improving the implementation of bilingual education through these programs, researching the international students' perspective would be crucial in understanding the efficacy and impact of these initiatives. Examining the

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<sup>55</sup> 教育部 110 年「大專校院學生雙語化學習計畫」核定, (BEST, 2021).

<sup>56</sup> "113 年度教育部獎勵補助私立技專校院整體發展經費 之校務發展及年度經費支用計畫書-附表 10 附件文藻外語大學", 2024,

[https://c010.wzu.edu.tw/datas/upload/files/%E7%8D%8E%E8%A3%9C%E5%8A%A9%E7%B6%93%E8%B2%BB/\\_%E6%96%87%E8%97%BB\\_113%E5%B9%B4%E4%BF%AE%E6%AD%A3%E6%94%AF%E7%94%A8%E8%A8%88%E7%95%AB%E6%9B%B8%E9%99%84%E8%A1%A810%E9%99%84%E4%BB%B6.pdf](https://c010.wzu.edu.tw/datas/upload/files/%E7%8D%8E%E8%A3%9C%E5%8A%A9%E7%B6%93%E8%B2%BB/_%E6%96%87%E8%97%BB_113%E5%B9%B4%E4%BF%AE%E6%AD%A3%E6%94%AF%E7%94%A8%E8%A8%88%E7%95%AB%E6%9B%B8%E9%99%84%E8%A1%A810%E9%99%84%E4%BB%B6.pdf).

experiences and feedback of international students would provide deeper insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Wenzao's EMI courses and related programs. This research could identify areas for improvement, inform best practices, and offer recommendations that could help enhance the implementation of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 policy, ensuring that it meets the needs of all stakeholders involved.

Given Wenzao's longstanding dedication to EMI and its unique position in Taiwan's higher education landscape, this study focuses on the experiences of its international students to assess the implementation and impact of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy. By examining their perspectives, this research aims to identify strengths and challenges in Wenzao's bilingual initiatives, offering insights that could inform broader policy improvements.

### **International Students in Wenzao**

There are 305 foreign students enrolled in Wenzao for the 2023 academic year (year 112), including exchange students.<sup>57</sup> The information on international students in each department is listed below.

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<sup>57</sup> Wenzao SOSA

Table 1 International Students in Wenzao in the 112 academic year

Program	Department	Students	Total
2 Year Department	Department of Japanese	2	4
	Department of English	1	
	Department of German	1	
5 Year Department	Department of Spanish	1	7
	Department of English	6	
4 Year Department	Department of English	36	227
	Department of Translation and Interpreting	19	
	Department of International Affairs	55	
	Department of Foreign Language Instruction	16	
	Department of French	7	
	Department of German	3	
	Department of Spanish	8	
	Department of Japanese	17	
	Department of Southeast Asian Studies	8	
	Department of International Business Administration	11	
	Department of Communication Arts	11	
	Department of Digital Content Application and Management	4	
	Department of Applied Chinese	32	
	Graduate Institute	Graduate Institute of English Language	
Graduate Institute of Multilingual Translation and Interpreting		5	
Master's Degree Program of International Affairs		17	
Graduate Institute of Foreign Language Education and Cultural Industries		1	
Graduate Institute of European Studies		2	
Graduate Institute of Southeast Asia Research		9	
Graduate Institute of International Business and Intercultural Management		6	
Graduate Institute of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language		13	
4 Year Department Night Division	Department of English	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>305</b>

Source: Wenzao, SOSA

Kezia Yugo's study that was conducted in the same university revealed that the number of international students in Wenzao has increased drastically, about 276% from the 103 academic year to the 110 academic year.<sup>58</sup> Hence, understanding their experiences in EMI courses is essential for effective bilingual policy implementation.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Kezia Yugo, "Culture in Classroom: Hierarchical Influence on Interpersonal Relationships in Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages" (2022).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the present study is to investigate and explore the effect of bilingual policy implementation on higher education. In the previous chapter, the literature review, EMI courses have been discussed and explained from its definition, purpose, contribution, other countries experience, as well as various stakeholders' perspective. To align with the context, international students' role on EMI courses, the development of EMI courses and bilingual education in Wenzao was also mentioned. This study employs the qualitative method, specifically semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns within the collected data.

### **Research Design**

This study examines the impact of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy on international students, specifically focusing on their experiences and challenges with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at Wenzao. To ensure the validity, the semi-structured interview was conducted with a purposive sample of international students at Wenzao. This method was chosen for its flexibility, where participants are able to share their experiences and challenges on EMI with their own words. The sampling method focused on selecting participants who have varying levels of experience with EMI and different lengths of stay at Wenzao, ensuring a variety of insights.

### **Participants Selection**

The participants were international students at Wenzao. To gain participants, a purposive sampling method was employed, where the researcher selected participants from her international network at the university. The main selection criterion was that participants do not have Chinese as their first language. Participants were categorized into two groups:



Native English Speakers (NES) and Non-Native English Speakers (NNES). They were given the option to participate in data collection through face-to-face interviews or by providing written responses.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process began by contacting international students from the researcher's network, most of whom were reached through social media, as the researcher already knew them personally. One interviewee, however, was approached in person as they had recently met the researcher. Each participant was asked if they would be willing to share their experiences and challenges with EMI. They could respond either in person, online (via Google Meet), or in writing (through social media chat or by responding directly using Google Docs), based on their preference. In social media chats or in-person interviews, the researcher could ask follow-up questions directly, leading to more in-depth and spontaneous discussions. Most interviews were conducted in person, taking place in quiet meeting rooms on campus. The semi-structured interview format allowed flexibility and adaptability, facilitating an open discussion while still staying focused on the research objectives.

Each interview was conducted on different days, with the settings varying based on the participants' preferences. In-person interviews were more relaxed due to casual small talk, allowing them to feel at ease during face-to-face conversations. The setting was comfortable and professional, hence participants felt relaxed and open to discussion. The online interview via Google Meet was more flexible in terms of timing, but still maintained a relaxed and open atmosphere. The social media chat interview was the most casual, but since it was done via typing, hence the researcher did not know how the interviewee was feeling directly, though follow-up questions were still asked directly. Lastly, the interviewees who responded via

typing in Google Docs had fewer follow-up questions. Hence, the interactions between them were less immediate and less detailed responses compared to other methods.

Interviewees were asked to sign a consent form to ensure that their data will be used for academic purposes only. Not only that, but the interviewees were also given questions in advance to be prepared. These questions, inspired by Chou's study on EMI,<sup>59</sup> covered topics such as their experiences in EMI courses, including their interactions with instructors and peers, and their views on the Bilingual 2030 Policy.<sup>60</sup> For the in-person interviews, the researcher borrowed the meeting room and prepared herself with a cellphone for recording, of course with the interviewees' consent. For the online interview, Google Meet was used, and the researcher ensured a stable internet connection.

The total number of interviewees was 10 people. *Table 2* provides the demographic information of the interviewees, including their status as either Native English Speakers (NES hereinafter) or Non-Native English Speakers (NNES hereinafter), their nationality, department, year of study, the number of semesters they have participated in English-Medium Instruction (EMI), and how they were interviewed.

Six interviewees were interviewed face-to-face (one of them via Google Meet), while the other four were interviewed via typing (one via social media chat and the others through Google Docs). The face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using AI transcription called Otter.ai. The transcriptions were also edited for clarity. The typing interviews process began by asking them to fill in the interview questions and any ambiguities were clarified by asking some follow-up questions.

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<sup>59</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>60</sup> For the complete list of questions, refer to the appendix A.

Table 2 Demographic Information of Interviewees

<b>Name</b>	<b>NES / NNES</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Year of Study</b>	<b>EMI Semesters</b>	<b>Interview Mode</b>
ES	NNES	Indonesian	English	Senior	6	Face-to-Face
MR	NES	Indonesian	International Affairs	Senior	6	Face-to-Face
JN	NNES	Indonesian	Applied Chinese	Junior	1	Typing
CH	NES	Indonesian	International Affairs	Junior	4	Typing
KL	NNES	Burmese	English	Senior	6	Face-to-Face
MN	NNES	Costa Rican	English	Sophomore	2	Face-to-Face
CA	NNES	Indonesian	Foreign Language Instruction	Recent Graduate	8	Typing
RH	NES	Vincentian	English	Senior	6	Typing
VC	NNES	Polish	English	Junior	4	Face-to-Face
SN	NES	American	International Affairs	Freshman	1	Face-to-Face

*Source: Organized by the Author*

## DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will share the experience of Wenzao's international students on EMI courses, addressing the first research question: *How does EMI influence the academic and social experiences of international students at the University?* This section explores the positive attitudes students hold towards their EMI courses and the academic advantages they experience, as well as their challenges in the EMI courses, answering the second research question: *What challenges do international students at Wenzao encounter in EMI courses?* In addition, this chapter will also unveil the perspectives of Wenzao's international students toward the Taiwan Bilingual 2030 Policy.

### **4.1 Research Question 1: International Students' Academic and Social Experiences in EMI Courses**

#### **Academic Experiences**

##### *1. Positive Attitudes Toward EMI Courses*

#### **Ease of Understanding**

All of my interviewees expressed positive attitudes towards the EMI courses. They pointed out that the EMI course initiatives benefit them academically, knowing that pursuing their education in Taiwan would be more challenging if the courses were taught in Chinese. EMI courses at Wenzao receive favorable feedback from most interviewees. They found the course material and teaching style are clear and easy to follow. For instance, CH, a junior International Affairs major from Indonesia who identified herself as a native English speaker answered,

It's been fairly alright! It's not difficult and easy to understand.

CH considers herself as a native English speaker because she spent her elementary school to middle school in a national plus school,<sup>61</sup> she also pointed out that she is more comfortable using English than Bahasa Indonesia in everyday conversation. Similarly, SN, a freshman International Affairs major from the United States, shared his experience as a native English speaker. Having lived in Taiwan for seven years, SN is familiar with both English and intermediate Chinese, but he prefers EMI courses because they closely resemble his experience of taking classes in the US. He noted,

Yes, I can follow along. I have no problem. It feels like taking a class in the US. I mean, even in the US, we have professors whose native language is not English. ..., I have no problem understanding what the professors are saying.

For SN, the use of English in EMI classes feels natural and comfortable as it mirrors the academic environment he was used to in the US. Even when professors are non-native English speakers, SN did not face language barriers. These comments indicated that they hold positive attitudes toward EMI and that they are able to engage with the course material without language barrier.

### **Consistency of English Usage**

A significant factor contributing to their positive experiences is the consistent use of English in the EMI courses, coded as Consistency of English Usage. This code was frequently mentioned by interviewees, particularly in helping them to be engaged in following the course material. For example, ES, a senior English major from Indonesia who has been involved in EMI courses for six semesters, highlighted how the use of English by professors made it easier to follow the class. Despite having intermediate Chinese proficiency, she prefers English as it aligns better with her academic interests. ES stated,

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<sup>61</sup> A national plus school follows the national curriculum, but the courses are delivered in English as the medium of instruction.

Yes, I can follow everything directly because the professor in Wenzao speaks in English every time—like 100%, except when they're talking privately with other Taiwanese students, then they use Chinese.

ES added,

But sometimes, if it's something really important, like attendance or the examination, which is kind of serious for the whole class, they will speak in Chinese. But otherwise, they use English for everything.

While ES did not specifically state why the professors switch to Chinese, it seems that the teachers may do so to ensure local students fully understand important information. This suggests that even though English is the main language of instruction, the teachers might use Chinese for particularly important information to avoid any confusion, especially when it concerns the whole class. This aligns with Kyeyune's suggestion that a bilingual, communication-focused approach may be necessary in EMI settings to support student understanding.<sup>62</sup>

RH, a senior International Affairs major from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where English is the official language, shared a similar view. Reflecting on her experience with EMI courses, which she has been enrolled in since her first semester, she stated,

Overall, my experience has been positive. Since the courses are in English, I can follow the materials easily. The teachers are clear, and I usually understand the subject without any issues.

CA, a recent graduate from Indonesia with B2-level English skills (CEFR), expressed that the consistent use of English in the classroom made her experience with EMI courses enjoyable and accessible. She explained,

I have enjoyed EMI courses so far. I can follow and understand the subjects because the lecturers use English most of the time.

The consistency of English usage in EMI class contributes to the international students' confidence in participating in class and helped them better to grasp the subjects being taught.

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<sup>62</sup> Kyeyune, "Challenges of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Multilingual Contexts: A View from Ugandan Classrooms."

Many international students prefer English, especially those who are not fluent in Chinese. Even among those fluent in Chinese, some find that academic Chinese differs from conversational language, leading them preferring EMI courses. Hence, the Consistency of English Usage code played a key role in shaping students' overall Positive Attitudes Toward EMI.

### **Engagement and Course Quality**

In addition to the accessibility of the courses, some highlighted the engaging quality of EMI courses. They mentioned that the EMI courses were “interesting” and “very good”. For instance, MR a senior International Affairs major and native English speaker from Indonesia expressed her positive experiences in EMI courses. Growing up in the United States, she considers herself as a native English speaker, stated,

Personally, I think Wenzao has a lot of good EMI courses. I feel like I can understand most of the EMI courses that I've taken, and most of the EMI courses that I've taken are very interesting and are very, I think very good.

MN, a sophomore English major from Costa Rica, whose English level is B2 to C1, similarly answered,

Yeah, I think the classes so far are very nice. They [my experiences in EMI courses] do change depending on the teacher, but I will say the experience is alright for now, it's pretty nice.

This indicated that the “Engaging Course Content” was important not only for understanding the materials but also for maintaining students' motivation in learning.

### **Adjusting to EMI Courses**

Despite being easy to follow, some NNES pointed out that they faced some challenges such as new terms, specialized vocabulary, and the teacher's accents, but they managed to adapt. For instance, VC, a junior from Poland, highlighted the difficulty of adjusting to subject-specific vocabulary in his International Affairs courses. While his English proficiency

(C1 CEFR) allows him to understand most of the material, specialized terminology can still be challenging. He noted,

For my English level, I can follow the class, and I can understand almost everything... Sometimes, I come across specific terms related to international affairs, which are new to me since I haven't studied this subject before. But overall, it's easy to keep up.

In another question, VC highlighted the difference of his native language and Chinese, which he indirectly expressed that the existence of EMI courses would help him academically,

... Chinese [language] is very different from Europe. So, our first languages [such as Polish or other European languages] are very different from each other, not relatable to each other as well.

This reflects findings from another study on international students in China, where students from linguistically distant regions often struggle to learn Chinese quickly. However, EMI programs provide an alternative way by allowing these students to focus on their studies in English, minimizing the language barrier.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, KL a senior from Myanmar who speaks both a Chinese dialect and English, mentioned that while he can follow most of the material in EMI courses, there are still some heavy topics that require extra effort to understand. He stated,

Yeah. Yeah [I can understand the material], most of the time, but for some pretty heavy topics I still need to digest. So, I would say maybe 95% of the time I can follow the footsteps of the teachers.

This highlights that even students with strong language skills still face challenges in certain subjects. JN, a junior from Indonesia with upper-intermediate Chinese and English proficiency, pointed out that her initial difficulties with EMI courses were mainly due to the teachers' accents.

For my experience, it is hard to follow at first because the teacher's accent is hard to understand.

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<sup>63</sup> He and Chiang, "Challenges to English-medium instruction (EMI) for international students in China: A learners' perspective: English-medium education aims to accommodate international students into Chinese universities, but how well is it working?."



Even when some students expressed initial challenges, they were able to adapt and continue benefiting from the courses.

*While these experiences highlight some positive aspects of their experience, they also pointed out the challenges in EMI courses such as language accents that will be discussed further in Research Question 2.*

## ***2. Teacher's Role and Explanations as Key to Learning***

Despite these challenges, students recognize that effective teaching plays a crucial role, making the quality of teacher explanations a key factor in their learning experiences. When asked about what helps them understand the subject the most, all the interviewees agreed that the teacher's explanation plays a crucial role. For instance, MR stated,

Personally, I think the classes that I learned the most are those with the teachers that teach well.

CH similarly answered,

It would be all of the content depending on the purpose and teacher's style. Some teachers are flexible, so the PPTs and their explanations are enough...

This reflects students' experiences with different teaching styles and how they adapt to other approaches such as PPTs and materials, recognizing that some methods are effective for their learning. CH further emphasized, "Surely though, their explanations are highly necessary," highlighting the importance of clear and well-delivered for their overall learning experience.

Hence, the students were asked how satisfied they are on the teachers' language proficiency, most students responded positively, mentioning that Wenzao's professors are generally fluent in English. MR answered,

... I personally think the professors at Wenzao are pretty good. Most of the teachers who teach EMI are able to at least speak English properly...

CA and KL similarly responded that many Taiwanese professors have studied abroad in English-speaking countries, which enhance their language proficiency. CA mentioned,

The English proficiency of my Taiwanese instructors is generally good. Many of them have studied abroad in English-speaking countries, such as the United States, which enhances their ability to communicate effectively and convey course materials clearly.

KL similarly respond,

Most professors, I think they have some experience studying abroad, for once, so I think they have accumulated some experience. So, I would say they might have certain level of English proficiency.

Chou's study on EMI in Taiwan also pointed out that EMI professors with experience studying in English-speaking countries tend to feel more confident teaching in English, supporting the positive feedbacks from students at Wenzao.<sup>64</sup> This aligns with research which also pointed out that teachers' own language proficiency and exposure to English-speaking environments significantly enhance the quality of EMI instruction.<sup>65</sup>

### **Social Experiences**

In recent years, the style of education has shifted from traditional lecture-based approaches to a more interactive teaching style. Studies have found that it engages students better, positively influences student motivation, and improves academic performance.<sup>66</sup> Not only do these styles improve students' understanding of the materials, but they also help them feel a sense of belonging in class.<sup>67</sup> This section focuses on international students' interactions with both local and other international students.

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<sup>64</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>65</sup> Changmi Wang, "The Relationship Between Teachers' Classroom English Proficiency and Their Teaching Self-Efficacy in an English Medium Instruction Context," Original Research, *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021-June-18 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.611743>, <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.611743>.

<sup>66</sup> L. A. Van Dijk and Wmg Wim Jochems, "Changing a traditional lecturing approach into an interactive approach," *International Journal of Engineering Education* 18 (2002); Ardashir Afrasiabifar and Mosavi Asadolah, "Effectiveness of shifting traditional lecture to interactive lecture to teach nursing students," *Investigacion y Educacion en Enfermeria* 37 (2019).

<sup>67</sup> I-Chia Chou, "Helping Students Learn in EMI Courses Using Reciprocal Teaching: A Case Study of a Taiwan University," *Advances in Engineering Software* 1 (2014); Elizabeth Levin, Andrew J. Rixon, and Maree Keating, "How can a 'Sense of Belonging' inform your teaching strategy? Reflections from a core Business unit," *Student Success* (2019).

## **Classroom Interaction with Other International Students**

Speaking about my participants' classroom interactions, those who do not have the ability to speak Chinese fluently admit that they are mostly communicating with the other international students. For instance, MR stated,

I think it is easier for me to interact with international students rather than local students. I think it's very hard for local students to, umm, I think because local students know that this is an EMI class. So, this is an English environment. I think they themselves already have pressure to speak English. So, they already know that they have to speak English in that classroom. And then they have to speak English to international students. I think that put them under more pressure. And I think that also makes it harder for us to talk to each other.

This statement suggests that EMI classes, rather than facilitating communication, may increase pressure on local students to speak English, which could make interactions with international students more difficult. This potentially creates a barrier to natural communication between local and international students.

MN also added,

... in class communication, if I'm not with other international students, it can be kind of difficult.

When they were asked why they chose to communicate with the other international students rather than with the local students, most of them answered that those local students lack confidence in using English, even though their English ability is understandable. This finding suggests that confidence, rather than language ability, is the key barrier to interaction. *The issue of local students' lack of confidence will be discussed further in Research Question 2.*

## **Interaction with Local Students**

However, this feeling and experience is slightly experienced by those who are able to speak intermediate Chinese because they can communicate with the Taiwanese students using Chinese though sometimes, they mixed it up with English. For instance, KL added,

... since my classmates know I can speak Chinese, they usually speak Chinese to me, and I'm okay with that. But when I take courses from other departments and meet new people who don't know me well, they often assume I can speak Chinese because I'm Asian.

ES similarly answered,

Yes [I felt awkward when talking in English with the local students], but it was just in the beginning [in my first year], [but] since my Chinese is getting better so I can talk with them and adapt better.

Unlike the others, JN, who is fluent in Chinese, prefers to communicate in English with Taiwanese students who can speak English well, sharing,

It's a bit difficult when we want to discuss because they cannot understand me. It's tiring for me that I have to translate what I say into Chinese again. It feels like I am wasting my time and sometimes we cannot connect to each other. So, it's either I do not understand them, or they cannot understand me.

Hence, although language proficiency is able to facilitate communication, it does not always guarantee smoother social interactions. For example, despite being fluent in Chinese, JN still faces communication challenges and finds it tiring to constantly switch between languages. This leads to frustration and a preference for English.

Thus, it can be concluded that English in EMI settings is double-edged: it helps communication, but also puts pressure on students, particularly locals, to consistently use English. This pressure may hinder their interactions with international peers. Furthermore, this highlights that language is not the only barrier to social interactions in EMI classes, but the willingness to communicate (WTC) could also become a barrier. This raises an important question: "To what extent are local students willing to use English in an EMI setting?"

## 4.2 Research Question 2: International Students' Challenges at Wenzao encounter in EMI Courses

The answer to this research question would most likely be the factors that contribute to the negative experience in Research Question 1. The significant challenge for international students is communication, both in academic and social experience. In academic experience, the factor that has been mentioned constantly is the problem of the teachers' accents, unclear instructions, and oversimplified materials. While for their social experiences, there are barriers between them and the local students either because of the local students' lack of confidence in using English or because their limited intercultural sensitivity.

### Language Accent

The teacher's explanation, as has been mentioned before, is crucial in helping the students understand the materials. However, several students kept mentioning that the teachers' language accents are hard to understand. For instance, MR stated,

The biggest challenge that I face in EMI courses is that sometimes I cannot understand the teachers...simply because some of them do have an accent.

Chou's study found that the teacher's accent should not affect their ability to teach EMI courses.<sup>68</sup> While teachers' accent and teaching ability are two different things, my research indicates that students often struggle to understand teachers with certain accents. Although MR did not explicitly express a preference for native English-speaking teachers (NESTs hereinafter), her frustration with accents might suggest an expectation for clearer, more standard pronunciation, often linked to native speakers.

This possible sense of *native speakerism* aligns with a study that found that students slightly prefer NESTs.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, another study on English learners in Korea highlighted

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<sup>68</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>69</sup> Marine Yeung, "TERTIARY STUDENTS' CHOICE BETWEEN NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKER ENGLISH TEACHERS AND THE ROLE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN LEARNER PREFERENCES: SOME EVIDENCE FROM POST-COLONIAL HONG KONG" (2021).

that students' preferences may depend on their English proficiency, with higher proficiency students favoring NESTs and lower proficiency students preferring non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs hereinafter).<sup>70</sup> However, it is important to note that MR did not express a specific preference for NESTs, but she expressed frustration with some teachers' communication styles,

Sometimes they talk in a way that's not interactive. So, they just mumble. They just babble in front of the class, but they're not actually asking or doing anything.

Though SN mentioned that even in the US, some of his teachers are NNESTs, he also mentioned struggling to understand one of his teachers due to a strong accent. He said,

I do have one class where I really, really struggle to understand the teacher... In one particular class, my professor's accent is very strong, like kind of incomprehensible.

When asked how he coped with this challenge, SN mentioned that he would try to rely on the textbook, once it arrived, to help match with the teacher's explanations with the content. He stated,

Well, we haven't received our textbooks yet, so if I did have my textbook, I would be buried in the textbook, trying to match what they're saying with what the textbook says. But I don't have that yet, so hopefully, once I get my textbook, I can compare what they're saying with the textbook. It might be easier for me.

RH also highlighted this challenge, saying,

There have been times when the teacher's accent made it harder to understand specific words or phrases.

While the international students appreciated the consistent use of English, difficulties in understanding teachers' accents significantly hinder students' ability to engage fully with the material.

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<sup>70</sup> Kyunghye Choi, "Study on Students' Attitude Towards World Englishes and Non-native English Teachers," *English teaching* 62 (2007).

## Challenges with Instructional Clarity

Another challenge frequently mentioned was the lack of clear instruction during classes. Despite being fluent in English, the teachers sometimes struggle to get their ideas across when explaining in their second language, particularly when explaining complex concepts, thus they switch to Chinese. This highlights that teachers' general English proficiency does not guarantee effective teaching.<sup>71</sup> For instance, MN said,

For example, the teacher would like to give an example, but she doesn't know the concept in English very well, so she likes to explain it in Chinese so the Taiwanese students can relate it to something they know. But because of this, international students don't really understand what she means...

MR similarly emphasized,

...sometimes some teachers find it difficult to get their ideas across...

This challenge of instructional clarity was common. MN's example shows how teachers sometimes switch to Chinese to explain concepts more easily understood by local students, but this leaves international students feeling "left off". As mentioned in the literature review, Kyeyune's research similarly highlights that, in multilingual settings, relying only on English can hinder comprehension, especially for complex or unfamiliar topics.<sup>72</sup>

MR's comment also shows that not everything gets communicated well in English, making it hard for students to follow. A similar issue occurred in South Korea, as discussed by Macaro (citing Kim et al., 2014), where international students reported feeling excluded when teachers relied heavily on Korean in EMI classes.<sup>73</sup> Ironically, using English in EMI courses is meant to make learning easier for everyone, but it also has the opposite effect, creating new challenges.

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<sup>71</sup> Donald Freeman et al., "English-for-Teaching: rethinking teacher proficiency in the classroom," *ELT Journal* 69, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu074>.

<sup>72</sup> Kyeyune, "Challenges of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Multilingual Contexts: A View from Ugandan Classrooms."

<sup>73</sup> E. Macaro, *English Medium Instruction: Content and Language in Policy and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2018). <https://books.google.com.tw/books?id=EzMDtAEACAAJ>.

Hence, some participants were asked to come up with solutions related to teaching style and instructional clarity. SN proposed,

I think maybe evaluating English ability as well as the teacher's English-speaking comprehensibility. So, I feel like before teachers are approved to teach in English, they should not only be able to, like, not just take a test in English and pass the test in English, but also be able to demonstrate that their English is comprehensible.

The challenges experienced in these courses suggest a need for better training and support for teachers in delivering lessons in English without needing to switch back to Chinese for clarification.

### **Oversimplified Materials**

Several students expressed dissatisfaction with the academic depth of EMI courses, feeling that the material was oversimplified. Several interviewees mentioned that though the material is easy to understand, certain topics are too easy and too simplified and barely touch the surface without providing more detailed information. CH responded,

I think it lacks diversity and curriculum planning as it's not really college-level. It could be more honed to push the students in developing their skills and trying new things.

MR also similarly answered,

I think they [the materials] are simplified. I think the materials that they give obviously cannot, they cannot put very big vocabulary in the PPT. They have to use words that are used some students might be able to understand better, and I feel like the materials that they give are not too heavy. It's just like materials, maybe something about comics, or maybe something about just politics, but nothing too difficult.

While VC despite needing time to manage with EMI, also similarly expressed,

Sometimes, they make it much more simpler than it actually is, because you only like touching the iceberg, they don't go that deep and to the details.

Three of them similarly responded that they are expecting something more challenging and more college-level. This issue is not limited to Wenzao. In a study discussed by Macaro (citing Chapple) on international students in Japan, many students also found that the EMI



courses were not challenging enough, even though the curriculum had been simplified to accommodate local students.<sup>74</sup> Thus, they suggest that there is a significant gap between those student groups. MR also emphasized in another question that she is okay with the current materials knowing that other students' English proficiency is not fluent as hers. This highlights that some international students are not satisfied with the current academic depth.

Additionally, during an EMI conference that was hosted by Wenzao, the researcher had an opportunity to ask Ikuya Aizawa, an EMI researcher, whether international students in Japan, particularly the NES, faced some challenges during EMI courses. Both Aizawa and Aiden Yeh, a Wenzao professor, also clarified that mostly the international students expressed that the course materials were too simplified, and that they expect a higher level of academic content than what is currently being taught. Aizawa answered,

They feel like the content is a little bit simplified, they feel like they need more challenges. But their problem is learning Japanese, ... they really want to make friends, they really want to be integrated in the outside of classroom, culture, civil society support. That's something they really find difficult, so in terms of language they don't have problem.... And this is not just confined to somebody from Anglophone context, but also for anyone [international students] really...<sup>75</sup>

Aiden Yeh also replied,

I agree. We have the same issues here [Wenzao], where many of our international students actually complain about the simplification of the language and the content itself. Some actually said the '*dumbification of the content*'.<sup>76</sup>

This suggests that while the EMI courses are accessible for international students, some of them expect a more challenging curriculum.

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<sup>74</sup> Macaro, *English Medium Instruction: Content and Language in Policy and Practice*.

<sup>75</sup> Ikuya Aizawa, "English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education in Japan" (paper presented at the EMI 教學的共同與歧向-線上國際學術研討會 Online International Conference on Convergences and Divergences of English Medium Instruction (EMI) Teaching, 中華民國, July 3rd 2024).

<sup>76</sup> Aiden Yeh responded to Aizawa's answer during the same conference, July 3rd 2024

## Local Students' Lack of Confidence

International students also expressed challenges in communicating with local students. While some locals were able to communicate fluently in English, most of the international students generally tended to interact more with the other international students, as previously mentioned. The main reason for this was that many local students lacked confidence in using English. For instance, MN mentioned,

Taiwanese people don't feel confident in their English, so they prefer to not use it. So, because of this, it happened to me once that I had to do a group work with this student, but she doesn't know English at all, at all, so we had to do like, speaking a Chinese Japanese, it's really weird.

VC also similarly explained,

I don't think they feel very comfortable when they have to speak English. They're not confident. They don't feel comfortable. Some people, yes, are very natural, but those people are very rare. There's no other people like that. Some of my EMI classmates of mine can actually speak very good English, but they just don't feel very confident.

In addition to self-confidence, a study by Kim in South Korea pointed out that local students often show limited intercultural sensitivity toward international students, which thus affects their interactions in EMI settings.<sup>77</sup>

After reflecting on the international students' experience communicating with the local students, the researcher found the theory of Willingness to Communicate (WTC hereinafter). WTC in a second language (L2) is defined as the readiness to engage in that language at a specific time with particular individuals.<sup>78</sup> One significant factor affecting the students' WTC in using a second language is self-confidence.<sup>79</sup> Hence, the previous question that was raised, "To what extent are local students willing to use English in an EMI setting?",

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<sup>77</sup> Jeong-yeon Kim, Jinsook Choi, and Bradley Tatar, "English-Medium Instruction and Intercultural Sensitivity: A Korean Case Study," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 21 (2017).

<sup>78</sup> Syeda Farzana Bukhari and Xiaoguang Cheng, "To do or not to do: willingness to communicate in the ESL context," *English Today* 33 (2016).

<sup>79</sup> Invia Gorni Katiandagho and Virginia Gabrella Sengkey, "Students' Self-Confidence and Their Willingness to Communicate in English," *Linguistic, English Education and Art (LEEA) Journal* (2022).

is already answered. That the local students have a low willingness to communicate in their second language with the international students is primarily due to their lack of self-confidence.

In summary, both lack of self-confidence in using English and lack of intercultural sensitivity are factors that lowers the local students' WTC in EMI courses, which would hinder their interaction. Hence, addressing these challenges would be beneficial in helping Taiwan's young people increase their bilingual capabilities and keep pace with global trends, as they are used to the bilingual environment. This aligns with the goals of Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Policy.<sup>80</sup>

### **Interviewees' Proposed Solutions**

The interviewees were not only asked to talk about the challenges, but also to give some suggestions. Some interviewees mentioned that those who actually faced the challenges in EMI courses are mostly the local students in terms of understanding the materials which are due to their language proficiency. For instance, ES mentioned,

The challenges are more for the Taiwanese students because sometimes they don't understand, and they don't speak at all—with me, with everyone, or with the professors. So, I think the challenges are more for Taiwanese students.

Others believed that the materials are simplified because the students in the classroom do not have possess the same English proficiency, for instance, MR said,

I think it's personally understandable that they do not give too heavy of a material, because a lot of Taiwanese students do not have the same English level as a lot of the international students.

Though local students' low WTC affects their interaction, the local students' low language proficiency also affected their interaction with the international students, which frustrated the international students when it comes to the group work settings. One

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<sup>80</sup> NDC, Short Bilingual 2030.

interviewee suggested that the qualifications for joining EMI should be stricter, noting that students with proficiency below the B2 level are still allowed to participate. This would ensure that there are no barriers between the students when communicating. Another interviewee added that if local students had similar English proficiency, the materials also could be more suited to a college level. MR mentioned,

I do wish that they could make it even more difficult, but until now, looking at how most Taiwanese students are not that good in English. I am okay with the classes that and the materials levels that they give.

However, as mentioned in the literature review, implementing such system in China led to an access gap and resource inequality, giving more opportunities to students with higher English proficiency while others are left behind. This leads to the creation of elite and non-elite students.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, in Hong Kong, the introduction of EMI in secondary education also resulted in the creation of a social divide, with academically able students benefitting more from EMI, while less able students suffered academically, as discussed by Macaro (citing Chu and Chan).<sup>82</sup>

Thus, this raises several questions: Could stricter qualifications for EMI in Wenzao create similar inequality, and if so, how can the system avoid leaving behind students with lower English proficiency? How can students with lower English skills be encouraged to improve? And does Wenzao have enough resources to support their English learning?

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<sup>81</sup> Wang, "The Role of English in Higher Education Internationalization: Language Ideologies on EMI Programmes in China."

<sup>82</sup> Macaro, *English Medium Instruction: Content and Language in Policy and Practice*.

### 4.3 Perspectives on the Bilingual 2030 Policy in Taiwan

Discussing the EMI courses in Taiwan would not be complete without mentioning the Bilingual 2030 Policy in Taiwan. The interviewees were also asked to share their perspectives on the Bilingual 2030 Policy.

#### Positive Attitudes toward the Policy

All of my interviewees expressed that this policy would bring benefits to Taiwan's internationalization. This policy is believed to increase job opportunities in the future. They also believe that this policy could support Taiwan's efforts to integrate into the global community, enhancing economic and political ties with other nations. Both CH and MR highlighted the political context. CH mentioned that this policy is important looking at the Taiwan's current political situation.

I think it is very necessary to an extent because Taiwan does have reliance on other countries for their own sustenance and development, especially in their strenuous position politically.

According to BBC, the newly elected Taiwan's President, William Lai, is pro-sovereignty.<sup>83</sup> It is believed by MR that the newly elected party, DPP<sup>84</sup>, aligned with Western democratic influences, recognizes bilingual education as essential for Taiwan's identity:

I believe that the Taiwanese bilingual policy could be very beneficial, because Taiwan- Okay, I'm sorry, but this is very political, but in my opinion, I think as Taiwan and the party that has been elected moves forward to become more influenced by western countries. I think it's very important for them to be able to speak English too, so that they themselves can try to find their new internationalized society, internationalized identity. If they only speak the Taiwanese language, and just stay in their own lane, to stay in their own little space that they have, I think that Taiwan will not be able to grow.

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<sup>83</sup> Tessa Wong, "Taiwan elects William Lai president in historic election, angering China," *BBC News* (Taipei), January 14th 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-67920532?form=MG0AV3>.

<sup>84</sup> Democratic Progressive Party

Additionally, Chou's study supports this view, noting that elections can greatly affect universities by influencing funding, teaching, research, and their relationship with society and the economy.<sup>85</sup> These show that political support is key to the success of the Bilingual 2030 Policy and Taiwan's growth internationally.

### **Too Ambitious?**

When the interviewees were asked whether this policy could be achieved in 2030, some interviewees believed that this policy is impossible to be achieved in 2030. Some mentioned that this policy is too ambitious and that there are still a lot of things that need to be improved. MR answered,

I think it cannot be achieved in 2030; I think it's too fast, but some are ready, and some are not. I think the government needs to put more promotion into it, such as "why do Taiwan need it?" not only about the economy, so that people will take it more seriously and why the government wants to do it.

Looking at how bilingualism in this country works right now, SN also believes that this policy is too ambitious:

The way that is going right now? No, I don't think so. I think that having, I mean, that's a big ask to have the whole country be bilingual in what, six years. And also, I think the Taiwanese teaching habits for learning English are not very good. It's a lot about teaching textbook English rather than applied English...

I think that it [the bilingual policy] is good to pursue a better proficiency of English in Taiwan, but it might be too ambitious...Taiwan is biting off more than it can chew.

SN himself is an English teacher and his view that Taiwanese learning habits are more into teaching textbook than applied English is supported by a study on English teaching in Taiwan which pointed out that Taiwanese EFL teaching methods put more emphasis on test preparation.<sup>86</sup> Another study also highlights that Taiwanese senior high school students are

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<sup>85</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

<sup>86</sup> Lisa Hsu, "The Relationship between Taiwanese English Teacher Misbehaviors and College Student Motivation in English Classes" (2013).

more used to the Grammar Translation Method than to Communicative Language Teaching, which poses challenges for NESTs.<sup>87</sup>

The researcher also encountered several teachers' perspective on the Bilingual 2030 policy. While they expressed support for this policy, they were quite skeptical about this policy, some describing the policy as 'a joke'. This aligns with Chou's study, which also found that many participants were doubtful about Taiwan successfully achieving bilingual status by 2030.<sup>88</sup>

In summary, the key themes that are raised during the discussion of international students' experiences with EMI courses at Wenzao University are academic engagement, social interaction, and communication challenges. While students generally valued the consistent use of English, which could ease their understanding in EMI courses, but some found that the materials are oversimplified. Communication barrier is also a main problem, especially with local students who lacked confidence in English, which thus affect the group work and social integration. Some instructors' accents and switching between English and Chinese also created confusion. Participants proposed solutions, suggesting stricter English proficiency requirements for local students in joining EMI courses and more training for teachers. While students believe that the Bilingual 2030 Policy is beneficial, they expressed concerns with the timeline of this policy.

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<sup>87</sup> Hsien-Chung Liao and Cheng-Cheng Yang, "Teaching Practice and Cultural Difference of an English as Foreign Language Classroom in Taiwan," *English Language Teaching* 5 (2012).

<sup>88</sup> Chou, "Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy: Challenges for Higher Education Faculty."

## CONCLUSION

This study takes a closer look at how English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) shapes the academic and social lives of international students at Wenzao University, uncovering both the benefits and the obstacles they face. The findings show that Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy has potential to strengthen Taiwan's global presence. However, practical challenges in EMI courses and social integration suggest that reaching full bilingualism by 2030 may require significant adjustments.

The Bilingual 2030 Policy aims to enhance Taiwan's international competitiveness by fostering a bilingual society—a clearly ambitious goal. EMI has been positioned as a critical strategy within this vision, attracting international students who bring valuable perspectives and serve as skilled potential contributors to Taiwan's workforce. The study findings suggest that while EMI courses at Wenzao generally provide academic support for international students, several challenges still remain.

The literature review discussed existing research on EMI, internationalization in education, and Taiwan's bilingual policy. It showed that while EMI aimed to prepare students, its implementation faced various challenges. Knowing that EMI is also to attract the international students as they are “desirable skilled migrants” and an “increasingly attractive human capital resource” for the house country.<sup>89</sup> Hence, understanding their experiences is necessary for evaluating the effectiveness of EMI.

The methodology chapter described the study's qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews to gather detailed insights from international students. Employing purposive sampling, the researcher selected participants who do not possess Chinese as their

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<sup>89</sup> Hawthorne, "The Growing Global Demand for Students as Skilled Migrants."; Hawthorne, "Global Demand for International Students As Skilled Migrants."



native language with diverse backgrounds, such as their departments and how long they have been involved with EMI courses, which to ensure varied perspectives.

The data analysis chapter presented the findings that were distinguished into several parts. To begin with these students were asked to discuss about their academic experiences, and generally they appreciated the EMI existence with its consistency of English in EMI courses which has helped them better engaging with the course, as well as understanding the materials easier. However, they felt that the course content was sometimes oversimplified, lacking the depth expected at a university level. Additionally, students mentioned difficulties in understanding some instructors due to strong accents which occasionally confused the learning process. They also felt that there were unclear instructions and “left off”, particularly when teachers cannot get their ideas across in English, which led them switch back to Chinese when explaining complex materials.

While for social experiences, international students generally interacted more with other international students than with local students. These interviewees, especially those who do not have Chinese ability, found it challenging to connect with local students. Unexpectedly, the main barrier to interaction was not the local students’ English proficiency, as international students found it generally understandable. Instead, the main problem is that the local students’ lack of confidence in their English which lower their willingness to communicate, making group projects and classroom interactions more difficult. However, this does not mean that local students’ English proficiency has not been a factor; it still posed challenges in group work settings. International students felt that setting a higher English proficiency standard could help improve interaction and allow for more academically challenging materials. However, whether this solution would work is uncertain, as

implementing stricter qualifications in China led to divisions between elite and non-elite groups of students.<sup>90</sup>

When exploring their perspectives on the Bilingual 2030 Policy, this study found that international students viewed this policy as a positive step for Taiwan in facing internationalization and for better job opportunities in the future. However, looking at what Taiwan has right now, they raised concerns about the policy's ambitious timeline.

In conclusion, this study highlighted that EMI courses at Wenzao have offered international students a supportive academic environment but still face challenges in promoting social integration and academic depth. The findings suggest that while Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy is promising, practical adjustments are needed to address these issues and achieve its goals.

This study proposes recommendations for future research. Future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative methodology, as it would involve a larger and more diverse group of international students from various backgrounds to gather a wider perspective on EMI courses. Additionally, future studies could conduct a study on English or EMI teachers in a bilingual environment such as Wenzao to explore Taiwan's readiness of becoming bilingual by 2030, revealing specific needs for teacher training or a more practical developments that may facilitate Taiwan's bilingual aspirations in a realistic manner. As Taiwan progresses toward its bilingual vision, ongoing research will be essential to ensure that policies are both inclusive and sustainable, supporting students and educators in achieving Taiwan's global objectives.

In sum, while the Bilingual 2030 Policy and EMI initiatives are positive steps toward internationalization, practical changes that consider cultural differences are needed. By

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<sup>90</sup> Wang, "The Role of English in Higher Education Internationalization: Language Ideologies on EMI Programmes in China."

addressing these challenges and adapting strategies to improve both the academic and social experiences of all students, Taiwan would be able to build a truly bilingual society, achieving the goals of the Bilingual 2030 Policy and strengthening its position globally.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Implementation and Challenges of Bilingual 2030 Policy in Taiwan: A Study of EMI Through Wenzao's International Students**

**Background Information**

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, including your nationality and educational background?
2. Do you consider yourself a native English speaker, or is English your second language?
3. Have you ever taken any English proficiency tests? If so, which level are you at (A1-C2)?
4. What program and year are you currently in?
5. How long have you been taking EMI courses in this university?
6. Are most of your classes EMI courses?
7. Have you taken any courses taught in Chinese?  
If yes, how is it compared to the courses held in English?

**Experiences in EMI**

8. Can you describe how your experience in class is so far? Can you follow and understand the subject?
9. What has been the most helpful thing that helps you understand the subject? Is it the book, PPT, or teacher explanation? (Please elaborate)
10. Overall, how satisfied are you with the EMI courses?
11. What are the main challenges you have faced in EMI courses?

**Teaching Style and Interaction with Instructors**

12. Do you think that the teacher's explanation helps you understand the subject?
13. How would you describe the teaching style of your Taiwanese instructors in EMI courses?
14. How would you describe the English proficiency of your Taiwanese instructors?
15. Can you share any specific examples where language barriers affected your learning experience? (Such as teacher's accent, misunderstandings during assignments or exams due to language issues, and/or vocabulary or terminology that was challenging)

**Classroom Interaction**

16. How would you describe your interactions with other students in your EMI classes?

17. Do you feel included and supported by your classmates?
18. Can you share an example of a group project you worked on? How was the experience?
19. Have you experienced any challenges related to cultural or language differences when interacting with your peers?

**Social integration outside of the classroom**

20. How have you made friends and connected with others at the university?
21. Are there any specific challenges you have faced as an international student?

**Perceptions of the Bilingual 2030 Policy**

22. What is your understanding of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 Policy?
23. Do you believe the policy is beneficial for Taiwan's higher education system? Why or why not?
24. How do you think the policy will impact future job opportunities for graduates?
25. Do you think the Taiwanese community is supportive of the Bilingual 2030 policy as a step toward internationalization?

**Suggestions for Improvement**

26. Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you make to improve EMI courses at Wenzao University?
27. Do you have any suggestions for how Wenzao could better support international students in EMI courses?

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY**

**Study Title:** Implementation and Challenges of Bilingual 2030 Policy in Taiwan: A Study of EMI Through Wenzao’s International Students

**Researcher:** Jennifer Sidney / **Institution:** Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation and challenges of Taiwan’s Bilingual 2030 Policy from the perspective of international students studying through English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages.

**Procedures:** If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview and share your experiences and perspectives related to the EMI program at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages. The interview will be recorded for accuracy in data collection.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity and any information that could identify you will be kept confidential. Data will be anonymized in any publications or presentations resulting from this study.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary, and your responses are for academic purposes only. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research study or your rights as a participant, please contact Jennifer Sidney at [sidneyjenniferr@gmail.com](mailto:sidneyjenniferr@gmail.com) or via LINE: [jennifer.sidney](https://www.line.me/tw/jennifer.sidney).

**Consent**

I have read the above information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. By agreeing to participate in this study, I confirm that I understand the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and that my participation is voluntary.

**Participant’s Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant’s Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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