



Fostering Success in English-Medium Instruction: The Tel Aviv University Approach

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Abstract

This article examines the role of English for Purposes of International Communication (EPIC) staff in providing support for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) lecturers and students within the institutional ecosystem of Tel Aviv University (TAU). The study begins with a review of current research on EMI, including insights from TAU's own initiatives and the Tempus ECOSTAR project to contextualize the challenges and opportunities of integrating EMI in higher education. The internationalization ecosystem at TAU is presented, analyzing how EMI contributes to the university's vision of global visibility and academic collaborations. The article then focuses on research informing the development and implementation of three EMI support models developed by the Division of Languages at TAU. Of particular focus is an in-depth qualitative content analysis of approximately 3000 anonymized student written responses to open questions on end-of-course evaluations of EMI courses at TAU, in which 10 themes were identified. While the themes gleaned from the student feedback are for the most part best practices in teaching in general, the need for such practices is even more critical when teaching EMI. The resulting EMI support models, which encompass three distinct approaches, address critical areas such as pedagogical strategies, disciplinary engagement, and language proficiency. Finally, we critically evaluate the model's limitations, particularly in terms of outreach, pedagogical training, and sustainability within TAU's heterogeneous academic environment. The article concludes by offering recommendations for enhancing EMI support at TAU and provides a roadmap for other institutions aiming to develop inclusive and scalable EMI frameworks.

Keywords: English-medium instruction (EMI), CEFR, support models, technology-based solutions

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Introduction

English Medium Instruction Research and Impact

English medium instruction (EMI), the practice of using the English language to teach academic subjects in countries where English is not the first language, has become a prevalent phenomenon in higher education (Guo et al., 2024; Macaro et al., 2018). This expansion is driven by multiple factors, including the desire of universities to internationalize their programs, attract a global audience, and enhance their overall prestige and reputation (Galloway & Ruegg, 2022; Uehara & Kojima, 2021; Wilkinson, 2013). Factors such as the differentiation of private education (Coleman, 2006) and increased student mobility further propel EMI's adoption (Guo et al., 2024). Additionally, EMI is seen as a means to provide access to cutting-edge knowledge and resources in various disciplines, primarily available in English, thereby integrating institutions more closely into the international academic community. However, this approach raises several concerns and challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the effectiveness and equity of EMI programs.

One of the primary issues is the lack of a clear and consistent definition of EMI (Macaro et al., 2018; Pecorari & Malmström, 2018). The absence of a shared understanding leads to inconsistencies in implementation, making it difficult to establish best practices and appropriate benchmarks. For example, institutions may differ on whether the goal is to achieve native-speaker proficiency in English or to accept English as a lingua franca (ELF), which has implications for curriculum design and teacher training. This definitional ambiguity also complicates efforts to assess the outcomes of EMI programs and compare findings across different contexts (Macaro et al., 2018).

Teacher preparedness is another critical factor influencing the success of EMI (Dearden, 2014; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021; Macaro et al., 2018; Malmström et al., 2025; O'Dowd, 2018). Content instructors may lack confidence in their linguistic competence and ability to deliver courses in English with the same level of quality and nuance as in their native language (Reus, 2020). This is further compounded by a lack of specific training and professional development opportunities focused on EMI pedagogy (Galloway & Ruegg, 2022). Many teachers have not considered that teaching through EMI involves more than simply translating materials from one

language to another (Cots 2013; Dafouz et al., 2007); it requires adapting teaching styles to be more interactive and student-centered (Ismailov et al., 2021; Molino et al., 2022; Morell, 2020). Moreover, there is often an absence of clear expectations regarding English language proficiency for EMI teachers, and professional development is not always mandatory.

Student preparedness is equally important (Dearden, 2014; Hoang, 2025; Ismailov et al., 2021). Many students may not be adequately equipped to participate effectively in EMI courses due to insufficient English proficiency, difficulties in lecture comprehension, and a lack of familiarity with academic discourse in English. Challenges include understanding vocabulary, processing information at a rapid speech rate, and taking effective notes. Some students may struggle with speaking and oral presentations, which can hinder their participation in class discussions and teamwork. Additionally, students may have difficulty with academic writing, including composing essays, using appropriate referencing, and avoiding plagiarism (Goodman et al., 2024; Ismailov et al., 2021; McCulloch & Indrarathne, 2023).

Research on the impact of EMI on academic performance has yielded mixed results (Aizawa et al., 2020; Dafouz & Camacho-Miñano, 2016; Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Hoang, 2025; Rose et al., 2020). Some studies suggest that students instructed in a second language (L2) may experience a decline in content learning (Lasagabaster, 2022; Ismailov et al., 2021; Li, 2016). This can be attributed to the increased cognitive load of processing information in a second language, as well as potential linguistic barriers that impede comprehension, critical thinking, and oral and written expression. However, other research indicates that EMI students can achieve similar or even better academic results compared to their non-EMI counterparts. This may be due to factors such as increased motivation, self-selection of high-achieving students into EMI programs, or the development of compensatory strategies to overcome language barriers. For example, a study by Dafouz and Camacho-Miñano (2016) found no statistically significant differences in student grades in Financial Accounting I between EMI and non-EMI groups.

Several factors have been identified as influencing student performance in EMI programs. Besides personal considerations such as prior knowledge (Ali, 2021; Rose et al., 2020), effort, interest, and motivation (Rose et al., 2020), which play a significant role in student success (Guo et al., 2024), environmental factors including course design (Ismailov et al., 2021; Reus, 2020),

teacher quality, available resources, and the overall learning environment also have a substantial impact (Guo et al., 2024; Ismailov et al., 2021; Lasagabaster, 2022). In addition, instructional strategies such as the use of interactive and student-centered pedagogical approaches can enhance engagement and promote deeper learning (Ismailov et al., 2021).

A salient concern is that EMI is often associated with teacher-centered learning experiences. Lecturers may prioritize transmitting content knowledge through lectures with limited interaction, which can negatively affect student engagement and motivation (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021 as cited in Malmström et al., 2025, Sun et al., 2023). Students may find it difficult to participate actively in class discussions due to their limited oral ability in English, leading to a less dynamic and engaging classroom environment (Dafouz & Camacho-Miñano, 2016). To address this, there is a need for more dialogic, interactive, and multimodal pedagogical approaches that promote student participation and facilitate meaningful communication (Ismailov et al., 2021).

Recommendations for future research and practice are many. They include conducting longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of EMI on student outcomes and to identify factors that contribute to sustained success (Ismailov et al., 2021). Expanding research to diverse contexts, including non-European countries (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Sun et al., 2023) and a wider range of academic disciplines, would increase the generalizability of findings (Guo et al., 2024; Macaro et al., 2018). Systematic examination of the learning processes within EMI, specifically the interplay of linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural factors and their effects on student outcomes (Macaro et al., 2018; Macaro, 2018; Ismailov et al., 2021), as well as synthesizing qualitative evidence would help to identify challenges and best practices in implementing learner-centered EMI pedagogies across diverse contexts (Ismailov et al., 2021; Macaro, 2018; Morell, 2020).

Teacher training and professional development are essential for providing instructors with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively teach in an EMI environment (Coleman, 2006; Dearden, 2014; O'Dowd, 2018; Sun et al., 2023). Thus, developing support systems for both teachers (Uehara & Kojima, 2021; Galloway & Ruegg, 2022) and students (Aizawa et al., 2020), including language support services (Pecorari & Malmström, 2018), academic skills workshops

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(Aizawa et al., 2020), and peer tutoring programs (Guo et al., 2024; Ismailov et al., 2021; Reus, 2020; Rose et al., 2020) are as important as carefully designing EMI programs to align with students' needs and abilities (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020), providing flexibility in course selection and catering to different learning paces (Guo et al., 2024; Ismailov et al., 2021; Macaro et al., 2018; Macaro, 2018).

By addressing these issues and conducting further research, higher education institutions can maximize the benefits of EMI and ensure equitable and effective learning experiences for all students. It is crucial to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and adopt a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach to EMI implementation, taking into account the specific needs and challenges of both teachers and students. This will require a collaborative effort involving policymakers, administrators, faculty, and students to create a supportive and inclusive environment that fosters successful EMI experiences.

This article examines the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) as part of Tel Aviv University's (TAU) internationalization strategy, emphasizing the role of English for Purposes of International Communication (EPIC) lecturers in supporting EMI lecturers and students within the university ecosystem. The article describes the local Israeli context and, specifically, the development process of EMI support at TAU, including preliminary insights from our participation in a TEMPUS European project and then from TAU's own EMI initiatives. In addition, a brief overview of the internationalization ecosystem at TAU highlights how EMI contributes to the university's vision of global visibility and academic collaborations. The core of the article focuses on research informing the development and implementation of three EMI support models developed by the Division of Languages (henceforth the Division), which encompass three distinct approaches to EMI integration at TAU that can be tailored to the needs of specific EMI instructors and courses. It is our hope that this experience might help other institutions as they develop their own EMI support models.

The Israeli Context: The Internationalization Ecosystem at Tel Aviv University

In 2019, the Council for Higher Education in Israel (CHE) mandated that Israeli undergraduates achieving exemption level in English (B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR) take two or more EMI courses as part of the Planning and Budgeting

Committee's (VATAT) ongoing five-year plan to promote internationalization in Israeli higher education institutions (HEIs). This decision was grounded on the understanding that a higher level of English proficiency can provide students with opportunities such as understanding and publishing research published in English (Flowerdew & Habibie, 2022; Kwan, 2010); taking part in international projects, conferences, academic exchanges or joint degree programs; as well as improved career prospects and increased access to global markets (Costa & Coleman, 2013; Grin et al., 2010; Nghia et al., 2023).

Global in outlook and impact, TAU set in motion its internationalization drive long before the CHE's initiative. For years, TAU has made it a priority to foster worldwide academic collaboration, attract international students and researchers, and provide global citizenship opportunities for Israeli students and faculty, by promoting international mobility schemes and exchange initiatives, offering international undergraduate and graduate EMI study programs, and advancing an Internationalization at Home policy for the benefit of all students at TAU. The strategic thought behind these efforts is that by forging research partnerships with peer institutions in different countries, supporting joint teaching and degree opportunities, and producing more degree programs in English to accommodate exchange and international students, TAU would facilitate a more internationally diverse experience for Israeli students on campus and encourage integration of the local academic community with other cultures and mindsets. Additional courses taught in English would also enable Israeli students to improve their English proficiency and learn the specific lexicon of their respective disciplines, so as to be better equipped to function in the world of content within their field, whether in academia or in the workplace, both at home and abroad.¹

This Internationalization at Home design necessarily implies internationalizing the curriculum by increasing the number of content courses taught in English and providing adequate support systems. Conscious of the challenges of having to internationalize the Israeli student experience, TAU already required undergraduate students to complete at least one course taught in English. Hence, the added incentive from the CHE mandate, with enticing opportunities for additional funding, spurred the development of EMI initiatives that were already in place. It also

¹ Interview with the Vice President for International Affairs, Prof. Milette Shamir, and Sharon Ziv Kafri, Director of International Development at Tel Aviv University (23 February 2025).

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emphasized the need for guidelines, support mechanisms, and training for EMI lecturers, students, and administrative staff who are/will be dealing with international populations and lecturers.

Under the aegis of TAU's Rectorate since 2009, and enjoying close collaboration with faculties and departments throughout campus and across disciplines, the Division "aims to contribute to all matters and decisions involving English and other foreign languages at an institutional and national level...and to contribute our expertise and proven record to a successful implementation of TAU's internationalization initiatives."² Over the years, the strategic proximity of the Division to key stakeholders has enabled its staff to spearhead important research and initiatives that have impacted policies regarding EMI and EPIC at both institutional and national levels. The Division played a key role in the Tempus ECOSTAR Project,³ whose main objectives were to create a Framework for English Teaching in Higher Education in Israel aligned with the CEFR to conform to international standards and to provide recommendations for teaching EMI courses. Before the start of the ECOSTAR project in 2014, English instruction in most Israeli higher education institutions focused primarily on reading comprehension of academic texts, with little to no attention paid to the standardization of programs or to the potential role of EPIC departments in supporting internationalization and EMI initiatives. The pioneering role the Division played in the localization and nationwide inter-institutional implementation of CEFR alignment, and the key position deployed by the Division's leadership in TAU's communication with the representatives of the CHE responsible for English, were all greatly facilitated by the trust and support of TAU's Rectorate and the Academic Secretariat.

A combination of a proactive approach, drive for relevance, and vision pursued by the Division have bolstered its credibility within other tiers of the University's internationalization ecosystem and consolidated its standing as a valuable interlocutor and partner in all matters concerning EMI. In turn, the close working relationship with the main stakeholders responsible for TAU's internationalization efforts has expedited the development and implementation of the

² Mission Statement, Division of Languages, Tel Aviv University, in a Quality Assessment Report submitted to the CHE in August, 2017.

³ ECOSTAR: English as the Cornerstone of Sustainable Technology and Research, Project No.543683-TEMPUS-1 2013-1-IL-TEMPUS-JPCR (2013–2017).

EMI strategy that is currently being applied at TAU, and specifically the three support models that will be described in this article.

Aware of the difficulties involved in implementing and expanding EMI instruction, the Division immediately approached the relevant authorities within TAU's internationalization ecosystem with a pilot idea for a technologically enhanced support system that would help Israeli and international students overcome the English language barrier, and at the same time would help content lecturers increase the 'understandability' of their English-taught courses. This initiative, called TAU-Access, was further developed in collaboration with TAU WEBCAST and TAU International,⁴ and supported by a grant from the CHE in 2018. A key component of TAU-Access was the use of Roads to Academic Reading: <https://roads2words.iucc.ac.il/>, a unique website based on Text Analytics that enables the automatic generation of vocabulary support. This text-profiling software analyzes lecture transcripts and course reading materials, and highlights and provides translations in Hebrew, Arabic, Spanish and Chinese for high frequency academic words, as well as discipline-specific words that students must learn and which are likely to repeat themselves. Roads to Academic Reading was developed with support from the Tempus ECOSTAR Project, the Israel Ministry of Science and Technology, the Open University of Israel, the Inter-University Computation Center, and the Division.

The two mainstays of TAU's internationalization ecosystem are first, the Rectorate and Academic Secretariat, regulating all academic policies, degrees, curricula, and teacher/student matters. The Rectorate is primarily responsible for EMI policy and to which all EMI projects are submitted for approval. Second is the office of the Vice President for International Affairs, together with the Lowy International School (formerly TAU International). The latter is the main hub for global academic cooperation, centralizing all aspects of the University's internationalization undertakings, populations, and services. The Vice President for International Affairs, in charge of international academic collaborations and worldwide ties with research institutions, and the Director of International Development, liaise between the Division staff and campus-wide faculty

⁴ TAU WEBCAST, TAU's Computation Department's Video Services, provides support for learning and online study, including video footage of academic courses, lectures and events.

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in promoting, disseminating and implementing the EMI support models for an ever-growing number of EMI courses, as well as supporting various virtual exchange initiatives between TAU and a range of international partners. This is in addition to long-standing collaboration between the Division and the Director of the Lowy International School regarding accreditation, intensive summer programs offered by the University for international students, and several other common concerns.

Finally, the Office of the Dean of Innovation in Teaching and Learning, established in 2020 in response to a government call to integrate digital learning into 30% of TAU's courses, provides a coordinating framework for all online teaching activities on campus. An amalgam of the former Center for Teaching Advancement, TAU Online and Virtual TAU,⁵ it seeks to create courses that combine best teaching practices with technological infrastructure, such as the pilot Life Sciences course developed as part of the University's TAU-Access EMI support initiative that was showcased at an in-service university-wide conference organized by TAU Online in 2019. To date, the Division's fruitful partnership with the Dean of Innovation's Office has produced joint workshops on technology-based solutions for EMI, as well as the incorporation of active digital learning and technology in the Division's courses. In addition, this collaboration led to a strong involvement of the Division's staff in the recent cross campus initiative AI Communities, established to research and inform university-wide AI policies.

The Center for Language Excellence (CLE)

Without doubt, the creation of the Division's Center for Language Excellence (CLE) has been a key factor in the Division's successful praxis within TAU's ecosystem. Established in 2013 to address the complex linguistic needs and skills sets required of the academic community, the Center for Language Excellence (CLE) affords the Division the independence and space within

⁵ The Center for Teaching Advancement (<https://en-rector.tau.ac.il/Teaching-Center>) used to monitor and support the quality of teaching at TAU and provided lecturers and teaching assistants pedagogical guidance and tools to improve the teaching and learning experience; TAU Online (<https://tauonline.tau.ac.il/>), TAU's Center for Innovative Learning, harnesses technology to provide digital solutions and tailor education to the individual needs of faculty and students; Virtual TAU (<https://virtualtraining-en.sites.tau.ac.il/>) provides support for digital pedagogy.

which to experiment and from which to channel many of the initiatives that have been mentioned. It has been especially effective when dealing with EMI.

The creation of CLE emerged from the Division's persistent advocacy for writing support at TAU. After years of proposals and negotiations, a breakthrough came when the Rector's Office agreed to fund modest renovations for a dedicated space in the Division and establish a model whereby students would pay a subsidized fee for tutoring sessions.

While CLE was established primarily as a writing center, it quickly became apparent that the university community required more comprehensive language assistance. Students sought support not only for written communication but also for general language proficiency development, oral communication skills enhancement, professional language practice, and assistance with additional languages offered in the Division.⁶ Furthermore, the Center discovered that language support needs extend beyond the student population to include faculty members and administrative staff, highlighting the university-wide demand for accessible language support and resources.

In addition, CLE's reputation for excellence led to a significant partnership in 2016, when the Weizmann Institute of Science arranged for their doctoral and post-doctoral researchers to access CLE's services. This collaboration, which includes both in-person and remote sessions, demonstrated the broader academic recognition of CLE's value, with the Weizmann Institute funding three complimentary sessions for each of their researchers. In addition to inter-institutional collaboration, CLE also engages in community outreach, offering adult members of the community the opportunity to come to CLE for language needs.

Recognizing the importance of equity in language support, CLE developed a partnership with programs under the office of the Dean of Student Advancement. This collaboration specifically addresses the needs of minority students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those with special needs by providing reduced-price sessions, thus ensuring that language

⁶ The Division of Languages includes English programs (courses in English for purposes of international communication, in academic writing for MA and PhD students, BA elective courses in English skills tailored to specific schools/faculties) as well as 10 additional languages: Arabic, Russian, French, German, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Turkish and Yiddish.

support remains accessible to traditionally underserved populations within the academic community.

Today, in addition to study sessions focused on individual learning goals, CLE provides different educational formats to support learning and accommodate different learning needs. For example, upon faculty request, PhD students participate in workshops on professional and academic communication skills. These include workshops on ‘Creating an Effective Elevator Pitch,’ ‘Crafting Effective Academic Arguments,’ ‘Writing the Introduction Section to a Research Article,’ and ‘Effective Conference Presentations’. Workshops include learning principles and stylistic features, practicing writing, and peer-review feedback. In CLE, students also study in small groups of up to three students when working towards a shared study goal, such as conversation skills for different professional contexts.

Through CLE, opportunities are also available to engage in Internationalization at Home through specialized workshops with international partners. Examples include collaboration with the University of Potsdam, whereby CLE students participate in *Sprachcafés*, or language cafes, where they meet online to practice speaking a language they are learning. Additionally, with students from the University of Tsukuba, TAU students enhanced their writing abilities and developed descriptive and creative writing skills in virtual workshops. These international collaborations provide opportunities to foster cultural awareness, encourage peer review and learning, and provide valuable experience in English communication.

The evolution of CLE demonstrates how targeted academic support initiatives can grow organically to meet previously unrecognized needs across institutional boundaries. For example, at a series of meetings held in 2019-2020 with various stakeholders, including the Association of University Heads (VERA) and the Rectors’ Forum, writing center representatives from each university in Israel submitted a proposal for establishing and expanding writing centers at universities across Israel. CLE has also considered establishing a publication support system offering mentoring, support, consultation, and writing opportunities with feedback to assist students and new faculty improve their writing for submission to professional journals and conferences. As previously mentioned, unknown at the time of its establishment, CLE would

become a critical element in TAU's EMI support system. Thus, this case study purports to offer valuable insights for other academic institutions considering similar language support programs.

The Three EMI Support Models: Research, Development, and Implementation

The creation of the Division's EMI support models integrated insights from research findings from a number of studies. We will first review the research and then describe the three support models.

ECOSTAR Research (2015-2017)

As part of the development process which led to the alignment of English for Academic Purposes programs with the CEFR and the ECOSTAR *CEFR-Aligned Framework for English in Higher Education* ((Spector-Cohen et al., 2017), partners from the Division at TAU conducted a needs analysis of three key stakeholders in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) throughout Israel: students, English for Academic Purposes (EAP, as they were known before the move to EPIC) instructors, and content lecturers. The insights gleaned from the content lecturers survey helped to inform the development of our EMI support models. We will focus below on what we learned from the content lecturers (for detailed information, see Or et al., 2017).

Links to an online survey (using LimeSurvey), approved by TAU's Ethics Committee, were sent out to heads of English programs in HEIs throughout the country with a request to distribute on email distribution lists to the three stakeholders at their institutions.⁷ The survey included a brief introduction about the purpose of the survey, background about ECOSTAR, and a contact email address for those requesting additional information. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and participants were asked for their informed consent before beginning the surveys. In addition to demographic items and ranking the relative importance of CEFR can-do statements, content lecturers were asked to share their perceptions regarding EMI by ranking their

⁷ The students received links to surveys in English, Hebrew or Arabic; the EAP (as they were known at the time, before the change to EPIC) teachers survey was in English; and the content lecturers survey was in Hebrew.

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(dis)agreement with a number of statements according to a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to do not agree at all.

According to their answers on the scale, the content lecturers were quite positive regarding EMI. The overwhelming majority agreed that proficiency in English is critical in academia, and most felt that EMI courses would have little to no detrimental impact on students' Hebrew level. In addition, the majority of respondents perceived that EMI could enhance the reputation of their academic institutions. However, despite the overall positive attitude towards EMI, content lecturers worried that course contents might be watered down, a concern that is consistent with other EMI studies (*inter alia* Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Lin & Lei, 2021; Macaro et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2020).

Content lecturers were also invited to share their perspectives regarding EMI in an open additional comments item at the end of the survey. Content analysis was performed on their open answers. According to Holsti (1969), content analysis is “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p. 14). The respondents' perceptions of the benefits of EMI were similar to those already cited in the literature (*inter alia* Coleman, 2006; Guo et al., 2024; Wilkinson, 2013): e.g., addressing global 21st century needs of students; institutional prestige, economic benefits, and international exchanges; and the opportunity for students to improve their English language skills and increase future opportunities.

However, content lecturers also shared their reservations regarding EMI. Although some points are beyond the scope of this paper (e.g., ideological concerns regarding the status of Hebrew; issues of equity; and the perception that EMI might be more relevant for some fields than for others), issues of student readiness and the need for support mechanisms were a common theme among the respondents. Some of the comments were: “Students need to be taught basic skills before we require compulsory attendance in an undergraduate course in English” (original Hebrew); the need for bilingual lecturers “in case there is a gap in the lexicon the student will be able to understand” (original Hebrew); and students' lack of preparation in K-12: “As long as students don't enter academic studies with a satisfactory level of English – there is no sense in teaching content courses in English” (original Hebrew).

A number of lecturers also addressed affective factors that may play a role in the success or lack of success in EMI courses. For example, EMI requirements may “dissuade” and “intimidate” (original English) the students while at the same time there might be a potentially positive impact of the EMI experience, enhancing students’ confidence to use English. Another concern was the fear that “they [the students] don’t know English” (original English) and EMI courses would add additional stress and anxiety. Others pointed out that “the need to cope with the course tasks in reading, listening and writing would alleviate the fears that some students have of English” (original Hebrew). Lastly, when asked if content lecturers need to take responsibility for students’ English language abilities (and lack thereof), there was a reluctance to do so.

It is important to note the limitations of the study. First, the surveys included self-selected samples, who might have had particular interests in English in higher education. Second, the samples were not representative of the 63 HEIs in Israel at that time. Finally, as with all self-report measures, caution should be taken in interpreting the results.

In conclusion, despite generally positive views of EMI, content lecturers did express some reservations. These were related to student English language preparation, support for the EMI lecturer regarding both language issues and pedagogy, catering to linguistic minorities and immigrants, and the need to localize EMI models in order to cater to the specific needs of the faculty and institution.

One of the deliverables of the Tempus ECOSTAR project was [*A Handbook for English-Medium Instruction in Institutions of Higher Education in Israel*](#) (Lawrence et al., 2017). The publication has two main sections. The first discusses theoretical concepts and general background regarding EMI, while the second presents practical suggestions, classroom strategies, and support. Thus, the *Handbook* was offered to EMI instructors at TAU to address some of these issues, and it also served as a reference point for developing our models.

Research by the Division of Languages at Tel Aviv University

Following notification of EMI requirements at TAU in 2021, a team of language experts in the Division embarked on a research project to inform the development of EMI support models,

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funded by a grant from the CHE. The main research included three components: a) a literature review of EMI research, 2) an analysis of approximately 3000 student responses to open questions on archived end-of-course evaluations of EMI courses at TAU,⁸ and 3) an analysis of approximately 100 archived video-recorded EMI lectures. After preliminary development of the models, the team ran and researched EMI support pilots in an EMI course in the Life Sciences and another in the Humanities.

Student Responses to Open Questions: EMI Course Evaluations

Following a preliminary pilot study, an in-depth qualitative content analysis (Holsti, 1969) was performed on approximately 3000 anonymized student written responses to open questions on end-of-course evaluations of EMI courses at TAU, obtained from TAU's Center for Teaching Advancement. The comments received were provided as lists on an Excel file without any identification of individual informants. Therefore, we were unable to ascertain which comments belonged to which informants or whether multiple comments belonged to one informant. Content analysis was performed on the first 100 comments, and subsequently systematic random sampling was employed with every tenth student response chosen for analysis. Ten themes were identified. We will first list the 10 themes, and then discuss each theme separately, providing sample student comments as well as the pedagogical implications of the themes for teaching EMI courses.

The 10 identified themes stressed the importance of: 1) organization and detail, 2) clear and explicit assignments, 3) applying theory to practice, 4) uploading course material before and after lessons, 5) an excellent command of English and the use of highly accessible language, 6) interaction with students, 7) not presupposing background knowledge among students, 8) class

⁸ Tel Aviv University already had international EMI degree programs as well as other short-term programs for a number of decades under what was then TAU International (today the Lowy International School), and some departments had integrated EMI courses into their Hebrew-medium programs.

discussion, 9) realistic pacing and constant comprehension monitoring, and 10) using multimodal input.

1. The importance of organization and detail

Student feedback reflected the need for explicit and clear organization of the course in general and the lessons in particular. Examples of comments (translated from Hebrew unless otherwise stated) are included below. The symbol + denotes a positive comment, while - is negative.

+ The instructor's formulations were very specific with good use of the board. There were clear openings and aims at each stage...

+ The passion which XX has conveyed during the classes impressed me much, and also his efforts to manage to organize a good lesson, for he has been always trying to provide us as many vivid examples as he can in order to make the understanding (original English)

- The instructor didn't use the board well, explanations were not clear, and there was a lack of organization.

- The lecture was organized but the material was not always explained clearly enough.

The pedagogical implications for EMI courses are that both the course in general and each lesson should be clearly organized (Morell, 2020) and this should be explicitly presented to students in the course syllabus and at the beginning of each class. Furthermore, presentations and board work should be clear and detailed. Lecturers should signpost throughout the lesson and monitor student comprehension (Ismailov et al., 2021; Reus, 2020). Signposting is a type of metadiscourse, or the “interpersonal resources used to organize a discourse or the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader” (Hyland, 2000, p. 109 as cited in Hyland, 2004). When signposting (in oral or written discourse), the instructor uses words and phrases to help students navigate a lecture, follow an argument or process, understand relationships among ideas and anticipate what will come next. For example, during a lesson a lecturer might signal that s/he is ending the discussion of a given topic and beginning another by saying: “*Up to this point we’ve discussed... Now I’d like to turn to...*” Another instance of signposting is when a lecturer puts

'breadcrumbs' at the bottom of presentation slides that list the main topics of the lecture and then highlights the specific point being discussed on a particular slide. For detailed information on signposting in EMI courses see, for example, Nardo (2017).

2. The importance of clear and explicit assignments

Students mentioned that they often did not feel prepared for or thoroughly understand class assignments. Some mentioned the fact that they had little to no background knowledge regarding the genres that they were being asked to produce:

- *I would just suggest to be more specific for the final assignment as well for our all professors. They haven't been clear with the final paper assignments. (original English)*
- *More formal instructions on what we need to do for assignments. (original English)*
- *Maybe [include] a guideline for the final paper. (original English)*
- *The assignments should be formulated less vaguely/broad (original English)*
- *I think it would have been valuable to have a mentor specifically for presenting. (original English)*
- *It would be good to first teach how to write a position paper before including it as an assignment.*

Pedagogical support should be given to EMI lecturers as to how to plan and design class assignments and assessments. For example, the use of backward design (Richards, 2013) would clarify what content, skills, and strategies are prerequisites for a given assignment (Ismailov et al., 2021). Larger tasks should be divided up into clear stages and logistics presented (e.g., how to submit the task). The visual form of the task description should aid in comprehension (e.g., avoid large chunks of text and instead use graphic organizers such as bullet points or tables). Explicit and specific assessment requirements in the form of checklists and rubrics should be given to the student when the task is first introduced to the class (Ismailov et al., 2021). If possible, the lecturer should provide student exemplars from previous iterations of the course.

In addition, students and staff alike often have a limited understanding of institutional policies on academic integrity, such as plagiarism or the use of AI, leading to inconsistent

application and even tolerance of malpractice (McCulloch & Indrarathne, 2023). This highlights the need for explicit guidelines in all academic requirements, including assignments.

Finally, lecturers should not assume that students are familiar with the specific genres required and/or may need to be given specific support as to the characteristics of the task itself (e.g., position papers, poster presentations) as well as how to approach the task (Flowerdew, 2020). This can be done by having an English language expert come to class and teach a lesson tailored to the assignment that includes information about the genre and specific English language considerations for the task.

3. The importance of applying theory to practice

Students stressed the need for hands-on opportunities to apply theory to practice. Students prioritize "acquiring content knowledge and being able to put it into practice" (Ismailov et al., 2021, p. 23) as an essential learning outcome. However, a lack of practical demonstration or application of knowledge by content lecturers, often due to language deficiencies or monologic teaching, increases student dissatisfaction and disengagement (Ismailov et al., 2021). Some felt that they were ill prepared and requested practical exercises in class and not only as homework assignments, even at the cost of covering less theoretical material.

+ The course was very practical and suited to people working in the industry...the atmosphere in the lesson was wonderful, and it's clear the lecturer wanted to teach everything without pressure so the students would understand, even if it means some of the material would not be covered.

+ Hands on and active learning – integrating theory into practice effortlessly... Brilliant. (original English)

- More emphasis on practice in class - I felt I was thrown into deep water.

- The course was not very well organised: there were no practical lessons (with exercises) by default, and there was a considerable discrepancy between the theory lessons and the homeworks. Exercise classes should be introduced as a default tool. (original English)

Flipped classroom teaching is a good approach to solidify and practice content knowledge in EMI lessons, and lecturers should be encouraged to integrate this approach into relevant lessons

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(see for example, Jimenez-Munoz, 2015; Andujar, 2020). Adopting an active-student-centered approach to teaching, including problem- and task-based learning, are all ways to provide opportunities for students to deepen their learning (Ismailov et al., 2021; Molino et al., 2022; Morell, 2020).

Moreover, effective education, particularly in EMI, should prepare students to apply their knowledge and skills in real-life contexts (Goodman et al., 2024), such as becoming global engineers capable of working in any company worldwide (Reus, 2020). As one of the goals of EMI is preparing students for their future professional lives, not having the opportunity to use it in real life scenarios is seen as a waste of effort (Nghia et al., 2023).

4. The importance of uploading course material before and after lessons

Analysis of student feedback showed that posting material (e.g., discipline-specific glossaries) and guiding questions to review *before* the lesson, as well as providing summaries *after* the lesson, were critical to support their learning.

+ *The preparations for each session before the classes which consist of many guiding questions are very helpful, which made my reading more focused and clear and such that I can understand the texts deeper and more comprehensive. (original English)*

+ *The TA taught the material very clearly, and posted organized and clear summaries.*

+ *The teaching was clear and organized, the instructor's summaries helped.*

- *[The] slides were not posted to the Moodle making it harder to follow the class than it already was, including assignments that we had to do (original English)*

- *The instructor should upload summaries of the lectures because the presentations weren't detailed enough, especially because the course was in English.*

- *Every class should have a presentation, just so we have some key terms and key points for each text. (original English)*

- *Summary at the end would've been helpful. Slides or writing on the board would've helped follow the long and demanding discussions we had. (original English)*

Pedagogical support for EMI instructors should assist in making decisions about what terms, concepts, and content should be given to students before the lesson and how to consolidate learning

(e.g., use Moodle quizzes or other digital applications preferably with gamification to allow students to continuously drill terms and concepts outside the lessons) (Ismailov et al., 2021).

Lecturers should be encouraged to write a summary of each lesson and post it to students. An alternative and more engaging method is to assign 1-2 students to be responsible for writing a class summary for each lesson. The summary can then be sent to the instructor for review before being posted to students.

5. The importance of an excellent command of English and the use of highly accessible language

Many content teachers lack confidence in their English proficiency, impacting their ability to deliver courses with the same quality as in their native language (Lasagabaster, 2022). Yet, contrary to what one may expect, student feedback indicated that there were language-related issues among some of the native English-speaking EMI instructors and not only among those who were not, in both oral and written modes. Formulations were not always highly *accessible* to students. Ordinary communication involves tailoring utterances based on the speaker's or writer's assessment of the addressee's knowledge as well as the topic's accessibility (Prince, 1981). The notion of accessibility refers to the attribute of the mental entities represented by linguistic elements (see Ariel, 1985, 1990; Kirschner, 1987). Kirschner et al. (1992) define the level of accessibility as "the amount of processing addressees require in order to retrieve the entity in question from their [the addressee's] short- or long-term memories" (p. 540). An entity with high accessibility requires little processing and can be retrieved immediately, whereas one with low accessibility requires more processing. Although Ariel (1985, 1990) does not include the notion of inaccessibility in her continuum of accessibility, some mental entities are completely inaccessible because the addressee has never been exposed to them (Kirschner, 1987).

- I had difficulty understanding the material because of the English. The formulations of questions and homework were an obstacle - better to translate the questions.

-The lecturer was American and should speak more slowly. Sometimes I didn't understand what he said.

- The lecture was in English, and the instructor was not fully in control of the language. The lectures were very slow and not always clear.

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- The midterm as a multiple choice test was a bit overwhelming with the amount of information needed to review vs the number of questions, particularly when some of the questions were not understandable or had more than one way of understanding them. (original English)

The vast majority of EMI lecturers do not have any specialized knowledge of teaching English to speakers of other languages. However, lecturers should be encouraged to monitor their ‘teacher talk’ to make it as highly accessible as possible, with frequent repetition and paraphrasing. They should be aware that idiomatic language could be problematic for students, as literal translations will create confusion (Reus, 2020). For written materials, language experts can be consulted. Over time, lecturers should pay attention to what kinds of questions students ask (i.e., if it is a language vs. a content issue). Hopefully, they will develop ‘a feel’ for what is accessible and adjust their language accordingly. In addition, lecturers need to scaffold materials and signpost throughout the lesson (including interim summaries). Finally, they should frequently check for student comprehension and encourage students to ask questions if they do not understand.

Additionally, the minimum English proficiency CEFR level for EMI instructors has been widely accepted as C1: the rationale being that 1) EMI lecturers should be at least one level above B2, the requirement for students (Klaassen & Bos, 2010), and 2) C1 is the level in which academic descriptors are introduced (Dimova, 2021). However, there is a recognized need for further research to establish appropriate guidelines (Dimov, 2021; O’Dowd, 2018).

6. The importance of interaction with students

A large number of the student comments that were analyzed stressed the need for lecturers to interact with students and to show a willingness to patiently answer student questions.

+ A professor willing to help even the students who don't deserve his time. (original in English)

+ The way the lecturer related to students was excellent. He explains every single question, and continues until the student who asked the question understands.

+ The professor is very patient and willing to explain the concepts as many times as necessary in different ways, which helps with the understanding of the material. He also always took everyone's questions and tried engaging the class. (original English)

- *Organised lessons were both a good and a bad thing: teacher's answers to students' questions were a bit too often "we'll get to that". Even a short answer would be nice to satisfy our curiosity even if the question would be answered later on in the course (original English)*

- *Questions should be encouraged, not treated as an inconvenience. (original English)*

In addition to monitoring their language to make it highly accessible, lecturers should avoid relying solely on frontal lecturers and adopt active, student-centered approaches (Ismailov et al., 2021; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021, as cited in Malmström et al., 2025). This can negatively affect student engagement, concentration, and motivation (Ismailov et al., 2021). In addition, they should encourage students to ask questions, repeat and/or paraphrase the question so the rest of the class hears it, and after answering should monitor student comprehension until the point is understood.

7. The importance of not presupposing background knowledge

Some students pointed out the need to learn and review basic terms, concepts, and genres, as well as essential content and cultural information. Students' poor background knowledge, especially in STEM subjects, psychology, and research methods, can complicate the processing of new or difficult concepts. Some students also struggle with "extensive use of technical language" (Ismailov et al., 2021, p. 23) which they may not have learned in language support classes. This necessitates time-consuming strategies such as dictionary use or guessing from context. Unfortunately, there were instances when they reported that lecturers mistakenly assumed the students already knew relevant information. This point connects to the concept of *accessibility*, now in terms of what the students know regarding content and cultural issues, as well as the usefulness of uploading discipline specific glossaries before the lesson.

+ *It's great that some of the lessons were devoted to establishing more basic terms, such as the definitions of the genres and the background information about the era. It's good that there was room for discussions in class. The presentations were helpful. (original English)*

- *Many times it felt like X assumes previous knowledge about the material - this same knowledge could be explained another time for students that didn't take previous courses on X.*

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- Although I appreciate his effort selecting these news articles, I still wonder if there is a need to concentrate on merely US and UK. And as a student from non-English speaking country, I felt I need more background interpretation before I really get into [the material]. (original English)

Lecturers should make sure that students are taught basic terms and concepts and make reference to them repeatedly in class (e.g., teach/review in class and offer digital exercises and gamification to drill the material). They should also not assume that students possess sufficient content knowledge nor that they are familiar with culturally specific material. Teachers may need to adjust their approaches, for example, by using translanguaging to facilitate understanding and to prevent student frustration when encountering new concepts (Reus, 2020). Flipped classroom teaching (Jimenez-Munoz, 2015; Andujar, 2020) can enable students to independently learn about basic material and then discuss it and consolidate knowledge in class. Of course, not all prerequisite material can be addressed in class, but lecturers can offer independent study material (preferably multimodal and gamified to promote student engagement) for those who might not possess sufficient background knowledge (Aizawa et al., 2020; Ismailov et al., 2021).

8. The importance of class discussion

Many of the positive student comments related to thought-provoking class discussions that promoted and consolidated learning.

+ The lecturer's passion for the subject of the course and willingness to hear students' opinions are lovely.

+ The professor has a super relationship with the students, and encourages free thinking and creativity while keeping the material relevant. I appreciate the professor's humbleness and open door policy to students in class, and without. Remarks on assignments (original English)

+ The course content was very good, delivery was with interaction among students and lecturer. I enjoyed the classes a lot. (original English)

+ Highly organized seminar discussions are thought-invoking. The teaching material is great and straight to the learning objectives of the course (original English)

+ He is very involved with the class and incredibly strong in engaging the class in discussion and participation. The simulations are stimulating and incredibly thought provoking and insightful. (original English)

Poor English skills, cultural norms (e.g., preferring listening over speaking/arguing), and lack of opportunities due to monologic teaching hinder student participation (Lasagabaster, 2022). Once again, the importance of active student-centered learning and student and lecturer interaction enabled students to consolidate their knowledge and gain new insights. Designing activities such as “group brainstorming, pair work or debates” are examples of how university sessions can incorporate “student overt participation” (Morell, 2020, p. 82).

9. The importance of realistic pacing and constant comprehension monitoring.

Although we have touched on this issue in some of the themes above, we feel that this issue deserves a separate category, since realistic pacing (regarding both the speed of speaking and the speed with which material is presented) is particularly salient when teaching complex content in a foreign/additional language. EMI instructors should be aware that teaching in English sometimes necessitates covering less content than in L1 due to the need to reduce their speaking pace for comprehension (Goodman et al., 2024). The importance of realistic pacing was mentioned in many of the student comments.

- It would be good to slow down the pace of the lessons - the information wasn't always clear - the course was taught in English.

- The lecturer was American and should speak more slowly.

- Sometimes we skipped from one difficult concept to the next one without making sure that the majority is following. (original English).

- The course was taught in English but the lecturer doesn't understand that not everyone is a native English speaker and the pace of his speaking was too fast. It was difficult to follow him in the lesson.

- Connect more during class with the students to ensure they understand. Most of us don't understand. (original English),

- Sometimes he pushes through information too fast. (original English).

Therefore, lecturers should monitor their ‘teacher talk’ as well as adjust the pace of speaking and of the lesson to accommodate non-native English-speaking students and the entire class, respectively. As seen above, students report issues with lecturers’ speech rate being too fast;

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therefore, EMI students may find it challenging to keep up with the teacher and the content (Reus, 2020). Prolonged concentration and extra effort are required to learn and revise content in English compared to their native language (Ismailov et al., 2021). Lecturers should ask students for feedback regarding the pace of the lesson and student comprehension of the material and adjust accordingly.

10. The importance of multimodal input

As we have repeatedly suggested in the course of this discussion, lecturers should employ interactive, learner-centered modes of teaching. In their comments, many students alluded to ‘alternative’ methods of teaching that included multimodal input that promoted student engagement. Multimodality, which involves combining different modes of communication such as spoken language, written words, visual materials, and body language, is crucial for conveying and eliciting meaning, especially when content specialists may not be fully proficient in English (Morell, 2020). Effective lectures are characterized by a higher concentration of verbal and nonverbal modes of communication.

- + *Small discussions, visual learning techniques. (original English)*
- + *Interactive, uses alternative teaching methods (simulations). (original English)*
- + *His method of avoid simply frontal lecture was amazing. It was super interesting, participatory, informative and the opposite of boring. Love how he asked questions, assigned interesting readings, videos and documentaries. One of the best classes ever. (original English)*

Although the above themes gleaned from the student feedback are for the most part simply best practices in teaching in general, the need for such practices is even more critical when teaching EMI. In addition, the assumption that being an excellent lecturer and a native speaker (or highly proficient in English) is sufficient to teach EMI is flawed. Finally, we must keep in mind that most content instructors do not have a degree or extensive expertise in education and educational pedagogy. Therefore, providing them with best practices in teaching and how they intersect specifically with EMI is essential (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021; Malmström et al., 2025; O’Dowd, 2018). Good teaching performance can be enhanced by well-prepared visuals as well as the use of both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication (Lagabaster, 2022; Morell, 2020; Sun et al., 2023).

The Analysis of Archived Video-Recorded EMI Lectures


The last research component was a content analysis of approximately 100 archived video-recorded EMI lectures. In the first stage of the research, the objectives of the analysis were to identify 1) best practices in teaching and 2) potential causes of communication breakdowns, distractions, and misunderstandings. The second stage was to create transcripts of the lessons and using discourse analysis, build a database of discourse markers that signal key ‘moves’ -- essential components of effective lectures. Although a detailed discussion of the analyses of the lectures is beyond the scope of the paper, the findings not only validated best practices in teaching, but also the themes found in the student feedback described above. The themes that were especially salient in the analysis were: 1) the need for organization and detail, 2) an excellent command of English and the use of highly accessible language, 3) the need to have interactive lessons with class discussion, and 4) realistic pacing, constant comprehension monitoring and signposting (i.e., the discourse markers that signal key ‘moves’).

The EMI support models

Based on a review of the literature and the research discussed above, the Division developed three different support models for EMI courses (see Figure 1 below). The decision not to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach was the realization that such an approach would not be effective in addressing the variety of lecturer and student needs and the specific characteristics of the various EMI courses. All three models share one important feature: they emphasize best practices in teaching, including insights gleaned from the research discussed above, while at the same time addressing language-related barriers to comprehension in order to make course content as accessible as possible, without encroaching in any way on the content lecturer’s expertise. The idea is to provide lecturers with the opportunity to select any model or various elements of the models. Key considerations underlying the choice of options include class size, information density (i.e., the number of discipline-related concepts taught each week), and the nature and number of course assignments (both written and oral). Compensation for the language experts is provided within the framework of hours in CLE. Finally, student support options in CLE are also discussed with the EMI lecturer.

Figure 1 *Support models for EMI courses*

Support Models for EMI Courses



	Language Skills Courses	Combination EMI Courses	Content EMI Courses
Focus	Language skills only, centered around a specific theme	Content course with 1-3 lessons dedicated to language skills relevant for the course task(s)	Discipline-related content only
Course taught by	[information deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]	EMI instructor with 1-3 lessons taught by Division lecturers	EMI instructor
Role of Division of Languages	Course design and development, in consultation with Faculties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on materials, tasks and assessments • Pedagogical support • Vocabulary support • Developing and delivering customized language/skills based lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on materials, tasks and assessments • Pedagogical support • Vocabulary support
Learning Tasks	Ongoing portfolio of assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content-focused course assignments • Writing assignment(s) on content-related topic(s) • Oral assignment(s) on content-related topic(s) 	Discipline-related content only
Responsible for Assessment	[information deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of assignments assessed by EMI instructor • Language component of assignments assessed by Division lecturer 	EMI instructor - no language assessment
CEFR Certificate	Common European Framework - CEFR C1	Common European Framework - CEFR C1	None
Tutoring sessions in CLE (students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 or in small groups • Customized workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 or in small groups • Customized workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 or in small groups • Customized workshops

Support Model #1 – Language skills courses

The first model (see the left-hand column in **Figure 1**) focuses on the development of language skills through discipline-related content (e.g., an elective BA course for History students, *Academic Communication in the Global World*, and an MA course for students in Environmental Studies, *Communication for Environmental Studies*). These courses are designed in consultation with content experts from the relevant academic program, taught by academic staff in the Division, and offered and tailored to faculties and schools as an elective. One advantage of this model is that an ongoing portfolio of course assignments can be aligned with relevant CEFR can-do statements, and thus integrated into the assessment criteria of student work. In this way, students are offered the opportunity to be assessed at the C1 level (an opt-out option), and those who are successful receive a CEFR C1 certificate on all or

some of the modalities (reading, writing, listening and speaking) from the Division.⁹ This certificate will serve as proof of proficiency for academic programs abroad as well as for professional and workplace contexts.

See **Appendix 1** for the explanatory material given to students regarding the C1 option. Although there are very few faculties and schools who choose this option (one reason could be the reluctance to lose academic hours in their own department), each year there are several courses offered of this type.

Support Model #2 – Combination EMI courses

In the Combination EMI course model (see the middle column in **Figure 1**), the EMI lecturer designs and delivers the course. The language expert(s) works together with the EMI lecturer as consultants on a number of options that are offered; the EMI lecturer chooses which are relevant for his/her needs.

Increased comprehensibility of materials and pedagogical suggestions

Lecturers who select this option share their materials (presentations, tasks descriptions, assessments, etc.) with an expert from the Division for review (a) to identify possible language-related barriers that could cause comprehension breakdowns and (b) to suggest highly accessible language and visual formats that are clearer and easier to understand. Based on professional knowledge and experience as well as the implications gleaned from our research, the following examples of pedagogical considerations can be discussed with the EMI lecturer: the advantages of backward design in task development, multimodality of materials, clear assessment requirements with specific objectives and assessment rubrics, signposting, and sufficient scaffolding and detail.

Vocabulary support

⁹ EMI courses at TAU are taught exclusively in English, and all tasks and assessments are in English. Due to the high English demands on students (e.g., authentic academic articles written for other researchers), after consultation with the EMI lecturer on course materials and the student's performance, students who opt for the C1 certificate will automatically receive a C1 for reading and listening.

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Lecturers can consult with language experts regarding which vocabulary/terms should be explicitly presented to students (for example, vocabulary software such as *Roads to Academic Reading* can be used to analyze lecturers' slides and identify general high-frequency academic vocabulary that appears most frequently in academic discourse across a wide range of academic disciplines). At the same time, glossaries of lower frequency discipline-specific terms and concepts can be prepared by the lecturer/TA. Students can be provided with vocabulary lists with translations and/or explanations on the course Moodle site every week for students to access before class instead of disrupting concentration to look up unfamiliar words during the lesson. As such, we also address themes found in our research: namely, lecturers should not presuppose background knowledge, should use highly accessible language, and make sure students are taught basic terms and concepts. In addition, it mirrors the importance of frontloading important concepts before the lesson and, when relevant, including them in summaries after the lesson.

Language- and skills-based lessons

EMI lecturers who assign oral and/or written tasks in English as part of their course requirements can choose to include per task one lesson or part of a lesson tailored to the specific requirements of the task, taught by the language expert. For example, if the course includes a short research paper or a poster presentation, after consultation with the EMI lecturer, the language expert teaches the characteristics of the genre as well as the language chunks and skills required to succeed in the task. This addresses a variety of themes gleaned from the research, such as the importance of clear assignments and assessment criteria, including formal instruction on how to complete the task (e.g., teaching how to write a position paper before assigning students to write one).

C1 certificate

The EMI instructor can decide to offer students the opportunity to achieve a C1 certificate (see **Appendix 1**). This is usually done together with language- and skills-based lessons, when the language expert teaches a tailor-made lesson. However, here again, the English language expert benchmarks the task and includes the relevant CEFR can-do statements in the assessment rubric. The EMI instructor assesses the content and any other non-language criteria, while the language component is assessed by the language expert. Those who successfully complete the task receive a C1 certificate in the relevant mode(s).

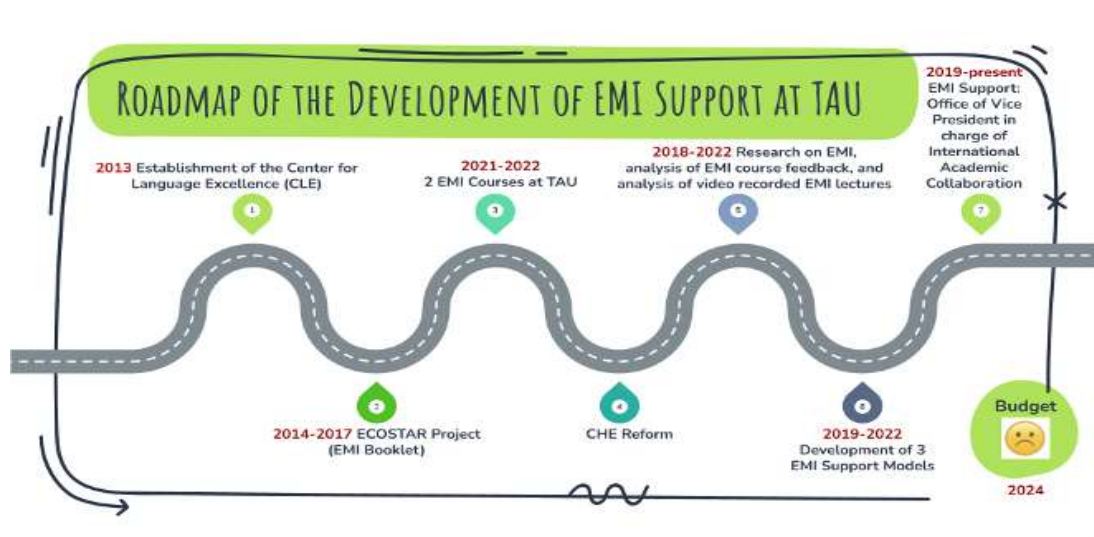
Support Model #3 – Content EMI courses

In the Content EMI course model (see the right-hand column in **Figure 1**), the language expert works exclusively behind the scenes to provide support options requested by the EMI lecturer: vocabulary support, pedagogical support, and/or consultation on materials and task design. In this model, there is no option to receive a C1 certificate.

To disseminate these options, in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President in charge of International Academic Collaboration, EMI instructors were identified and sent information about the support offered by the Division. Interested instructors scheduled a preliminary meeting with a representative from the Vice President's office and language experts from the Division to explore support options. Once the type of support was agreed upon, the instructor was paired with a language instructor. The budget for EMI support was given within the framework of the CHE reform and ended in 2024.

In summary, the development timeline, starting from the establishment of CLE in 2013 to the 2024-2025 academic year, is outlined in **Figure 2** below.

Figure 2 The roadmap of the development of EMI support at Tel Aviv University



Limitations and Future Directions

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One critical limitation of our support models is the problem of scalability. Although we undoubtedly feel that the most effective EMI support is tailored one-on-one collaboration between the language expert and the EMI instructor, we have neither sufficient staff hours in the Division nor the willingness on the part of all EMI instructors at TAU to seek support. An additional limitation is that the EMI instructors who did choose to consult were a self-selected group; i.e., they were already successful lecturers who chose to continue their professional growth as educators, and could be considered as early adopters. Another constraint is that the budget received from the CHE reform ended in 2024; thus, additional avenues of funding need to be explored. Finally, it became increasingly apparent that there was a need for someone to oversee and coordinate all aspects of EMI at the institution, and therefore a new position needed to be created at TAU.

In efforts to reach EMI instructors and improve scalability, the office of the Dean of Innovation in Teaching and Learning, in collaboration with the Division, offered an online workshop for EMI instructors. The workshop discussed teaching strategies to support students' comprehension of content with the aim of reducing students' cognitive load during the lesson. Bringing awareness of the need to use accessible language such as repetition, clear pronunciation, and avoiding idiomatic language, was exemplified. Clear signposting was also suggested and modeled throughout the workshop, as well as ways to signpost both verbally and visually. Front-loading content (key terms, or contextual information) was suggested, and examples of gamifying content and self-access exercises to consolidate learning were also shared. Additionally, a written summary of the lesson with important reminders about where to locate material or resources, homework assignments, or preparation for the next lesson, was also discussed with the aim of reducing students' cognitive load in lessons. Finally, students' success on assignments is oftentimes negatively affected by their inability to understand the requirements and expectations of an assignment, and not due solely to language constraints. Therefore, in the last part of the workshop, lecturers participated in an exercise in which they analyzed an assignment to evaluate its clarity and accessibility. Considerations for task design and rubrics for assessment were discussed as means to enhance clarity and expectations on assignments. Although the number of registrants was low, the feedback received was quite positive.

Information and recommendations regarding EMI were posted on the TAU website of the Dean of Innovation in Teaching and Learning (in Hebrew). In addition, a new position was created to oversee EMI at TAU, and in 2025 the position was filled. At the time of writing this article, preliminary meetings were already held to acquaint the new director with EMI initiatives at the university and additional meetings are being held to discuss and provide consultation for the director's initiatives.

Recommendations

Designing and implementing EMI support models in your institution can be a daunting task. The following section includes suggestions that could facilitate the process.

Address the lack of a clear and consistent definition of EMI within institutions. The absence of a shared understanding of what constitutes EMI can lead to inconsistencies in implementation and hinder the establishment of best practices. Therefore, institutions should strive to define EMI clearly within their own context, considering factors such as the prerequisite English proficiency level of students to participate in EMI courses, policies for choosing lecturers and courses for EMI, and a clear language policy (e.g., all course work must be in English, or regarding the use of translanguaging in the classroom).

Recognize the importance of Internationalization at Home. The collaboration through CLE with international partners such as the University of Potsdam and the University of Tsukuba to offer language cafes and virtual workshops demonstrates how such initiatives can foster intercultural communication and provide valuable English communication practice for local students. Institutions can explore and promote such opportunities. In addition, English courses in the EPIC program should include Internationalization at Home opportunities such as Virtual Exchange projects or joint courses.

Develop EMI support models informed by research and needs analysis. The creation of the Division's three EMI support models was directly linked to research findings, including the ECOSTAR project's needs analysis of students, EPIC instructors, and content lecturers, as well as the Division's own research involving student feedback on EMI courses and EMI lecture analysis.

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This highlights the importance of basing EMI support on empirical evidence and understanding the specific needs of stakeholders and the particular institutional context.

Professionalize the EPIC department regarding EMI. Instructors in the EPIC department should engage in continuous professional development regarding EMI in general, and the role of language experts in providing and supporting EMI and other Internationalization at Home initiatives at the institution. At the same time, it is critical that English language experts meet with their administration and highlight their critical role in supporting Internationalization at Home initiatives across campus.

Consider the various models of EMI support and their applicability. The Division's development of three distinct support models – Language Skills courses, Combination EMI courses, and Content EMI courses – demonstrates that a one-size-fits-all approach is not ideal. Institutions should explore different models and adapt or combine elements based on their specific context, resources, class sizes, and the needs of their instructors and students.

Actively seek collaboration between language experts and content lecturers. The Combination and Content EMI course models at TAU emphasize the role of language experts from the Division working in consultation with content instructors. This collaboration can help to identify and address language-related barriers in course materials, provide pedagogical suggestions, and offer vocabulary support. It may be worth approaching deans or heads of department directly in order to obtain their support. They might offer incentives to encourage reluctant content lecturers to rise to the challenge of EMI instruction.

Focus on enhancing teacher preparedness for EMI. Content lecturers often lack confidence and specific training in general pedagogy, so the added burden of being forced to teach in English makes it imperative for institutions to establish an EMI support system. This means adapting pedagogy to the specific challenges of teaching in a foreign language, such as the need for increased signposting, frequent comprehension monitoring and repetition, as well as frontloading vocabulary and concepts, while also relating to specific aspects of English that can hinder comprehension (e.g., idiomatic language and, specifically for Hebrew and Arabic speakers, the use of reduced relative clauses in English, which in the L1 are governed by morphological and syntactic rules that do not allow for one-to-one equivalents). Classroom observation research by

Lasagabaster & Doiz (2021), as cited in Malmström et al., 2025) indicates that EMI instruction is often “teacher-focused (characterized by monologic and transmissive teaching) rather than student-focused (enabling dialogic and engaged learning)” (p. 1), thus potentially leading to superficial learning. In a survey of 70 European universities, O’Dowd (2018) found that although most institutional EMI training included strategies for developing communicative skills, over 50% did not include training on CLIL teaching methodology. Institutions should invest in professional development opportunities and support models that go beyond simply translating materials and focus on adapting teaching styles to be more interactive and student-centered in an EMI environment (Ismailov et al., 2021; Lasagabaster, 2022; Molino et al. 2022; Morell, 2020; Sun, 2023). This should also include clarifying expectations regarding English language proficiency for EMI teachers. Self-access material on EMI for lecturers that include the institutional policy for EMI courses, concrete suggestions for teaching, resources, and information on support options can be posted on the institution’s website.

Prioritize student preparedness for EMI courses. Many students may lack the necessary English proficiency and familiarity with academic discourse in English. In addition to action-oriented English language courses in the EPIC program that include Internationalization at Home opportunities, institutions should consider providing support mechanisms, such as pre-sessional language courses and a tutoring center (Dearden, 2014, Hoang, 2025; Ismailov et al., 2021).

Set up a tutoring center. Establishing a tutoring center such as CLE can serve a variety of functions (Meijer & de Jong, 2021; Takeuchi & Ruegg, 2022), especially because the quality of students’ writing has been shown to be significantly correlated with their overall content score (Roothoof et al., 2025). These centers can serve as language brokers, navigating university language policies and promoting language development (Kaufhold & Yencken, 2021). One-on-one and/or group tutoring sessions can meet the language needs of students (Matikainen, 2024), EMI instructors, and administrative staff. In addition to in-person support on campus, offering long-distance sessions on Zoom can help reach a wider audience. Furthermore, staff can develop workshops that are responsive to specific academic challenges, such as writing, study skills, time management, and discipline-specific needs. These workshops are often tailored to different student populations, including adult learners, first-generation students, and those requiring additional support

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(Schneider & Hiskey, 2024), and provide relevant resources. Moreover, such a tutoring center can serve as the budgetary framework by which language specialists can be compensated for tutoring and for EMI support.

Secure dedicated and sustainable funding for EMI support. The CHE funding for EMI support at TAU ended in 2024, highlighting the need for institutions to find ongoing funding avenues to ensure the sustainability of their EMI initiatives.

Address the challenges of scalability in EMI support initiatives. While tailored, one-on-one support may be most effective, it may not be scalable in large HEI's. Institutions need to explore additional methods to reach a larger number of EMI instructors, such as online workshops, self-access modules for lecturers, and resource sharing. Furthermore, developing a centralized support system ensures that those involved in EMI support (both academic and administrative bodies) work together efficiently. Finally, consider creating a position for overseeing and coordinating EMI initiatives at the institution.

Disseminate EMI support initiatives. As TAU is a very large and diversified HEI, disseminating EMI support initiatives can be difficult. Explore ways to inform students and staff about the EMI support offered; sending messages on institutional listserv groups, posting information on course sites, meeting with the deans of faculties and heads of schools, and establishing an active presence on social media such as on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram are all ways to reach students and staff.

Conclusion

The case of TAU highlights the complexity of implementing and supporting EMI effectively and emphasizes the need for institutions to adopt a strategic and research-informed approach that is suitable to their respective ecosystems. The research findings show that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient; instead, the three support models developed by the Division illustrate how tailored frameworks, based on student and lecturer feedback and institutional needs analyses, can successfully promote both content-specific learning and academic skills in English. Such initiatives prioritize accessibility, pedagogical effectiveness, and most importantly, active collaboration involving language experts, institutional leadership, policymakers, administrators,

faculty, and students. This enables the creation of flexible environments where EMI can thrive and ensures equitable and effective learning experiences for all students.

At the same time, issues of scalability, sustainability, and lecturer preparedness remain pressing concerns that require commitment, funding, and dedicated resources. Ultimately, the success of EMI initiatives depends not only on language proficiency but also on cultivating inclusive teaching practices, fostering professional development, strengthening institutional support for lecturers and students, and weaving internationalization into the fiber of academic culture. The establishment of dedicated centers such as CLE, creating new EMI enhancement positions, and pursuing continued academic, digital, and international collaborations are strategies that can ensure long-term viability.

In sum, EMI should be seen as a catalyst for rethinking pedagogy, curriculum design, and even internationalization itself. This valuable case study provides insights into the advantages and challenges of integrating internationalization into higher education's evolving landscape. At the same time, it demonstrates how thoughtful design and research-informed practice can transform EMI from a policy requirement into an opportunity for meaningful academic innovation that enhances both local learning outcomes and global engagement. It is a call to action for other HEIs to develop localized and well-researched support models that foster EMI instruction. It is our hope that our EMI experience at the TAU may serve as a roadmap for the creation of effective and sustainable EMI frameworks and encourage others to pick up the gauntlet and set out on the road to successful EMI implementation.

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Appendix 1: Obtaining a C1 Certificate in English

What is a C1 certificate and how can you obtain one?

The Division of Languages at Tel Aviv University, together with your course instructor, is offering students in your course the opportunity to receive a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) C1 Level certificate in English. Below please find information about the CEFR, how you can obtain this C1 certificate, and how this can help you.

What is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)?

The CEFR is a set of standards and concepts for the teaching and assessment of foreign languages. It is now being used in over 120 countries throughout the world, including in Israel.

The CEFR describes what a learner can do at six specific levels:

- Basic User (A1 and A2)
- Independent User (B1 and B2)
- Proficient User (C1 and C2)

At the end of this document, you can find the CEFR Global Scale, which gives you a general idea of what a language learner can do with the language at each level.

Please watch the video [Understanding the CEFR](#). This will give you a general understanding of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

How can a C1 certificate help you?

A certificate of your CEFR level in English can be used as proof of proficiency for exchange and academic programs abroad, as well as for professional and work contexts. Proof of English proficiency according to the CEFR is increasingly becoming a requirement in many academic and work contexts.

How you can obtain a C1 certificate?

If you successfully complete **all** the assignments in this course, including the written tasks and oral presentations, you will receive a C1 certificate in English for reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The CEFR Global Scale

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, p. 24. Accessed from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf.

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