



香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

專業 創新 胸懷全球
Professional · Creative
For The World

CityU Scholars

Students' Experiences of English-Medium Instruction at the Postgraduate Level Challenges and Sustainable Support for Success

Moorhouse, Benjamin Luke; Wan, Yuwei

Published in:
Sustainability

Published: 01/02/2023

Document Version:

Final Published version, also known as Publisher's PDF, Publisher's Final version or Version of Record

License:
CC BY

Publication record in CityU Scholars:

[Go to record](#)

Published version (DOI):

[10.3390/su15043243](https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043243)

Publication details:

Moorhouse, B. L., & Wan, Y. (2023). Students' Experiences of English-Medium Instruction at the Postgraduate Level: Challenges and Sustainable Support for Success. *Sustainability*, 15(4), Article 3243.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043243>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on CityU Scholars is the Post-print version (also known as Accepted Author Manuscript, Peer-reviewed or Author Final version), it may differ from the Final Published version. When citing, ensure that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination and other details.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the CityU Scholars portal is retained by the author(s) and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights. Users may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.

Publisher permission



Permission for previously published items are in accordance with publisher's copyright policies sourced from the SHERPA RoMEO database. Links to full text versions (either Published or Post-print) are only available if corresponding publishers allow open access.

Take down policy

Contact lbscholars@cityu.edu.hk if you believe that this document breaches copyright and provide us with details. We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Article

Students' Experiences of English-Medium Instruction at the Postgraduate Level: Challenges and Sustainable Support for Success

Benjamin Luke Moorhouse * and Yuwei Wan 

Department of Education Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, China

* Correspondence: blmoorhouse@hkbu.edu.hk

Abstract: More and more students are exploring overseas destinations and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) environments for their postgraduate studies. While it is known that students can often struggle in an EMI environment, the challenges faced by postgraduate students, and the support they receive or need, are not fully understood. By adopting a two-stage qualitative sequential data collection approach, this study explored the experiences and perceptions of full-time postgraduate students from Mainland China studying in a one-year Master of Education programme at a Hong Kong university during their first semester. Data were collected through an online survey ($N = 73$) and three in-depth group interviews ($N = 12$). The analysis of data offered a holistic understanding of the students' challenges, needs, and struggles. The findings provide suggestions for support that teachers and programmes can provide to postgraduate students, as well as student self-help support strategies. Several sustainable support strategies are proposed to assist students in adjusting and succeeding in the EMI context at the postgraduate level.

Keywords: English-Medium Instruction (EMI); postgraduate students; Hong Kong; Mainland China; higher education; EMI challenges; EMI sustainable support strategies



Citation: Moorhouse, B.L.; Wan, Y. Students' Experiences of English-Medium Instruction at the Postgraduate Level: Challenges and Sustainable Support for Success. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 3243. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043243>

Academic Editors: Jack Pun, Fan Fang and Nathan Thomas

Received: 17 January 2023

Revised: 8 February 2023

Accepted: 8 February 2023

Published: 10 February 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

An increasing number of students are exploring overseas destinations and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) environments for their postgraduate studies. Many of these students have attended undergraduate programmes conducted in their first language (L1). However, once overseas, they can find themselves in a fully EMI environment for the first time. Marcaro defines the phenomenon of EMI as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” [1] (p. 19). Richards and Pun expand the definition to include “the use of English in multilingual postcolonial societies where it serves as an official language and as an academic lingua franca in education and may also function as a community lingua franca alongside other local and official language” [2] (p. 228). EMI is considered different from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). EMI programmes and courses do not have explicit language learning aims, while CLIL ones generally do. EMI is the primary approach adopted in higher education globally, while CLIL is often found in primary and secondary schools, particularly in Europe [1].

There has been a significant increase in universities adopting EMI globally [3]. In Hong Kong, although English is an official language, universities can be considered EMI based on Richards and Pun's definition. In addition, the vast majority of the Hong Kong population consider Cantonese—a Chinese dialect—as their L1, while the majority of Mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong consider Mandarin Chinese as their L1. Although some Mainland Chinese students may have received EMI in their pre-tertiary

and undergraduate studies, this could be limited to specific subjects and courses. It is often referred to as partial EMI mode (Partial EMI) [4].

There has been an increasing amount of research investigating the EMI phenomenon. Studies have explored reasons for the expansion of EMI [5], the relationship between EMI and academic success [3,6], and students and teachers' beliefs about EMI [7–9]. However, most studies have explored EMI at the undergraduate level [10]. There has been limited research exploring postgraduate students' experiences of EMI.

Postgraduate students are distinctly different from undergraduates. Students are typically older and come with a diverse range of previous educational and work experiences. Students need an undergraduate degree in order to study for a postgraduate degree. These could be from different universities in different countries, offering courses in different languages, including learners' L1 or English. Usually, postgraduate programmes are shorter than undergraduate programmes, lasting approximately one to two years of full-time study, and they are often self-funded. The content of the programmes tends to be more advanced than an undergraduate degree, requiring a higher level of understanding, greater independence, and more specialist knowledge and skills pertaining to university education—e.g., academic writing [11]. As a result, postgraduate degree holders tend to be considered more highly qualified. Often students choose to engage in postgraduate studies to give them a competitive advantage in the workforce, increase the chance of promotion, develop their subject knowledge, or as a prerequisite for doctoral-level studies [12].

This study, by exploring the experiences and perceptions of one cohort of full-time postgraduate Mainland Chinese students during their first semester studying for a one-year Master of Education (MEd) degree in English for Language Teaching (ELT) at an EMI Hong Kong university, aimed to understand better the challenges associated with studying in an EMI context at the postgraduate level, and to propose possible sustainable support strategies that can help such students succeed. The focus on MEd: ELT students can shed light on the challenges faced by an overlooked group, postgraduate students at EMI universities [11], and how they can be sustainably supported to adjust and succeed in an EMI context. In addition, it can help us consider the often challenged but common belief that language proficiency is the primary prerequisite for learning academic subject content (i.e., education theories, linguistic knowledge, and pedagogical skills) in English [2]. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What challenges do postgraduate students face when attending an EMI university?
2. What support strategies can be used to help postgraduate students adjust and succeed in an EMI university?

The findings can raise EMI university postgraduate programme leaders and course instructors' awareness of the challenges their postgraduate students may encounter in adjusting and succeeding in EMI contexts, while also proposing sustainable support strategies that they can implement to increase students' success.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tertiary EMI in Mainland China and Hong Kong

Since the early 2010s, there has been a large expansion of EMI in many countries and regions, including Mainland China and Hong Kong [1,13,14]. It has been acknowledged that EMI is an important means to improve the quality of university teaching and increase the internationalisation of institutions [15], as well as to enhance the competitiveness of graduates in the global market [16]. Mainland China began to implement EMI in tertiary education at the beginning of the 21st century with many Chinese universities receiving strong policy support [17]. This led EMI programmes to mushroom. In the Mainland China context, EMI is perceived as a supplement to traditional college English teaching to acquire content knowledge and improve English language proficiency [13]. There is no consensus on the definition or form of EMI in Mainland China [1,4,13]. In many institutions, English is used for core programme courses, while other courses are delivered in Chinese, such as some mandatory Chinese history or politics courses. Often individual instructors will

supplement English instructions with translations or materials in L1. This can be described as partial EMI [4]. However, in Mainland China, the vast majority of university programmes are taught primarily in Mandarin Chinese, with only English-language-related courses, or other language-related courses, offered in English or the target language, respectively. Therefore, graduates from Mainland universities may have limited exposure to EMI before attending postgraduate studies.

In Hong Kong, the situation is quite different [18]. English is one of the official languages and the dominant instructional language in tertiary education. Most university courses are offered exclusively in full EMI mode with the primary goal of teachers being to develop students' subject content knowledge with less focus placed on their language proficiency [4]. For Mainland Chinese postgraduate students entering Hong Kong universities, this may create unexpected challenges as they adapt to the new learning environment [1,19].

2.2. EMI at the Postgraduate Level

Most current EMI studies focus primarily on students at the undergraduate level, but postgraduate students differ from undergraduates in many aspects, including age, educational background, work experiences, learning styles, attitudes, and language proficiency levels [20,21]. The length of undergraduate studies is around three to four years, while a typical postgraduate programme lasts only one to two years, giving students an intensive curriculum and high academic demands [1,11]. Postgraduate students are often assumed to have more expertise, knowledge, and related academic skills than undergraduates, so they may receive less support in their induction into the university [22]. A survey of postgraduate students in the UK found that more than 80% of international participants reported challenges in transitioning to their postgraduate studies and the new learning context [11]. The challenges include unfamiliar teaching approaches, language use, and academic writing. In a study conducted at a university in Macau [23], several students from Mainland China, whose first degrees were English-related, considered EMI at the postgraduate level extremely challenging. The full EMI context required them to adjust to "varying accents and speaking speeds" as their teachers had different language backgrounds (p. 17). These experiences contrasted with the students' undergraduate studies, where their teachers would provide Chinese elaboration when necessary. The findings of Yuan et al. indicates the necessity to view postgraduates as a different group from undergraduates experiencing EMI [24].

2.3. Students' Experiences and Perceptions of EMI

A plethora of literature has investigated students' experiences and perceptions of EMI in tertiary education [10,19,24,25]. Generally, students show positive attitudes toward the adoption of EMI [20,25,26]. However, in Zhang and Pladevall-Ballester's study [25], it was found that students' attitudes changed over time throughout the EMI learning process, and the challenges they faced could negatively affect their experiences. Similarly, students in Yuan's study reported their emotional change from excitement to confusion and frustration when taking EMI courses [24].

Students' challenges in EMI classes are generally associated with the new learning environment [11,24], content knowledge [1,27] and language proficiency [10,28]. In terms of learning adaptation, many students faced "great shock and unease" in the transitioning process [24] (p. 7). Soruc and Griffiths collected students' difficulties in a Turkish EMI university through open-ended questionnaires [10]. The authors identified four key categories of difficulties students encountered, namely, "speaking and listening"; "teacher and class"; "vocabulary"; and "affective/cognitive difficulties" (p. 4). Pun and Jin also synthesised three common language challenges, including communicating with professors and classmates, and logical writing [19]. It was found that students with less prior experience of EMI might face more language-related difficulties than others, especially in dealing with productive tasks such as academic writing. Instead of concentrating on language-related difficulties, some studies explored other factors that could hinder students' EMI learn-

ing [19,27]. The factors include the extra energy and long-time concentration needed in an EMI environment, instructors' new approaches, and content knowledge, comprehension, and application.

2.4. Support Strategies in EMI

A small but growing number of studies have suggested support strategies for different stakeholders to address students' challenges at the tertiary level. When facing learning challenges, students' self-help strategies play an essential role in overcoming the struggles. Guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory [29], Yu et al. noted the use of L1-mediated, L2-mediated, tool-mediated, and community-mediated strategies in helping students cope with EMI difficulties [30]. As the L1 of all the students was Chinese, the positive role of Chinese language in assisting students in comprehending the content knowledge was emphasised. Students could read textbooks translated into Chinese and use Chinese to communicate with classmates and native Chinese teachers after class. Soruc and Griffiths interviewed seven EMI students to find out their strategies to address corresponding challenges [10]. As most students were aware of their own language "inadequacies", they utilised several strategies to help them succeed in the EMI context, i.e., "asking questions", "using prior knowledge", "guessing from context", "using visuals", etc. (p. 8). It is interesting to find that some students tried to not only manage their own learning, but also to manage the learning environment and motivate their instructors by taking notes or sitting at the front. Moreover, Soruc and Griffiths pointed out the importance of teachers being aware of students' challenges and providing effective strategies to support students' learning [10].

After identifying teachers' challenges in EMI teaching, Pun and Thomas reported several strategies from teachers' perspectives [31]. Similar to the technique used by students, teachers used L1 (Cantonese) to consolidate students' knowledge comprehension. In dealing with difficulties in texts, teachers "highlight the key point" or "rearrange the order of topics" (p. 252). The use of the flipped classroom mode was also stated to enhance students' content learning both at home and in class. To help teachers better implement EMI at different stages of teaching, Richards and Pun provided a list of strategies that teachers can use before, during, and after EMI to cope with pedagogic, linguistic, affective, and learner factors [2]. In terms of programme support, the opening of intensive English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses is recommended to help EMI students across the English language barrier [28].

Nevertheless, most current studies only provide strategies from the perspective of teachers or policymakers themselves without considering students' perspectives on what teachers or programmes could do to support them. Students, as the main recipients of education in EMI, also have valuable perspectives to share about their experiences of EMI at the postgraduate level. Therefore, the current study offers an understanding of postgraduate students' challenges and needs, identifying teacher support, programme support, and students' self-help strategies in an EMI university. The study aims at contributing to the limited literature on EMI study at the postgraduate level and illuminating future EMI teaching practices and programme development.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study is qualitative in nature. Adopting a qualitative approach allowed the researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the participants' lived experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon being studied: students' experiences of EMI at the postgraduate level. A two-stage design was adopted using a qualitative online survey and follow-up group interviews. The two-stage design allowed a more holistic understanding and description of students' experiences than using a single method [32]. Furthermore, it allowed for "rich and complex accounts of the type of sense-making of participants" [33] (p. 1) and, therefore, helped explore participants' lived experiences. The second stage

allowed the researchers to further explore and expand on the themes generated in the first stage, which is not possible in single-method studies [34]. This makes this research model preferred for the exploratory nature of this study.

3.2. The Research Context

Hong Kong universities have a long history of EMI. However, over the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of students from Mainland China choosing to study at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Hong Kong [35]. In some institutions and programmes, students of Mainland Chinese origin account for the majority of students at the postgraduate level. The programme in focus, a Master of Education in English Language for Teaching (MED: ELT) is one such programme. It is offered in full EMI mode [1] with students taking a total of nine courses (or seven courses and a dissertation) within one-year of full-time study. The programme includes courses in Phonetics and Phonology; Lexis, Morphology, and Semantics; Grammar for Teaching; Written and Spoken Discourse, as well as electives, such as child development, sociolinguistics, and research methods. Although English language teaching is the subject of study, the aim of the programme is not for students to learn English but rather to acquire useful knowledge for teaching English at the primary and secondary levels. This satisfies Richards and Pun's definition of EMI while also being an interesting context for exploration [4]. The 2022–2023 programme intake consisted of 77 students, all from various provinces in Mainland China.

3.3. Participants

All 77 students enrolled in the MEd: ELT programme were invited to participate in the study. Of the 77, a total of 73 completed the survey. The survey participants had the following characteristics:

- Seven identified as male, and 66 identified as female. The programme has an uneven ratio of female to male students. This reflects the English-language teaching profession in Mainland China.
- Participants were between 20 and 34 years of age, with the mean age of 24.
- All participants were in the first semester of the programme and were taking five courses simultaneously. Each course was taught by a different lecturer.
- All students were required to take the IELTS exam as part of the admissions requirements. Their overall band score ranged between 6.5 and 8, with the mean score being 6.79.
- Most of the participants (82%) had studied an 'English-related programme' for their undergraduate degrees, such as English Literature, Business English, English Education, or Translation and Interpretation. The remaining participants (18%) studied 'non-English-related' programmes. These included material moulding, Preschool Education, International Business, Thai, Japanese, Communication, Accounting, Economy, Finance, Logistic Management, and International Economics and Trade.
- Despite the large number of students who studied English-related courses, when asked what percentage of their undergraduate studies were conducted in English, their responses suggest that most of them studied in partial EMI contexts. On average, 50–60% of their undergraduate courses were taught in English.
- A total of 45 participants had previous work experience, while the remaining 28 did not.

Interview participants included 12 students who completed the survey. These included three male students and nine female students. See Table 1 for their demographic information. Participants could self-nominate for the follow-up interview by leaving their names and emails at the end of the survey. Thirty self-nominated for the follow-up interview with 12 selected to participate. The interview participants were purposefully selected to represent a diversity of backgrounds and characteristics (e.g., English- and non-English-related undergraduate programmes, work experience, gender, and age). One group consisted of students with non-English-related undergraduate degrees, while the other two groups had

English-related undergraduate degrees. The groupings were designed to help us probe more deeply into the similarities and differences between students with diverse previous educational experiences (English and non-English degree majors), while providing space for students to build on the responses of others with similar education experiences.

Table 1. Interview participants' demographic information.

Group Interview	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Major of First Degree	IELTS/TOEFL Score
1	Peter	Male	23	Japanese	6.5
1	Olivia	Female	26	Communication	82 (TOEFL)
1	Winnie	Female	25	Finance	7
1	Evelyn	Female	25	International economics and trade	7
2	Liam	Male	25	English	7.5
2	Ellie	Female	22	English (Translation)	6.5
2	Willow	Female	23	English (Translation)	7
2	Layla	Female	34	English	6.5
3	Allen	Male	20	English	7
3	Chloe	Female	22	Business English	7
3	Madison	Female	21	English (Education)	7
3	Caroline	Female	23	Business English	7

Informed consent was obtained from all participants by way of consent statements with students confirming agreement through a tick box on the survey, and signing a consent statement before the follow-up group interviews. All participants are referred to by pseudonyms. Ethical approval was granted by the Hong Kong Baptist University Human Research Ethics Committee (REC/22-23/0058).

As the participants were recruited through convenience sampling, it allows for greater discussion of the context of the study; however, it is important to recognise that it may limit the transferability of the findings to other EMI contexts [36].

3.4. Data Collection

As has been previously stated, the study adopted a two-stage qualitative sequential design. Data was collected using the following research tools:

3.4.1. Stage 1: Survey

A qualitative survey was purposefully developed to address the RQs and collect a holistic overview of the students' experiences in the EMI environment. The researchers reviewed relevant literature when constructing the survey instrument [10]. The survey included demographic information and open-ended questions pertaining to student challenges, experiences, and suggestions for support that could be provided (see Appendix A for the relevant survey items). The survey was piloted by three PhD students with backgrounds similar to those of the target participants currently studying in an EMI institution to check if it achieved the study's aims and had face validity [36]. After piloting, the survey was modified for content, clarity, and comprehensiveness to increase the face validity. It was then revised and disseminated electronically to the participants in November 2022. The survey was designed to take about 20 min to complete. Participants were able to respond in English or Chinese depending on their preferences.

3.4.2. Stage 2: Group Interviews

Follow-up group interviews were arranged to help the researchers explore more deeply the participants' responses to the survey. In total, three group interviews were conducted

with four students in each group ($N = 12$). Two groups were made up of students who studied 'English-related' programmes for their undergraduate studies. One group included students who studied 'non-English related' programmes. By arranging group interviews with participants who represented different majors, we are able to better understand the experiences, challenges, and suggestions for support of students with different lived experiences. Conducting two group interviews made up of participants with previous English-language-related degrees allowed for comparison between the responses of the two groups during data analysis. Only one group of non-English majors was conducted due to the ratio of the non-English and English-related majors of the participants in the EMI programme studied.

Group interviews allowed participants to expand and elaborate on other group members' contributions, or provide alternative perspectives [37]. An interview guide was purposefully created (see Appendix B). Questions and prompts drew from the themes identified in Stage One. For example, a list of challenges was generated from the survey data, and these challenges were correspondingly included as prompts for discussion during the interviews. The guide provided an initial structure to the interviews. However, follow-up prompts and questions were asked in response to participants' contributions. Each group interview lasted between 60 and 90 min and was transcribed. Interviews were conducted in English with participants given the opportunity to respond in Chinese depending on their preferences.

3.4.3. Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed inductively using the thematic analysis qualitative analytic method proposed by Braun and Clarke [38] in three stages. In the first stage, the survey data were analysed and coded, which led to the development of the interview guide. Then the interview data were analysed. Finally, the survey and interview data were combined. In Stages One and Two, we engaged in inductive coding. First, we familiarised ourselves with the data by independently reading the dataset multiple times. Then we generated initial codes and themes from the data. We then organised and tidied up the codes and themes and categorised them under the two research questions, and for strategies, under the relevant supports (teacher, programme, and students themselves). Using a shared document, we combined the themes from the survey and interview stages, initiating a further phase of organising and clearing the data before the final themes were identified (see Appendix C for the final themes pertaining to the two research questions generated from the survey and interview data analysis). Finally, extracts that illustrated the themes were selected from the combined dataset (survey and interviews). Throughout the process, we stayed in close communication. We checked understandings, asked for clarification, and discussed any differences in interpretations [39].

4. Findings

4.1. Postgraduate Students' Challenges Adjusting and Succeeding in an EMI University

Data analysis of the survey responses identified four themes pertaining to the postgraduate students' challenges attending an EMI university: understanding teachers, academic writing, understanding course materials and readings, and oral production. Analysis of the interview data confirmed these themes, with one additional theme identified: teachers' incorrect assumptions. Findings related to each theme are presented below.

4.1.1. Understanding Teachers

The most common self-reported challenge identified during the coding process was 'understanding teachers.' Thirty-three respondents indicated various aspects pertaining to understanding teachers in their responses to the survey. These included difficulties in understanding teachers' accents or English varieties, challenges comprehending their teachers' use of specific terminology, academic vocabulary, or idiomatic expressions, difficulty following their teachers' speaking speed, and cultural differences. The students elaborated

on these challenges during the group interviews. For example, Peter (a non-English major) described how it could be difficult for him to follow lectures, as the Englishes the teachers used were different from his previous experiences: “It is not easy for me to follow [lectures], because when [my teachers] speak, it sounds very different from what I have learned. So I need to take some time to think about what they just said”. Evelyn recalled her first few weeks of the programme and described how she struggled to understand her teachers and how this affected her emotionally:

I have been here for more than two months, and actually, the first class was with [teacher’s name]. And I told him that I could not catch what he said, like every sentence, so I felt nervous, and the second week I cried for this course, the lesson. You know, and then I got a rash and I went to the hospital at midnight, because of nervousness.

Ellie suggested that the adoption of EMI affected her ability to understand the lecture content. She said, “If teachers speak in Chinese, I don’t miss the whole page. But now, if teachers speak quickly, I don’t understand the whole page”. Similarly, Ellie described how she had difficulty understanding one teacher but was able to understand another:

I have a course called *Inclusive Education*, and it is really a new area for me. I never knew it before. The first teacher spoke very quickly. I know she is full of passion and she tries to attract our attention. But she not only spoke quickly but she also had an accent. So although she is full of passion, I don’t really understand her classes. Now we have changed the teacher, and this teacher speaks slowly, and I can understand what she said.

The inability to understand specific teachers had led some students to change courses. For instance, Evelyn decided to drop one course and select another as she had struggled to understand the teacher of the first course’s English variety. Interestingly, students who came from Southern China and had Cantonese as their L1 (as do most Hong Kong residents) expressed during the group interviews that they did not face the same difficulties as their Mandarin-speaking classmates.

4.1.2. Academic Writing

The second most common self-reported challenge identified was ‘academic writing’. Twenty-seven survey respondents indicated aspects of ‘academic writing’ as challenges of studying in an EMI university. Students stated that they had difficulty writing papers, including grasping different genres and understanding academic writing conventions. For instance, a survey respondent wrote, “writing English assignments is still a tough thing for me even if I have used English to write my assignments for 4 years”. The participants attributed these challenges to different writing styles between English and Chinese and a lack of previous experience writing academic essays in English at the undergraduate level. Some interviewees mentioned that, at the undergraduate level, they rarely had to read academic texts or write in English. When they did, it was either short pieces in a test or they would write in Chinese first and then translate the text into English using translation software. For instance, Peter mentioned that during his undergraduate studies, “We hardly read the English academic writing, something like that. We just read the news or the blog before. So we don’t have much input about academic English.” Evelyn mentioned that during her undergraduate studies, “Actually we weren’t taught much about writing and the focus was different”. Similarly, a survey respondent compared the academic writing demands from her undergraduate studies to her postgraduate studies, “Academic writing is a problem. During my undergraduate years, there was only one time I needed to write a thesis in English, while in the postgraduate stage, there were many writing tasks.” Even those students who acknowledged having previous experience with academic writing noted differences between their previous experiences and the demands of postgraduate studies. They also felt they never fully mastered academic writing conventions. Caroline expressed these challenges during the group interview:

I think the word we use for formal words or informal words for academic writing is quite different and we have not learned them very systematically. Such as knowledge about the words, their meaning and usage. So maybe we used the wrong words and also the format. The citation in my undergraduate paper did use the APA format, but the teacher just gave us the guidebook and we learned by ourselves and we did it wrong frequently.

Interestingly, a challenge, or perhaps more of a concern, for some of the interviewed students was the belief that their classmates were better writers than they were. This belief increased the pressure on them to improve their academic writing for fear of being compared by their teachers to their more proficient classmates. As students felt that academic writing plays a substantial part in postgraduate studies, a sense of competence in writing in English seemed vital to their sense of success during their studies.

4.1.3. Oral Production

A further self-reported challenge identified was related to students' oral production. Survey responses indicated that students struggled with expressing their thoughts in English, oral fluency, asking and responding to teachers' questions, and giving oral presentations. For instance, a survey respondent wrote, "Not easy to express myself when using English, which will make me unwilling to speak and communicate". Similarly, Allen, in the interview, mentioned that speaking in English can be very challenging. He explained that,

[When responding to teachers in class], you need to make your answer very logical. But sometimes, actually maybe if you do not have a very clear mind. Maybe you can speak very fluently in "Chinese brain", when you translate it in English and make it hard to understand and be precise.

Winnie elaborated on this challenge when describing why she rarely speaks in class:

When I want to express my opinion, I need to find the words in my mind, but I couldn't choose the right word, and sometimes I will forget the pronunciation, even though it's very easy . . . I didn't have much experience at my undergraduate level because we didn't need to speak with the teachers in English. We didn't have a lot of chances.

Like Winnie, participants mentioned that even if classes were conducted in English or were partially in English during their undergraduate studies, they could use Chinese to communicate with teachers in and out of the classroom. This was not often the case during their postgraduate studies where English was the main medium of language used for student and teacher communication, particularly for students unable to speak Cantonese.

4.1.4. Understanding Course Materials and Readings

The final self-reported challenge identified during the coding of the survey responses was 'understanding course material and readings'. Specifically, students mentioned they had difficulty comprehending some of the complex texts and readings for their courses, and did not feel they could read fast enough in English to read all the required readings they were assigned. For example, one survey respondent mentioned, "Some articles are very long and difficult to understand, especially for the research method course." Another survey respondent wrote, "Sometimes the reading materials assigned before the class may be a little more than I can finish within a limited time. My reading speed is not fast enough and some reading materials may be a little complex and hard to understand." Madison elaborated on this challenge during the interview:

I can understand most of the words [in the readings], but I cannot organize them because they have different meanings, contextual meanings or academic meanings. Some simple words even have another meaning. So I think that at the undergraduate level, we just learnt basic reading strategies and the texts were simple. Now, I cannot shift my reading to a more academic one.

Similar to the other self-reported challenges mentioned above, the participants felt that the challenge of understanding course materials and readings was primarily due to a lack of previous experience at the undergraduate level. Overall, their responses suggested that they felt ill-prepared for the increased demands of postgraduate studies conducted in the medium of English.

4.1.5. Teachers' Incorrect Assumptions

An additional theme identified during the interview coding was teachers' incorrect assumptions about students' proficiency, knowledge, and past learning experiences. As most students held English-related undergraduate degrees, the interviewees felt that it influenced teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and abilities. This was a particular challenge for non-English majors as they felt their needs were not always catered to. For instance, Winnie recalled an incident in one of her classes. The teacher said, "Oh, you have learned this in your undergraduate years" and students responded affirmatively. However, she said "I was upset at that time because I found that I knew nothing about this." Similarly, Olivia shared that one of her teachers had assumed they were all previously "linguistics-major students." Peter and Evelyn echoed these points during the group interviews. When probed about why they did not inform their teachers about their academic backgrounds, Peter said, "If I try to tell the teacher I was not an English major, everybody will look at me thinking I'm an alien."

While this challenge may not have been salient to all postgraduate students in the current study, it does reflect the certain difficulties students with atypical or different backgrounds may face in specific programmes.

4.2. Support for Adjusting and Succeeding in an EMI University at the Postgraduate Level

During the survey and follow-up group interviews, participants were asked to suggest strategies and practices that they had found useful in helping them adjust and succeed in an EMI university. They were asked to consider teacher support, programme/university support, and students' own self-help strategies. In the follow-up interviews, the interviewees were also asked to consider what support they would find helpful but that had not been provided.

4.2.1. Teacher Support Strategies

In this current study, five teacher support strategies were identified: (1) provide pre-session materials; (2) systematic assignment of readings; (3) provide different channels for out-of-class communication; (4) offer instruction and guidance on academic writing; and (5) implement specific in-class teaching strategies.

Providing pre-session materials, including presentation slides, readings, and pre-session questions to discuss in class, was seen as a valuable support in helping students. Participants mentioned that most of their teachers would upload their presentation slides to the Learning Management System before the sessions. This allowed them to "preview" the session content in advance. Layla described this practice as "very helpful". In addition, some teachers provided "voice-over narration" on the presentation slides, while others offered key questions for discussion in the session. Winnie mentioned that these strategies were useful, as "we could think before the course and then we could understand easily. . . . and we will discuss questions in class."

Teachers regularly assigned students journal articles, book chapters, and other texts to support their understanding of the course content. While this is a common practice, the participants mentioned that they found it more useful when the reading assignment was more systematic. Specifically, they preferred that teachers provide all the course readings in advance, identify which reading materials are mandatory and which optional, and highlight important parts in the course readings. For example, Evelyn described one of her teacher's strategies:

I like the arrangement that the teacher will provide all the readings for all the weeks. One of my teachers said that you have to read two of [the readings] each week because one is required and one is optional. And I like this early arrangement so I can arrange my timetable.

By providing the session readings in advance, students like Evelyn were able to better schedule their out-of-class study time, making it easier for them to manage the challenges related to understanding the course materials and readings. Given that some students can find it challenging to ask questions in class, the participants suggested that teachers could provide different channels for out-of-class communication. These can include email and creating groups on instant messaging platforms like WeChat and WhatsApp.

Academic writing was a key challenge for the participants. Students recommended that teachers provide clear assignment instructions and guidance to aid them in constructing academic texts. Layla suggested these should be “step by step”. Similarly, Liam suggested that teachers could provide “templates” to help them structure their academic essays. However, he also noted that over time the support could be reduced once they became more familiar with the writing conventions.

Finally, the students identified specific in-class strategies their teachers have used that helped them overcome some of the challenges they experienced in the EMI university. Caroline described how one of her teachers would encourage students to contribute during classes:

For example, in one of my elective courses, when we do the group discussion, the teacher comes to listen. And then she would say, Oh, you did pretty good. Would you like to share your opinion in the classroom? It makes me feel less pressure and I’m willing to share, so consequently, my oral English has also improved.

Other participants mentioned how their teachers used simple language and concrete examples to help students comprehend complex terms and concepts. Some teachers also annotated their presentation slides in class or wrote down key information on the blackboard. This, students suggested, helps them notice the “important parts” of the session. In addition, some teachers used digital tools, such as student response systems and digital noticeboards. These tools provided alternative and anonymous modes of participation and increased student willingness to contribute in class.

4.2.2. Programme Support Strategies

In this study, the participants suggested four support strategies the programme could provide: (1) provide teachers with details of students’ backgrounds; (2) offer guidance and workshops on academic writing; (3) provide details of the course content and teachers before the programme begins; and (4) offer informal English activities.

Students come to postgraduate programmes with diverse education and work backgrounds. Therefore, students suggested that programmes should make their teachers aware of students’ backgrounds, so they can better support their specific needs. Indeed, Olivia and Winnie mentioned that once one of their teachers knew that they did not have an English-related undergraduate degree, the teacher provided greater support to them.

As students found academic writing challenging and had little experience writing academically in English at the undergraduate level, the participants suggested the programme could provide more support to students’ writing development before they began their studies. They commented that their programme did offer such a programme, but the format and mode could be improved. Evelyn described the programme they received and the issues they found with the format and mode:

We had a workshop about academic writing, and the PowerPoint is helpful, but you know, because it’s too long. It’s like the class begins at 9 am and ends at 6 pm. It was a very long day, and it was taught to us on Zoom. So I just fell asleep. But I read the PowerPoint later myself, and I found it useful.

The students suggested that postgraduate programmes could offer optional pre-course workshops on academic writing. They felt it would be more manageable and give them time to “digest” the content before the course properly begins. Another suggestion was related to the provision of information about the course content and instructors before the beginning of the semester. The participants suggested that they knew little about the courses they would be required or able to take, and this limited their ability to prepare. Madison suggested that teachers could make short introduction videos about themselves and the course they were going to teach. Students could then watch these videos and become more familiar with the course and the instructor. This could also allow them to make more informed choices about the course. In addition, Caroline mentioned that such videos could help students “Get used to teachers’ accents”.

Finally, the participants believed programmes could offer some informal English activities. They talked about an “English corner” activity arranged by the university. Workshops were organised a few times a week for students to discuss hot topics and issues in English. A language instructor facilitated the workshops, which provided a venue for practising English speaking and listening skills. The participants also suggested that more social events could be organised to help increase the sense of community within the programme.

4.2.3. Student Self-Help Support Strategies

Students in this study suggested two self-help support strategies they felt to be essential to help them adjust and succeed in an EMI university: (1) being active in their own learning; and (2) developing study strategies.

First, students believed it was important to be active in their own learning. The active approaches included previewing session content, keeping up with the course readings, collaborating with classmates, and proactively seeking help from teachers. When asked in the survey what students do to cope with the EMI environment, one student wrote, “I read a lot of essays and literature and try my best to preview the lesson in advance, and talk to the classmate about the confusion part after the class.” In addition to being active, the participants mentioned a number of study strategies that have helped them cope in the EMI environment. For instance, a number of respondents mentioned using translation digital tools to help them translate course readings, parts of texts, or unknown words into their L1. Others used dictionaries and the internet to look up unknown words and concepts. Different reading strategies, such as skimming and scanning, were also suggested, as they can help students manage the large demands of reading in English.

5. Discussion

This current study set out to explore the experiences and perceptions of one cohort of full-time postgraduate students in their first semester studying for a one-year MEd: ELT degree at an EMI university in Hong Kong. It aimed to understand better the challenges associated with studying in an EMI context at the postgraduate level, and to propose possible sustainable support strategies to help such students succeed. The findings revealed five salient challenges post-graduate students face in an EMI university. These included understanding teachers, academic writing, understanding course materials and readings, oral production, and teachers’ incorrect assumptions.

The findings suggested that postgraduate students, even those with previous experiences in partial EMI undergraduate programmes or those who previously studied English-related degrees, face many of the same challenges as their undergraduate counterparts [18]. The students felt they were inadequately prepared during their undergraduate programmes for the immersive English language environment or full EMI [4] they found themselves in at the postgraduate level. The findings, therefore, support Richards and Pun’s assumption that students need more than language proficiency in order to successfully learn academic content (i.e., education theories, linguistic knowledge, and pedagogical skills) in English [2]. This seems even more poignant when the students’ postgraduate programmes have different instructional approaches and assessment practices than their

undergraduate programmes. For instance, most of the students reported struggling with academic writing in English at the postgraduate level. They stated that they had very little experience with that in their undergraduate studies where assessments tended to be exams. This means that students felt they had entered the postgraduate programme lacking a fundamental skill for success in the EMI context.

Importantly, we cannot see our postgraduate students as a homogeneous group with the same experiences, proficiencies, expectations, and needs. While all students are unique, postgraduate students are likely to have a greater diversity of experiences before joining these programmes [11]. This means that the challenges they have adapting and succeeding in a full EMI environment will also likely differ. Indeed, the findings showed that non-English-related majors faced specific challenges, and had the self-perception that they were different from English-related majors. In addition, students who shared the L1 of their teachers, Cantonese, seemed to struggle less with understanding their teachers' English use than Mandarin speakers. Our data suggested that students felt their teachers may have been unaware of these differences. It seems important that we raise teachers' awareness of the possible challenges postgraduate students can face, and that students may face different challenges depending on their academic and work backgrounds. Given the shortness of postgraduate programmes, postgraduate students need to adapt quickly to the demands at the postgraduate level. Therefore, finding ways to support students to adjust to the full EMI environment should become an urgent issue in EMI universities.

The findings suggested that the support postgraduate students need to adjust and succeed in the EMI environment should come from the teacher, the programmes, and from students' own self-help support strategies. It is well known that teachers play a fundamental role in supporting students in an EMI university [2]. It is the teachers that students interact with on a daily basis, and teachers are the key facilitators of students' learning. We found five support strategies teachers can use to help students overcome the challenges of the EMI university. As students reported struggling with understanding their teachers and course materials, the provision of pre-session materials, such as presentation slides and course readings, gives students the opportunity to prime themselves for the in-person sessions. This, our data suggests, gives them more confidence in the classroom and helps them understand the teacher and content more effectively. Similar to Pun and Thomas's findings regarding teachers' perspective on their own strategies [31], students may feel supported as they adjust to the EMI setting if they have the option to preview content through flipped videos or review presentation slides or readings. Providing ways for students to actively engage with the content outside of the classroom, such as through assigning discussion questions in advance of sessions, or short preparation activities, will likely increase the support to students. In the classroom, because the L1 of students is different from that of most teachers, the use of translanguaging, as mentioned in previous literature [24,30], is difficult to adopt in the postgraduate programme in Hong Kong, which suggests teachers need to seek other strategies to help students cope with their challenges. The findings indicated that teachers need to be mindful of the students' linguistic competencies, and implement support strategies accordingly, such as annotating the presentation slides or using a student response system to elicit student contributions [40]. Richards and Pun provided a comprehensive list of strategies teachers can adopt in implementing EMI [2]. While not all of these may be relevant to the postgraduate classroom, they can serve as a useful reference point for teacher development or further study. In addition, through the provision of various out-of-class communication channels, students can have alternative ways to engage with teachers.

Postgraduate programmes have an important role to play in creating and maintaining a supportive environment for their students [11]. Various kinds of support can be provided at the programme level, which can then take the pressure off teachers to provide that support, and also reduce repetition of that support being given by various teachers. For example, the students mentioned that they struggled with academic writing, and they suggested the programme could provide guidance and workshops on academic writing. These findings

were congruent with Ekoç's suggestion of providing intensive English for Academic Purposes courses [28]. If this support comes at the right time and in the right modes, it can make students feel more prepared and also reduce the need for teachers to provide similar kinds of support. In addition, the students suggested that the programme can offer opportunities for students to gain exposure and use English outside of the classroom. This could increase students' oral production skills and also their sense of belonging to the institution [11].

Students themselves have been found to need specific strategies to help them adjust and succeed in EMI universities [10]. Similarly, in this study, students believed that they should be active in their own learning and develop study skills. Students' awareness that they have a role to play in their own adjustment and success in the EMI environment, and concrete suggestions for how they can support their own learning, are important. As students have different challenges, programmes and teachers are likely unable to cater for everyone's needs. Therefore, it is important for students' to develop their own coping strategies. This can be one way to ensure students succeed in the EMI context. Teachers and programmes may still have a role here; they can provide guidance on the kinds of skills students need in the EMI environment and remind them that active involvement is necessary if they wish to maximise their learning.

While various studies have explored the individual roles teachers, programmes, and students can play in helping students cope with the EMI environment [2,10], this study took a holistic approach to understand the support that can be provided by each stakeholder with the goal of supporting students to adjust and succeed in the EMI environment. Indeed, we argue that teachers, programmes, and students themselves all have a part to play in ensuring students successfully adjust and then succeed in the EMI context at the postgraduate level. Ideally, support systems can be set up so that they can target specific students with specific support to address specific challenges. Self-access resources, tailored advice, and communication channels for students to indicate their challenges and needs, are all possible ways of supporting postgraduate students in an EMI university.

6. Conclusions

This exploratory study has shown that postgraduate students can experience challenges adjusting to the EMI university. It also has been demonstrated that teachers, programmes, and the students themselves all have a part to play in supporting their adjustment and success. These findings, we hope, will put the experiences of postgraduate students into focus in the scholarship about EMI, as well as encourage teachers and programmes to evaluate whether they are providing the support that students need in order to succeed in the EMI setting. This study adds to our understanding of this overlooked group [11]. Importantly, any support strategies need to be sustainable for students and teachers to effectively help students adjust and succeed in the EMI university at the postgraduate level. It is, therefore, up to the teachers, programmes, and institutions to consider what support is needed for students in different subjects and contexts and what support can be provided given the various contextual constraints within an institutional setting [31].

As has been stated previously, this study was limited to students studying in one postgraduate programme in one EMI university in Hong Kong. Furthermore, while the study adopted a two-stage approach, increasing the reliability of the findings, the methods relied on students' self-reported challenges and suggestions for support strategies. Therefore, the findings may not reflect their actual experiences and perceptions nor be reflective of postgraduate students studying in other EMI institutions or contexts. Scholars are encouraged to expand on this study and explore the experiences of post-graduate students studying in different majors and in other EMI institutions in various countries and regions (e.g., Europe). The findings from this exploratory study could help inform the development of quantitative research tools for a larger study across multiple programmes, institutions, and regions. This will help us develop a more holistic understanding of students' experiences in EMI and the development of subject- and context-specific sustainable support strategies.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, B.L.M. and Y.W.; Methodology, B.L.M. and Y.W.; Software, B.L.M.; Formal analysis, B.L.M. and Y.W.; Investigation, B.L.M. and Y.W.; Data curation, Y.W.; Writing—original draft, B.L.M. and Y.W.; Writing—review & editing, B.L.M. and Y.W.; Supervision, B.L.M.; Project administration, B.L.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical approval was granted by the Hong Kong Baptist University Human Research Ethics Committee (REC/22-23/0058) on 17 October 2022.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Survey Items

Demographics:

1. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
2. Age:
3. What was your major in your undergraduate degree? (e.g., BA in English)
4. Which English proficiency exam did you take? What was your overall score?
Exam: Score:
5. What percentage of your undergraduate programme was conducted in English?
6. Do you have any previous work experiences? If yes, how many years? What did you do (what job)? Did you use English at work?

During the programme: Challenges

7. Have you met any language difficulties in the EMI learning environment?
8. Have you met any other difficulties (not language) in the EMI environment?

During the programme: Support

9. What do your teachers do to help you cope with the EMI environment here? (any strategies to support you in or out of classroom)
10. What does the programme or university do to help you cope with the EMI environment here?
11. What do you do to help yourself cope with the EMI environment here?

Advice for others

12. What advice would you give to university or teachers to support you with EMI environment before your studies here?
13. What advice would you give to university or teachers to support you with EMI environment during your studies here?
14. What advice would you give to other students who are studying in an EMI environment for the first time?
15. Do you have any further ideas to share about your EMI experience here? (optional)

Appendix B. Interview Guide

General perceptions

1. Tell us briefly about your experience at the current university so far.
2. Why did you choose here for your postgraduate studies?

3. What are the main differences between studying at your undergraduate and postgraduate level studies? Prompts: What language did the teachers use? If it was in English, were there any differences in the challenges?
4. What is your understanding of an ideal EMI classroom and or teacher?

Challenges

5. Think about the following identified challenges, which ones do you have? Why do you think you have these challenges?

Language

Understanding teachers (accent/English variety/terminology/academic expression/culture/speaking speed)

Understanding course materials and readings (complex texts/reading speed)

Oral production (expressing thoughts in English/fluency/presenting in front of class)

Academic writing (writing papers, understanding academic conventions, different writing style, unfamiliar genres)

Non-language

Content knowledge

Peer pressure (believing classmates are better than you)

Workload

Mindset (different from teachers/classmates)

Finding academic sources

6. Have you faced any other challenges or barriers to your learning? What are they?
7. How much of the lectures do you feel you understand? Do you think this is because of language challenges or other academic challenges?

Sustainable Strategies

8. Can you think of any sustainable strategies teachers, the university, or students can provide or use before and during your studies here to address the challenges mentioned above?

Appendix C. Final Themes Generated from the Survey and Interview

RQ1: What Challenges Do Postgraduate Students Face When Attending an EMI University?	
Themes	Sub-Themes
Understanding teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers’ accents/English varieties • Teachers’ use of specific terminology/academic vocabulary/idioms • Culture • Speaking speed
Understanding course materials and readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex texts • Reading speed • No experience in undergraduate studies with academic texts
Oral production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing thoughts in English • Fluency • Presentations • Feel less proficient than classmates • Limited experience speaking English during undergraduate studies • Feel less proficient than classmates • Classmates have better oral production
Academic writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing papers • Understanding academic writing conventions • Different writing style between English and Chinese • Unfamiliar genres • No previous experience writing academic essays in English at UG level • Classmates have better writing
Teachers’ incorrect assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers assume students have relevant knowledge from UG studies

RQ2: What Support Strategies Can Be Used to Help Postgraduate Students Adjust and Succeed in an EMI University?

	Themes	Sub-Themes
Teacher Support Strategies	(1) Provide pre-session materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide session PowerPoint before the session • Provide reading materials before the session • Voice-over PPT useful (flipped approach) • Provide pre-session questions to discuss in class
	(2) Implement specific in-class teaching strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple words and sentences • Use examples to help with explanations • Use L1 • Use visual aids • Explain terms in more detail • Control speaking speed • Use SRS
	(3) Provide different modes of out-of-class communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide e-mail or instant messaging
	(4) Systematic assignment of readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give all readings for the course • Identify some readings as mandatory or optional • Highlight important part of the course readings
	(5) Academic writing instructions and guidance	
Programme Support Strategies	(1) Provide teachers with details of students' backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers do not know about students' experiences
	(2) Offer guidance and workshops on academic writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic writing training
	(3) Provide details of the course content and teachers before the programme begins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course introduction materials/videos • Book lists/suggestions/materials • Information on teachers
	(4) Offer informal English activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English corner • Social events
Student Self-help Support Strategies	(1) Be active in their own learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview the pre-session materials • Read session readings • Collaborate with classmates • Ask teacher for help
	(2) Develop study skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search the internet • Use translation apps • Check dictionary • Reading strategies: skimming and scanning readings • Translating readings or unknown words

References

1. Macaro, E.; Curle, S.; Pun, J.; An, J.; Dearden, J. A Systematic Review of English Medium Instruction in Higher Education. *Lang. Teach.* **2018**, *51*, 36–76. [[CrossRef](#)]
2. Richards, J.C.; Pun, J. Teacher Strategies in Implementing English Medium Instruction. *Elt J.* **2022**, *76*, 227–237. [[CrossRef](#)]

3. Curle, S.; Jablonkai, R.R.; Mittelmeier, J.; Sahan, K.; Veitch, A.; Galloway, N. *English in Higher Education—English Medium. Part 1: Literature Review*; British Council: London, UK, 2020. Available online: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/L020_English_HE_lit_review_FINAL.pdf (accessed on 1 December 2022).
4. Richards, J.C.; Pun, J. A Typology of English-Medium Instruction. *RELC J.* **2021**, *2021*, 0033688220968584. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Rose, H.; Curle, S.; Aizawa, I.; Thompson, G. What Drives Success in English Medium Taught Courses? The Interplay between Language Proficiency, Academic Skills, and Motivation. *Stud. High. Educ.* **2020**, *45*, 2149–2161. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Li, M. The Effectiveness of a Bilingual Education Program at a Chinese University: A Case Study of Social Science Majors. *Int. J. Biling. Educ. Biling.* **2018**, *21*, 897–912. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Cho, D.W. English-Medium Instruction in the University Context of Korea: Tradeoff between Teaching Outcomes and Media-Initiated University Ranking. *J. Asia TEFL* **2012**, *9*, 135–163.
8. Hu, G.; Li, L.; Lei, J. English-Medium Instruction at a Chinese University: Rhetoric and Reality. *Lang. Policy* **2014**, *13*, 21–40. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Kirkgöz, Y. Globalization and English Language Policy in Turkey. *Educ. Policy* **2009**, *23*, 663–684. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Soruç, A.; Griffiths, C. English as a Medium of Instruction: Students' Strategies. *Elt J.* **2018**, *72*, 38–48. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Coneyworth, L.; Jessop, R.; Maden, P.; White, G. The Overlooked Cohort?—Improving the Taught Postgraduate Student Experience in Higher Education. *Innov. Educ. Teach. Int.* **2019**, *57*, 262–273. [[CrossRef](#)]
12. Vural, Ö.F.; Basaran, M. The Reasons for Teachers' Preference for Master's Degree. *Int. J. Curric. Instr.* **2021**, *13*, 589–613.
13. Hu, G. English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education: Lessons from China. *J. Asia TEFL* **2019**, *16*, 1–11. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Wingate, U.; Hakim, A. Moving beyond 'Infancy': Towards a Cross-Fertilization between EMI and EAP Scholarship. *Elt J.* **2022**, *76*, 529–537. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Wilkinson, R. 1. English-medium instruction at a Dutch university: Challenges and pitfalls. In *English-Medium Instruction at Universities: Global Challenges*; Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK, 2013; pp. 3–24.
16. Kim, E.G. English Medium Instruction in Korean Higher Education: Challenges and Future Directions. In *English Medium Instruction in Higher Education in Asia-Pacific*; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2017; pp. 53–69.
17. Hu, G.; Li, X. Asking and Answering Questions in English-Medium Instruction Classrooms: What Is the Cognitive and Syntactic Complexity Level? In *English-Medium Instruction in Chinese Universities*; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2017; pp. 184–203. ISBN 1-315-61862-1.
18. Sung, C.C.M. Negotiating Participation and Identity in a Second Language: Mainland Chinese Students' English Learning Experiences in a Multilingual University in Hong Kong. *Res. Pap. Educ.* **2021**, *36*, 381–401. [[CrossRef](#)]
19. Pun, J.; Jin, X. Student Challenges and Learning Strategies at Hong Kong EMI Universities. *PLoS ONE* **2021**, *16*, e0251564. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Lee, Y.-J.; Davis, R.O.; Li, Y. International Graduate Students' Experiences of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) Courses in a Korean University. *Int. J. Learn. Teach. Educ. Res.* **2021**, *20*, 38–51. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Smith, R.A.; Khawaja, N.G. A Review of the Acculturation Experiences of International Students. *Int. J. Intercult. Relat.* **2011**, *35*, 699–713. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Tobbell, J.; O'Donnell, V.; Zammit, M. Exploring Transition to Postgraduate Study: Shifting Identities in Interaction with Communities, Practice and Participation. *Br. Educ. Res. J.* **2010**, *36*, 261–278. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. Ma, Y.; Yu, S.; Reynolds, B.L.; Jiang, L. A Qualitative Investigation of Chinese Students' Willingness to Communicate in English in the Graduate School EMI Classroom. *Engl. Teach. Learn.* **2022**, *46*, 77–98. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. Yuan, R.; Zhang, T.; Li, M. 'EMI Is like a Durian': Chinese Students' Perspectives on an Ideal English-Medium Instruction Classroom in Higher Education. *Lang. Educ.* **2022**, 1–17. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Zhang, M.; Pladevall-Ballester, E. Students' Attitudes and Perceptions towards Three EMI Courses in Mainland China. *Lang. Cult. Curric.* **2022**, *35*, 200–216. [[CrossRef](#)]
26. Doiz, A.; Costa, F.; Lasagabaster, D.; Mariotti, C. Linguistic Demands and Language Assistance in EMI Courses: What Is the Stance of Italian and Spanish Undergraduates? *Lingue E Ling.* **2019**, *33*, 69–85. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. Hua, T.-L. Understanding the Learning Challenges of English-Medium Instruction Learners and Ways to Facilitate Their Learning: A Case Study of Taiwan Psychology Students' Perspectives. *Lat. Am. J. Content Lang. Integr. Learn.* **2020**, *12*, 321–340. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. Ekoç, A. English Medium Instruction (EMI) from the Perspectives of Students at a Technical University in Turkey. *J. Furth. High. Educ.* **2020**, *44*, 231–243. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Vygotsky, L.S.; Cole, M. *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes*; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1978; ISBN 0-674-57629-2.
30. Yu, S.; Wang, Y.; Jiang, L.; Wang, B. Coping with EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction): Mainland China Students' Strategies at a University in Macau. *Innov. Educ. Teach. Int.* **2021**, *58*, 462–472. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Pun, J.K.; Thomas, N. English Medium Instruction: Teachers' Challenges and Coping Strategies. *Elt J.* **2020**, *74*, 247–257. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Morse, J.M. Simultaneous and Sequential Qualitative Mixed Method Designs. *Qual. Inq.* **2010**, *16*, 483–491. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Braun, V.; Clarke, V.; Boulton, E.; Davey, L.; McEvoy, C. The Online Survey as a Qualitative Research Tool. *Int. J. Soc. Res. Methodol.* **2021**, *24*, 641–654. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Hesse-Biber, S. Qualitative Approaches to Mixed Methods Practice. *Qual. Inq.* **2010**, *16*, 455–468. [[CrossRef](#)]

35. Lingnan University. LU Study Finds One in Five Mainland Chinese University Students Are Considering Postgraduate Studies Abroad after Pandemic. Available online: <https://www.ln.edu.hk/news/20210803/lu-study-finds-one-in-five-mainland-chinese-university-students-are-considering-postgraduate-studies-abroad-after-pandemic/> (accessed on 3 August 2021).
36. Dörnyei, Z.; Taguchi, T. *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing*; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2009.
37. Cohen, L.; Manion, L.; Morrison, K. *Research Methods in Education*, 8th ed.; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2018.
38. Braun, V.; Clarke, V. Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* **2006**, *3*, 77–101. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Miles, M.B.; Huberman, M.A.; Saldana, J. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*; SAGE Publ. Ltd.: London, UK, 2014.
40. Moorhouse, B.L.; Kohnke, L. Using Mentimeter to Elicit Student Responses in the EAP/ESP Classroom. *RELC J.* **2020**, *51*, 198–204. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.