

ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON AI-MEDIATED TRANSLANGUAGING: A CASE STUDY AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract – *English medium instruction is developing quickly in Vietnamese universities as a result of national internationalisation efforts, but its implementation tends to encounter the multilingual nature of classrooms and the rise of new digital tools. This study, conducted between October 2025 and February 2026, explores how English medium instruction lecturers at Can Tho University perceive and practise translanguaging, particularly how generative artificial intelligence begins to influence these practices in English focused teaching environments. Drawing on semi structured interviews with five lecturers from different disciplines, the study indicates that English medium instruction teachers frequently and intentionally employ both Vietnamese and English to help students grasp complex ideas, fully comprehend subject content, and participate more confidently, though still expecting English in formal academic tasks. From the participants' perspectives, generative artificial intelligence appeared to support bilingual meaning-making, particularly when teachers and students moved between Vietnamese and English during explanation and task preparation. Teachers commonly prompt artificial intelligence in Vietnamese and then refine the output in English to enhance students' comprehension and confidence, especially for students with lower English proficiency. Nevertheless, they also express concerns about shallow learning, uneven dependence on artificial intelligence, and the lack of obvious institutional guidance. Overall, the findings indicate that AI-mediated translanguaging may help teachers deal*

with some tensions between English medium instruction policy and classroom realities in this context. The study encourages future consideration of stronger institutional support, professional development, and assessment practices that appreciate multilingual and AI-supported learning.

Keywords: *AI-mediated translanguaging, EMI, English-medium instruction, generative AI.*

I. INTRODUCTION

English-medium instruction (EMI) has become popular in global higher education, particularly in contexts where English is not the primary language of instruction [1]. Commonly defined as the use of English to teach academic subjects outside Anglophone nations [2, 3], EMI is considered a strategic way for internationalisation, global competitiveness, and graduate employability [4–6]. Despite these ambitions, EMI implementation often generates pedagogical tensions, especially when English-only policies are imposed without adequate consideration of learners' linguistic resources or teachers' classroom realities [7].

These issues are particularly noticeable in Vietnam, where EMI has been introduced rapidly through top-down reforms linked to national and regional internationalisation agendas [8]. Although official policies typically require English-only instruction, lecturers and students frequently draw on Vietnamese alongside English to support comprehension and participation [9, 10]. Such practices are likely to solve problems regarding uneven student proficiency, heavy content loads, and limited institutional support. However, without an effective pedagogical framework, these practices may be perceived as policy violations

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rather than legitimate instructional strategies. Under these circumstances, pedagogical translanguaging has become a principled approach that intentionally mobilises learners' full linguistic repertoires to support content learning in EMI [11–13]. Rather than separating languages into rigid domains, translanguaging indicates strategic language use aligned with learning objectives, such as conceptual development, participation, and higher-order thinking [14, 15]. The recent emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) introduces new possibilities for translanguaging by reshaping how multilingual meaning-making is mediated through digital tools [16, 17]. Learners use AI bilingually by conceptualising ideas in their first language and refining outputs in English, which transforms AI into a mediational resource [18, 19].

Despite these innovations, limited research has examined how EMI teachers perceive and enact AI-mediated translanguaging, particularly in Vietnamese higher education. Existing studies have focused primarily on student practices, leaving teachers' disciplinary reasoning, institutional constraints, and professional decision-making underexplored [18–21]. Although recent studies recognise multilingual modification in EMI classrooms [10, 22, 23], translanguaging is still framed mainly as human interaction, and research on digital mediation has focused on students rather than teachers [18–21]. This study thus examines how five EMI lecturers described their pedagogical decisions at the intersection of translanguaging, EMI teaching, and digital mediation, with attention to how they negotiated language support and content delivery in their own classrooms. In addition to teachers' perceptions and practices of translanguaging, their views on the benefits and challenges of AI-supported translanguaging, and the factors shaping their adoption of AI-mediated strategies are also investigated. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Vietnamese EMI teachers currently perceive and practice translanguaging?
2. How do they view the benefits and chal-

lenges of using AI to facilitate translanguaging?

3. What factors influence their adoption of AI-mediated translanguaging practices?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *English-medium instruction in higher education*

English-medium instruction has rapidly grown in higher education, particularly in countries where national languages have traditionally been the major means of teaching [1]. EMI is generally defined as the use of English to teach academic subjects outside English-speaking countries [2, 3, 24]. The rise of EMI is closely associated with internationalisation attempts and English's role as a global lingua franca [25]. Across Europe and Asia, EMI has been institutionalised as both a language policy and a tool of higher education internationalisation, linked to competitiveness, mobility, and employability agendas [4–6]. However, evidence reveals persistent tensions between these macro-level aims and classroom realities, particularly where English-only expectations neglect learners' resources, disciplinary demands, and teacher preparedness [7]. These tensions are also evident in Vietnam, where EMI has been rolled out quickly through centralised policies tied to regional internationalisation goals [8]. Although official EMI frameworks frequently privilege English-only delivery, evidence from multilingual classrooms consistently shows that lecturers and students adapt by mobilising local linguistic resources to maintain comprehension and participation [9, 10]. Such adjustment suggests that EMI implementation is rarely monolingual in practice; rather, it is influenced by institutional constraints, uneven proficiency, and the practical need to sustain disciplinary access [9, 26]. Together, these conditions risk reinforcing educational inequalities and working against the stated objectives of internationalisation, resulting in a critical gap between EMI policy ambitions and pedagogical realities in Vietnam.

B. Pedagogical translanguaging in EMI

Pedagogical translanguaging in EMI has been understood as a deliberate instructional approach in which teachers systematically mobilise students' full linguistic repertoires to support content and language learning, rather than treating languages as separate codes [11, 27]. Unlike spontaneous classroom language mixing, pedagogical translanguaging means planned decisions about language use for input, output, and activity design, with soft boundaries between languages and a clear focus on academic improvement [12]. Drawing on García et al.'s framework [13], pedagogical translanguaging can be defined as an orientation in which teachers' multilingual stance, instructional design, and classroom decisions collectively legitimise learners' full linguistic repertoires. In EMI contexts, such practices transform classrooms into translanguaging spaces that disrupt English-only hierarchies and enable broader participation in knowledge co-construction [28]. Across EMI studies, strategic L1 use is linked to reduced cognitive load and stronger conceptual engagement, especially when language alternation supports demanding tasks such as explaining specialised concepts, negotiating terminology, or reformulating disciplinary meanings [14, 15, 22]. Nonetheless, the literature cautions that translanguaging is pedagogically effective only when strategically regulated, as excessive or poorly timed L1 use may reduce English exposure, undermine linguistic legitimacy, or exclude students beyond the shared local repertoire [23, 29]. For these reasons, the pedagogical value of translanguaging in EMI does not simply depend on the frequency of L1 use but on its strategic and context-sensitive implementation.

To guide the present study analytically, pedagogical translanguaging is approached through García et al.'s [13] three interrelated dimensions of stance, design, and shift. Stance refers to teachers' underlying beliefs about the legitimacy of multilingual resources; design concerns planned pedagogical arrangements through which languages are strategically organised; and shift captures moment-to-moment adjustments responding

to emerging classroom needs. This framework is particularly useful for examining how AI enters EMI teaching as a resource that may reshape teachers' pedagogical decisions across these dimensions.

C. The application of generative AI in content and language learning

Generative AI is regarded as a mediating resource that reinforces both content and language learning. In EFL writing classes, generative AI supports multiple stages of text production, but its pedagogical value lies less in automation than in learners' iterative use for planning, revising, and evaluating meaning [18]. Beyond writing, AI plays a key role in a broader semiotic environment. For example, programming languages, interfaces, and computational representations function as meaning-making resources that foster computational literacy intertwined with content learning [16]. Across pedagogical contexts, AI-driven systems increasingly serve as mediational infrastructures, redistributing linguistic support once provided by teachers while requiring learners to exercise greater evaluative judgement over language choices and content accuracy [17]. Furthermore, L1-L2 comparison and iterative feedback cycles aided by AI contribute to gains in lexical diversity and rhetorical cohesion. In multilingual contexts such as Vietnam, bilingual prompting shows that AI use is not solely technological assistance but a form of self-mediated translanguaging, where learners switch between languages to control meaning, evaluate output, and align responses with task demands [19]. However, evidence from translation tool use cautions that although AI enhances comprehension and vocabulary learning, overreliance may prevent deeper processing and oral development [20]. Complementary technology-rich materials (e.g., PowerPoint graphs, projected maps, e-books) with simplified explanations remain essential in English-medium curricula [30]. Ultimately, the educational benefits of generative AI depend on thoughtful instructional design that keeps learners mentally engaged and uses AI to

support, rather than replace, their own linguistic development and meaning-making.

D. AI-mediated translanguaging in EMI

AI-mediated translanguaging in EMI indicates how artificial intelligence reshapes multilingual meaning-making by expanding the spaces, tools, and roles through which languages interact [16, 17]. In reality, AI-mediated translanguaging functions as an emerging pattern of multilingual problem-solving, where learners strategically deploy different languages at various stages of interaction with AI systems. Evidence from Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, and Arabic contexts revealed that learners frequently begin meaning construction in the first language, use AI to generate or re-organise ideas, and then refine outputs in English according to disciplinary or rhetorical expectations [18–21]. Despite contextual differences, L1 is fundamental to cognitive planning rather than operating merely as compensatory support. Collectively, AI-mediated translanguaging may partially reconcile EMI’s English-dominant expectations with multilingual learning realities, but its pedagogical value depends on how teachers regulate learner agency, critical engagement, and disciplinary appropriateness. However, existing evidence has still been learner-focused and descriptive, with limited attention to how teachers strategically legitimise or regulate AI-mediated translanguaging under EMI policy conditions. This issue leaves insufficient explanation of how AI functions not only as a linguistic aid but also as a pedagogical mediator affected by disciplinary expectations, institutional norms, and teachers’ professional judgement.

Overall, EMI, translanguaging, and generative AI should be examined in relation to one another rather than as separate pedagogical phenomena. In multilingual higher education, they intersect through teachers’ everyday decisions about language legitimacy, content accessibility, and technological mediation.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research design

This study, carried out from October 2025 to February 2026, adopts a qualitative exploratory case study design to examine EMI teachers’ perspectives on AI-mediated translanguaging at Can Tho University, Vietnam. A qualitative case study, which is a research strategy rather than a single method, allows an in-depth investigation of a bounded phenomenon within its real-life context [31]. In this study, the ‘case’ indicates EMI teachers’ experiences, beliefs, and pedagogical reflections related to the use of AI tools to support translanguaging practices. This bounded focus makes it possible to capture the complexity of teachers’ sense-making processes and situated practices within a specific institutional and sociolinguistic setting. The design is particularly suitable for addressing ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions in contexts where teaching practices are tied to daily constraints and cannot be experimentally controlled [32]. Moreover, the qualitative case study enables a holistic exploration of interconnected processes, individual perspectives, and contextual influences within clear temporal and institutional boundaries [33]. Based on contextualised analysis, this design allows close examination of teachers’ reported attitudes and practices, offering insights into how AI may be entering bilingual pedagogies within one Vietnamese EMI setting.

B. Participants

The study used purposive sampling to deliberately select participants who could offer rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon [34]. To obtain analytical breadth, a maximum variation approach was adopted to capture diverse perspectives among EMI teachers from different disciplinary backgrounds, while still allowing in-depth exploration within a small sample [31]. Rather than aiming for representativeness, the study prioritised analytical depth, consistent with qualitative case study logic in which a small, information-rich sample supports close examination of situated pedagogical reasoning [31, 32].

Specifically, participants were required to meet the following criteria: (1) being full-time lecturers at Can Tho University; (2) having a minimum of two years’ experience teaching a credited, non-language academic subject fully or primarily in English; (3) currently teaching at undergraduate level in an EMI programme; (4) representing distinct academic disciplines to reflect disciplinary variation in EMI practices; and (5) having at least fundamental familiarity with digital or AI-supported teaching tools. These criteria ensured a strong alignment between participant characteristics and the study’s focus on EMI pedagogy and emerging AI-mediated translanguaging practices.

The final sample consisted of five Vietnamese EMI teachers teaching content subjects in English, including Engineering, Business Administration, Biotechnology, Food Technology, and Computer Science. The participants were selected to represent variation in gender, teaching experience, and disciplinary traditions, which may influence beliefs about language use and technology integration. To protect their confidentiality, all teachers were assigned pseudonyms. Table 1 summarises their demographic and professional backgrounds.

Table 1: Background information of participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Teaching experience (years)	Specialisation
Tam	Male	12	Engineering
Hoa	Female	9	Business Administration
Binh	Female	7	Biotechnology
Hanh	Female	6	Food Technology
Phuc	Male	15	Computer Science

C. Research instrument

The research instrument in this study was semi-structured interviews, selected to elicit in-depth and contextually grounded insights into how Vietnamese EMI teachers conceptualise, negotiate, and potentially reconfigure translanguaging practices in relation to emerging AI tools. As a qualitative method, semi-structured interviews efficiently balance consistency and openness by combining predetermined guiding questions with the flexibility to follow participants’ meanings

[35]. This format encourages the interviewer to probe teachers’ reasoning, clarify tensions, and pursue unanticipated but analytically important issues from participants’ narratives [35]. Such flexibility is appropriate for the present study because teachers’ perspectives toward translanguaging and AI are often shaped by tacit beliefs, situated classroom judgments, and institutional constraints that cannot be fully captured through structured instruments.

All interviews were conducted individually via Zoom, consistent with definitions of online interviewing as synchronous, video-mediated interaction that closely approximates face-to-face meetings while enabling participation across geographical locations [36]. Online interviews also gave participants chances to speak from familiar environments, which may have supported more reflective and candid accounts of professional uncertainty, classroom dilemmas, and policy pressures. Each interview lasted approximately 60–75 minutes in Vietnamese to minimise linguistic barriers as well as generate a nuanced expression of pedagogical reasoning. With participants’ consent, interviews were video-recorded, helping the researcher to attend fully to teachers’ responses during the interaction and later review the recordings during familiarisation and coding to capture subtle verbal and non-verbal cues [36]. Furthermore, individual interviews were chosen with the intention of creating a reliable reflection on potentially sensitive issues (e.g., English-only expectations, AI-related risks, and professional accountability) that teachers might be reluctant to share in groups [35].

The interview questions were informed by the stance-design-shift framework of pedagogical translanguaging. Questions on teachers’ beliefs about Vietnamese use and AI-addressed stance; questions on lesson organisation, task sequencing, and AI-supported activities examined design; and scenario-based prompts elicited examples of shift, showing how teachers adjusted language use and AI mediation in response to students’ disciplinary and linguistic difficulties. The protocol comprised four sections focusing on partici-

pants' EMI backgrounds, translanguaging stances and practices, engagement with AI tools through scenario-based prompts, and perceptions of pedagogical integration, benefits, and challenges. The interview guide also included follow-up prompts asking participants to provide concrete classroom examples, explain disciplinary differences, and describe recent experiences with AI-supported teaching decisions, which helped generate detailed accounts for later thematic comparison. To enhance methodological rigour, the protocol was piloted with an EMI teacher not included in the main sample, and minor refinements were made to ensure clarity, coherence, and logical flow.

D. Data collection and analysis

Data collection complied with a careful and ethically grounded process that suited the qualitative case study design and the sensitive nature of EMI teachers' professional reflections. After securing ethical approval, written informed consent was obtained from all five participants. The teachers were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that confidentiality was fully protected. Before the main study, the semi-structured interview protocol was piloted with one EMI teacher outside the sample. This step helped check the clarity, flow, and relevance of the questions and ensured they aligned with the realities of EMI teaching in Vietnamese higher education. Several minor adjustments were made to improve coherence. The main interviews were then conducted individually on Zoom, with participants' permission to audio- and video-record the sessions. To enable teachers to convey their experiences, beliefs, and pedagogical reasoning with nuance, the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and lasted about 60–75 minutes. All recordings were transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese before being translated into English for analysis. To minimise meaning loss, the researcher repeatedly compared translated excerpts with original Vietnamese transcripts during coding and quotation selection.

The interview data analysis was guided by the six-phase framework for thematic analysis

[37]. Analysis began with repeated reading of all transcripts to develop familiarity with participants' narratives and identify recurring pedagogical patterns. During this phase, analytic memos were written after each transcript to record early interpretive observations, particularly regarding how teachers described language choices, AI use, and institutional tensions. Initial coding was then conducted in NVivo 14 through line-by-line coding of meaning units. Codes were first generated inductively from participants' own wording (e.g., Vietnamese for conceptual clarification, AI for bilingual prompting, English-only assessment pressure), before being compared and grouped into broader conceptual categories. After this first coding cycle, related codes were merged, refined, or renamed to reduce overlap and improve analytical consistency. A second coding cycle then examined how these emerging categories corresponded to the study's framework, allowing both data-driven and theory-informed interpretation. Theme development proceeded through iterative comparison across participants and disciplines. Codes that described similar pedagogical functions were clustered into provisional themes, which were repeatedly reviewed against the full data set to ensure internal coherence and distinction between themes. For example, codes related to Vietnamese explanation, bilingual brainstorming, and disciplinary clarification were consolidated under teachers' translanguaging stance and classroom shifts, whereas codes concerning AI prompting, output refinement, and concern about shallow learning were grouped under AI as a mediational resource in translanguaging design. Themes were revised several times until they clearly represented both shared patterns and discipline-specific variation. Table 2 presents the process of coding development and thematic generation.

Trustworthiness was supported through four procedures. Member checking involved three participants confirming the accuracy of summary interpretations. Peer debriefing was conducted with a colleague experienced in qualitative language education, who reviewed coded excerpts and of-

Table 2: Coding development and thematic generation

Initial codes	Focused categories	Final themes	Framework dimension
Vietnamese used for difficult concepts	Strategic L1 scaffolding	Teachers’ translanguaging stance and classroom shifts in EMI practice	Stance / Shift
English for reports and exams	Language separation by pedagogical stage	Teachers’ translanguaging stance and classroom shifts in EMI practice	Design
Vietnamese brainstorming before English speaking	Bilingual sequencing	Teachers’ translanguaging stance and classroom shifts in EMI practice	Design
AI used to simplify explanation	AI-assisted content mediation	AI as a mediational resource in translanguaging design	Design
Vietnamese prompts to AI	Bilingual prompting practices	AI as a mediational resource in translanguaging design	Design
English refinement after AI output	AI-supported output regulation	AI as a mediational resource in translanguaging design	Shift
AI causes shallow reading	Critical concerns about AI dependence	AI as a mediational resource in translanguaging design	Stance
Safety requires a Vietnamese explanation	Discipline-sensitive language decisions	Institutional and disciplinary conditions shaping translanguaging design and shift	Shift
Lack of AI policies	Institutional uncertainty	Institutional and disciplinary conditions shaping translanguaging design and shift	Stance

ferred alternative views. An audit trail was kept through coding memos, theme revision notes, and NVivo version tracking. Finally, rich quotations were included to ensure transparency between data and claims.

E. Ethical consideration

This study followed established ethical standards for research with human participants, with particular concentration on participants’ rights, professional security, and well-being [38]. Before data collection, all teachers were fully informed about the study’s aims, interview procedure, recording arrangement, and how the data would be used. Each participant submitted written informed consent, including permission for audio- and video-recording, anonymised reporting, and safe data storage. Participation was totally voluntary, and teachers were reminded that they could skip any question or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To protect anonymity, pseudonyms were used, and all identifying details were removed from transcripts and publications. Confidentiality was further safeguarded through the encrypted storage of recordings and transcripts, with access limited to the researchers.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

Drawing on the interviews, teachers’ accounts reflected the three analytical dimensions of translanguaging pedagogy: their beliefs about legitimate language use in EMI (stance), their planned bilingual and AI-supported instructional sequencing (design), and their flexible adjustments during disciplinary teaching (shift). The final three themes reported below emerged from iterative comparison between inductive coding patterns and the stance-design-shift analytical lens.

Teachers’ translanguaging stance and classroom shifts in EMI practice

All participants described their EMI classrooms as formally English-medium, with English serving as the language of lectures, assessment, and disciplinary conventions. However, none of the teachers reported maintaining English-only interaction throughout teaching. Instead, they applied purposeful alternation between English and Vietnamese to meet pedagogical demands. All of them indicated that Vietnamese was used when English became a barrier to content understanding. Mr. Tam (Engineering) stated that English framed the lesson, but Vietnamese offered ped-

agogical support. He explained that ‘English is the official medium in class, but Vietnamese is a strategic linguistic tool to scaffold learning, especially when concepts are abstract or highly technical’ [39]. Similarly, Ms. Binh (Biotechnology) emphasised that Vietnamese was essential for unpacking complex biological mechanisms. She said, ‘Students may understand the process in Vietnamese, but decoding academic English texts slows them down. Vietnamese helps them grasp the mechanism before dealing with the language’ [40]. Ms. Hanh (Food Technology) explained that language choice changed according to task difficulty and risk. She stated, ‘I explain theories in English first, but when I see confusion, especially in lab work, I intervene in Vietnamese. In my food technology classes, precision comes before policy’ [41].

From the interview responses, English remained dominant in final outputs such as presentations, reports, and examinations, while Vietnamese was used as an intermediate resource to support comprehension and explanation. In this case, teachers drew on Vietnamese as a temporary aid rather than as a full medium of instruction, and translanguaging was managed as a controlled practice, upholding English as the formal language while supporting students’ access to subject knowledge.

Across the five interviews, translanguaging was commonly described as supporting students’ thinking processes rather than replacing English instruction. Vietnamese was commonly used at the early stages of learning activities, particularly during idea formation, group discussion, and problem-solving. In Engineering and Computer Science, translanguaging was reported as supporting logical reasoning. Mr. Phuc (Computer Science) explained, ‘Vietnamese supports logical reasoning. English standardises technical naming and syntax. I see them as serving different mental functions’ [42]. He further reported encouraging the Vietnamese during debugging activities, where students needed to articulate chains of reasoning. He revealed, ‘Debugging is essentially storytelling. Students can explain

what went wrong more clearly in Vietnamese before expressing it in English’ [42]. In Business Administration, translanguaging was used to reduce affective problems. To Ms. Hoa, students’ fear of speaking English was a major obstacle to participation. She observed, ‘Many students have good ideas but hesitate to speak because they worry about grammar or accent’ [43]. To address this, she deliberately added bilingual stages in collaborative tasks. She shared, ‘I encourage students to brainstorm in Vietnamese first. Once the thinking is clear, shifting to English becomes less threatening’ [43].

Despite different disciplines, teachers revealed a common instructional sequence whereby students engaged in discussions supported by Vietnamese before reporting in English. This activity could help students focus on conceptual clarity prior to linguistic accuracy. This recurring sequence emerged as a clear pedagogical pattern across disciplines, indicating that teachers organised language use around distinct cognitive and communicative functions rather than alternating randomly.

In terms of professional development, only one participant reported formal exposure to the concept of translanguaging. The other teachers indicated that their bilingual practices had developed through classroom experience without theoretical guidance. Mr. Tam noted, ‘I learned the term translanguaging quite recently, but my classroom practice has embodied it for years’ [39]. Ms. Hanh similarly stated that her understanding emerged through observation rather than formal study. She explained, ‘I learned about translanguaging not through literature, but by watching how my students actually learn’ [41].

While acknowledging its pedagogical value, teachers reported a lack of institutional guidance on how translanguaging should be implemented or evaluated. Most participants stated that they relied on personal judgment and experience to determine when Vietnamese use was appropriate. Interpretively, translanguaging in this EMI context functioned as a teacher-developed adaptation to classroom realities rather than an institution-

ally recognised pedagogical approach.

Although translanguaging was widely practiced, teachers reported some limitations. A typical concern was the mismatch between bilingual instruction and monolingual assessment. Ms. Hanh stated, ‘Despite interactive bilingual teaching, assessments must be written entirely in English. This pressures weaker students and may not reflect their real understanding’ [41]. Institutional expectations for English-only instruction in EMI were superficially strong but weakly enforced. Ms. Hoa said that policy enforcement was ‘more a rhetorical expectation than a strict rule’ [43]. At the same time, this ambiguity created anxiety among some lecturers, particularly those with less experience. Ms. Binh and Ms. Hanh stated that young colleagues were afraid of professional judgement if seen using Vietnamese [40, 41]. Teachers’ classroom decisions were therefore shaped not only by pedagogical reasoning but also by implicit professional pressures surrounding EMI legitimacy.

AI as a mediational resource in translanguaging design

All participants got familiar with AI tools, particularly ChatGPT. Teachers regarded AI as a support resource rather than a replacement for teaching. AI was used to simplify explanations, generate examples, check terminology, and assist lesson preparation. Students’ AI use was widespread and largely bilingual. Teachers consistently reported that students prompted AI in Vietnamese to understand content before producing English outputs. Ms. Binh explained, ‘Encouraging students to use Vietnamese prompts can be extremely efficient. It mirrors how research teams discuss ideas in L1 before formal drafting’ [40]. Mr. Phuc described Vietnamese prompting as natural in computing contexts: ‘Students reason in Vietnamese, generate explanations through AI, and then refine the English output. That’s how professional problem-solving works’ [42].

Teachers admitted that AI-supported translanguaging improved comprehension, reduced anxiety, and increased participation. Mr. Tam ob-

served that weaker students benefited most immediately, as ‘Lower-proficiency students gain linguistic support from AI, which allows them to engage more meaningfully’ [39]. Ms. Hoa noticed increased confidence among students once the content was clarified through Vietnamese-assisted AI interaction. She noted, ‘Once they understand the content deeply through L1, they are more willing to speak in English’ [43].

Teachers also reported that bilingual AI comparison tasks helped students notice differences in tone, precision, and disciplinary conventions between languages [40–42]. However, such tasks were time-consuming and more suitable for smaller classes. Teachers incorporated AI mainly through explanation, drafting, and comparison tasks. Analytically, AI was an added mediational layer that extended existing translanguaging practices rather than replacing them.

Furthermore, all participants identified possible dangers associated with AI-supported translanguaging. A common issue was superficial engagement with content. Ms. Binh stated that ‘some students treat AI summaries as substitutes for primary reading’ [40], while Ms. Hanh reported that students’ writing ‘becomes too uniform, polished but shallow’ [41]. Teachers also noted differential AI use across proficiency levels. Stronger students were assumed to use AI critically, but weaker students relied on it passively for translation and structure. Several participants even felt worried that these differences, without guidance, could widen learning gaps [39, 42, 43]. This finding implies that teachers did not view AI as pedagogically neutral; instead, its value depended on students’ critical engagement and teachers’ regulation of use.

Institutional and disciplinary conditions shaping translanguaging design and shift

Teachers’ implementation of AI-mediated translanguaging was strongly determined by disciplinary demands and professional priorities. In laboratory-based and applied science fields, participants reported that accuracy, safety, and procedural clarity outweighed adherence to English-only expectations. Ms. Binh (Biotechnology) ex-

plained that ‘scientific comprehension cannot be compromised for the sake of policy appearance’ [40]. In other words, laboratory instruction could not rely solely on English because misinterpretation of experimental steps or hazards could have serious consequences. She also reported intentionally shifting to Vietnamese when explaining safety procedures and complex biological mechanisms, even within EMI courses. Similarly, Ms. Hanh (Food Technology) emphasised that ‘in food technology, precision comes before policy’, particularly during experiments and troubleshooting [41]. In Computer Science, bilingual activities supported by AI were consistent with disciplinary practice. Mr. Phuc described computing as an inherently hybrid linguistic environment, where English documentation coexisted with Vietnamese reasoning and explanation. He stated that ‘the notion of English-only classrooms doesn’t fit programming reality’, explaining that students often needed Vietnamese to articulate algorithmic logic before refining explanations in English [42]. He further reported that AI facilitated this process by allowing students to generate explanations through Vietnamese prompts and then evaluate and revise English outputs, mirroring professional problem-solving practices in software development [42]. Across disciplines, language flexibility was therefore justified not only by student proficiency but also by the epistemic demands of each field.

Beyond disciplinary considerations, all participants agreed on insufficient institutional support for AI-mediated translanguaging. Teachers consistently noted the shortage of formal training, ethical guidelines, and assessment frameworks that recognised AI-assisted and bilingual learning processes. Mr. Tam (Engineering) mentioned that ‘there are no detailed guidelines, so teachers rely on experience and intuition’ [39], indicating that decisions about AI use and language mediation were mainly individual. Several participants were not sure about how to evaluate AI-assisted work fairly, particularly when assessments remained strictly English-only and product-focused [40, 41]. For example, Ms. Hanh observed that

such arrangements risked obscuring the depth of students’ conceptual understanding that had been developed through AI-supported bilingual processes [41]. This matter points to a tension between emerging classroom practices and institutional structures, as teachers adapted on their own in the absence of formal pedagogical guidance.

Besides these issues, teachers reported a gradual shift in their professional roles. Rather than policing language use, they increasingly focused on facilitating reasoning, guiding evaluation, and supporting students’ critical engagement with AI outputs. Ms. Hoa described her changing role from ‘a sole content expert’ to ‘a designer of learning environments’ [43]. However, this shift was accompanied by uncertainty about professional accountability, especially in the absence of formal recognition and regulation of AI-mediated translanguaging practices. Interpretively, AI-mediated translanguaging is reshaping both classroom language practices and teachers’ pedagogical identities within EMI settings.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among the three analytical categories identified in the findings. Teachers’ use of AI-mediated translanguaging appeared at the intersection of disciplinary demands and institutional conditions. Within this space, pedagogical role adaptation became necessary as teachers negotiated policy expectations, disciplinary accuracy, and students’ meaning-making needs.

B. Discussion

Interpreted through the stance-design-shift framework [13], the findings indicate that AI-mediated translanguaging is more than an additional classroom technique. Rather, it can be understood as an emerging pedagogical configuration in which teachers’ multilingual beliefs (stance), instructional planning (design), and moment-to-moment language decisions (shift) are increasingly mediated by digital tools. This study examined Vietnamese EMI teachers’ perceptions and practices of translanguaging, their views on AI-supported translanguaging, and the

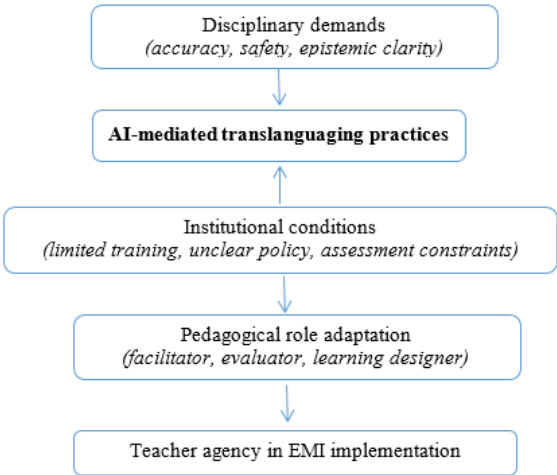


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of teachers’ AI-mediated translanguaging practices in EMI classrooms

factors shaping their adoption of AI-mediated practices. Overall, the findings show that teachers did not use translanguaging or AI as remedial strategies. Instead, they integrated both to deal with disciplinary demands, student needs, and institutional constraints in EMI settings. In this sense, bilingual practice in EMI is pedagogically purposeful rather than simply compensatory.

First, the findings indicate an evident gap between English-only EMI policy discourse and classroom practice. Teachers across disciplines reported their purposeful use of Vietnamese to scaffold content understanding, support participation, and ensure accuracy. This aligns with previous research showing that EMI classrooms often function as multilingual spaces despite monolingual policy expectations [7, 10]. The teachers’ emphasis on employing Vietnamese for conceptualisation and English for formal output is also in line with pedagogical translanguaging frameworks that stress intentional design instead of spontaneous code-switching [11–13]. However, such language allocation was not only pedagogically strategic but also epistemically regulated, since teachers adjusted language choices according to the knowledge demands of each

discipline, particularly where precision and procedural clarity were essential. In this respect, the findings support the view that the pedagogical value of translanguaging stems not from how often the L1 is used, but from how strategically it is aligned with specific learning objectives [14, 15]. Simultaneously, they challenge simplified interpretations of translanguaging as universally liberating, as teachers still maintained clear boundaries around when English remained necessary for disciplinary legitimacy and assessment.

Second, the findings offer a small-scale example of how teachers perceived generative AI as supporting and structuring bilingual practices in EMI classrooms. Teachers described AI as a mediational tool that made students’ bilingual cognitive processes more visible and manageable, particularly via Vietnamese prompting followed by English refinement. The present findings, however, suggest a more specific role, as AI operated not simply as a language support tool but as an intermediary space where disciplinary reasoning was first developed and then reformulated through language. More importantly, the findings show that AI is not merely an external aid but a co-mediational layer in translanguaging, with teachers regulating when bilingual support fosters learning and when it risks displacing disciplinary thought. This outcome supports studies suggesting that AI reshapes multilingual meaning-making by expanding the tools and spaces through which languages interact [16, 17]. Consistent with findings from EFL and EMI contexts [18, 19], AI-supported translanguaging was associated with improved comprehension and reduced anxiety, especially for low-proficiency students. Nevertheless, the findings complicate optimistic views of AI integration, as teachers often warned that its use might carry risks of shallow understanding, reduced independent reasoning, and uniform output. Moreover, teachers’ concerns about over-reliance, superficial understanding, and homogenised language reflect cautions raised in prior work on AI-assisted translation and writing [20], underscoring that AI’s pedagogical value depends on guided and critical

use.

Third, disciplinary and institutional factors have an influential impact on teachers' readiness to adopt AI-mediated translanguaging. In laboratory-based and technical fields, accuracy and safety modified flexible language use, consolidating arguments that EMI practices must be sensitive to epistemic and professional norms [22, 23]. Unlike much EMI research that highlights language policy tensions, this study shows that disciplinary constraints can directly shape when translanguaging becomes pedagogically necessary. However, teachers, with distinct expertise, reported insufficient institutional support, particularly the absence of training, ethical guidance, and assessment frameworks that acknowledge bilingual and AI-assisted learning. This mirrors common matters in Vietnamese EMI research about misalignment between policy ambitions and pedagogical realities [8, 9]. What extends prior scholarship is that institutional uncertainty encompasses not only ambiguity in language policy but also questions about teachers' responsibility for regulating AI-assisted learning. The shift in teachers' roles, from enforcing English use to facilitating reasoning and evaluation, also reflects the roles of EMI teachers as mediators of learning rather than language gatekeepers [17, 28]. Yet this mediating role is becoming more complex, as teachers are increasingly expected to evaluate both the linguistic quality and the cognitive validity of AI-supported student work. From the perspective of the stance-design-shift framework, the findings suggest that AI may be entering teachers' multilingual decision-making across these three dimensions. In this configuration, teachers legitimise multilingual resources while regulating how AI supports disciplinary meaning-making under EMI conditions. Rather than replacing existing translanguaging practices, AI appears to intensify teachers' need to make explicit pedagogical decisions about when, how, and for what purposes languages and technologies should be combined. When critically designed and institutionally supported, AI has the potential to legitimise teachers' existing bilingual

practices and make EMI more pedagogically sustainable in Vietnamese higher education.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine how Vietnamese EMI university teachers understand and enact translanguaging, especially how generative AI is integrated into these practices. The findings show that translanguaging is neither incidental nor remedial in EMI classrooms. Instead, teachers strategically combine Vietnamese, English, and AI tools to support disciplinary reasoning, manage cognitive load, and sustain student participation, and attempt to maintain English as the primary language of formal academic output. AI further amplifies these practices by making bilingual thinking processes visible and workable, particularly through Vietnamese prompting followed by English refinement. The significance of these findings is the challenge of narrow interpretations of EMI as English-only delivery. Within the limits of this case, AI-mediated translanguaging may be understood as more than simple bilingual support, as teachers linked it to disciplinary explanation, classroom participation, and task management. It constitutes a pedagogical configuration in which teachers negotiate linguistic flexibility, disciplinary accuracy, and technological mediation under English-dominant institutional norms. However, although the small single-site sample enabled analytical depth, it limited broader transferability across EMI contexts. Future research is supposed to investigate student learning outcomes, assessment alignment, and institutional policy responses across multiple EMI settings. In short, multilingual and AI-supported practices deserve more careful consideration in EMI discussions, particularly in contexts where teachers are supposed to balance English-medium expectations with students' disciplinary understanding.

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