

An Application of EPER Test in English-Medium Instruction for Academic Purposes Programs: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT: *This research aims to introduce the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading approach (EPER) test and use the corresponding English vocabulary to simplify existing textbooks, developing materials suitable for local students in English-medium instruction. Additionally, the test helps assess students' reading abilities, enabling teachers to create mixed groups where students with higher English reading skills can assist those with lower proficiency, fostering peer-to-peer cooperative learning.*

KEYWORDS: extensive reading, cooperative learning, English-medium instruction

INTRODUCTION

The Taiwanese government has initiated the "2030 Bilingual Nation Policy Development Blueprint," emphasizing the importance of English proficiency. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is being promoted in various disciplines to enhance students' language abilities and international competitiveness. However, challenges arise due to the disparity in English proficiency among students from different backgrounds and the complexity of adapting specialized subjects to English instruction. One significant challenge in EMI is the lack of appropriate teaching materials tailored to local students. Existing materials are often derived from original English textbooks designed for native speakers or international students proficient in English through tests like TOEFL or IELTS. These materials prove challenging for students, leading to reliance on translation software and hindering effective learning.

This study explores the implementation of the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading approach (EPER) test to assess students' reading abilities and simplify English instructional materials. EPER offers placement and progress tests, allowing tailored material simplification and ensuring students' comprehension. While EPER has been primarily used for language courses, this study pioneers its application in specialized subjects, aiming to document details and challenges for future reference.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING DESIGN AND METHODS

This study incorporates extensive reading principles and EPER tests, employing a pre-test and post-test methodology. The study proceeds through an action research approach, utilizing student feedback, observation data, and EPER test results to reflect and adjust teaching content and techniques.

Action research is a type of research that hopes to improve the current teaching situation in the classroom. It is a series of activities in which teachers reflect on their teaching and self-criticize. In other words, it is an important way to discover problems from the research teaching site, develop improvement plans, improve teaching quality, and demonstrate the professional development of teachers. During the implementation of this project, it is planned to use the Edinburgh Reading Ability Test as a pre-test. Subsequently, the teaching content will be adjusted according to the test. Through student feedback and teaching observation data during the process, teaching reflection and correction will be carried out. After the course, students will be allowed to retake the test. Post-test to understand the effectiveness of this teaching. The research design process and implementation steps instructions are as follows.

Conduct the EPER Placement Test before the semester begins to assess students' English proficiency levels. This will help determine their starting point and identify areas that need improvement.

Modify teaching materials based on the test results. Focus on vocabulary suitable for beginner and low-intermediate levels to ensure students can grasp the fundamental concepts effectively.

Encourage pre-learning for higher-level vocabulary. Provide additional resources and activities to help students expand their vocabulary and improve their language skills beyond the basic level.

Conduct the EPER Progress Test at the end of the semester to evaluate students' progress in reading abilities and overall language comprehension. This test will provide valuable insights into their development and identify areas needing attention.

Analyse student feedback and observation data to reflect on teaching methods. Respond to students' comments, suggestions, and any observed challenges they faced during the semester. This feedback will help refine teaching techniques and cater to students' needs.

Compare pre-test and post-test results to assess the effectiveness of the EPER-based instruction. This comparison will provide a clear picture of student's progress and the impact of the teaching approach. It will also help identify areas where further improvements can be made.

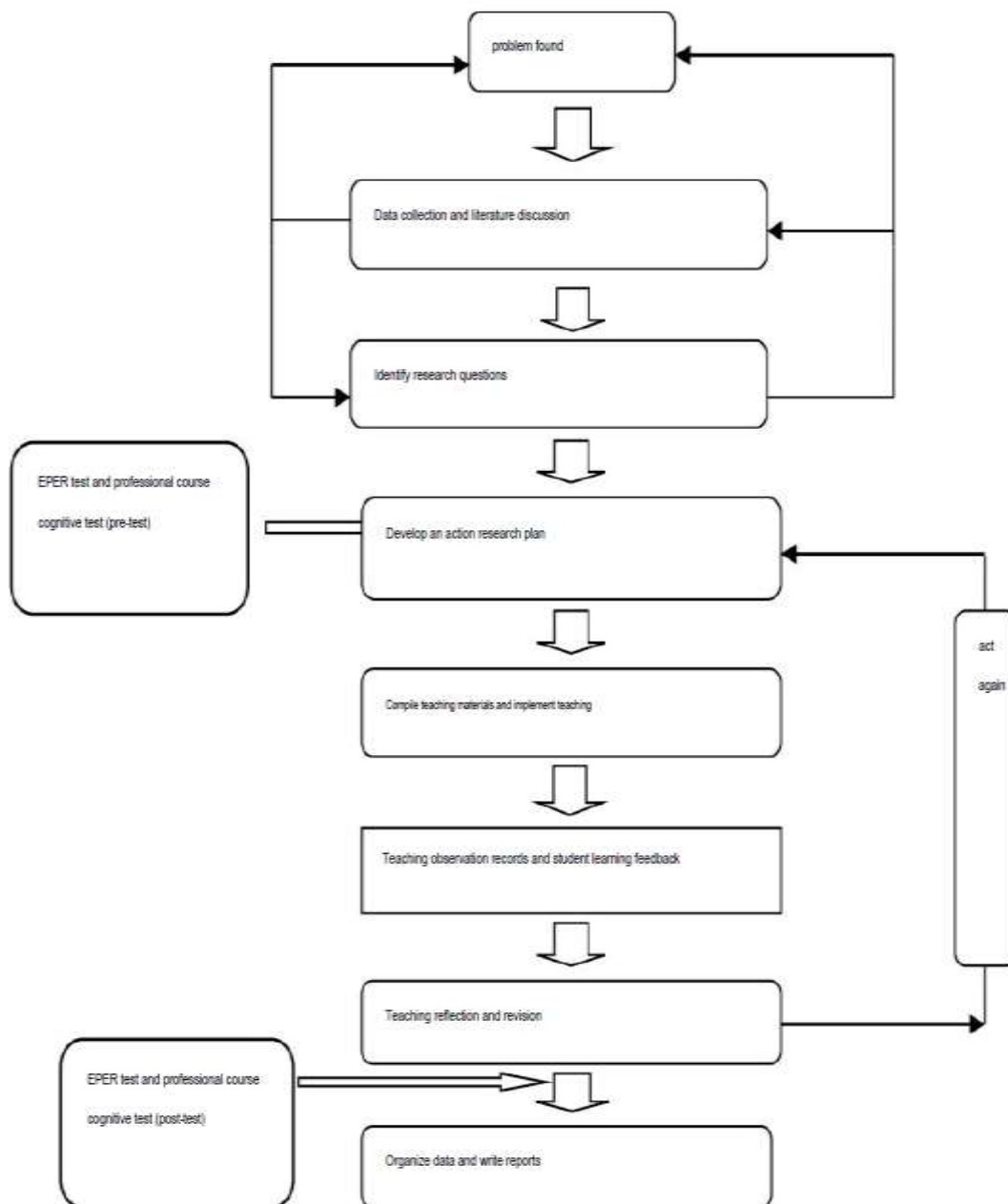


Figure 1. Research design flow chart

Teaching Research Tools

(A) EPER Test: Utilized for pre-test and post-test assessments, helping determine students' reading abilities and guide material simplification.

Table 1 EPER Test and English Test Correlation Table

EPER Level	Average Vocabulary	Student Level	Cambridge	TOEIC
G	300	Starter		
F	500	Beginner		
E	800	Elementary		150
D	1200	Low Intermediate		300
C	1600	Intermediate		450
B	1900	High Intermediate	FCE	530
A	2200	Advanced	CAE	650
X	3000	Bridge	CPE	730

*From the EPER project website

(B) Learning Feedback Form: Used to collect student feedback on the learning process, aiding in teaching content and technique adjustments.

Teaching Analysis

(A) English Reading Ability Analysis:

The pre-test results showed that 12.5% of students were beginners, 62.5% were elementary, 12.5% were low-intermediate, and 12.5% were intermediate. Material simplification primarily focused on vocabulary suitable for beginners and low-intermediate students, with advanced vocabulary introduced through pre-learning. In the post-test, there was a decrease in beginner-level students by 10%, an increase in low-intermediate students by 32.5%, indicating significant improvement in students with English proficiency between 800 and 1200 vocabulary levels.

Table 2 English proficiency pre- and post-test comparison table

EPER Level	Average Vocabulary	Student Level	Pre-test Numbers	Post-test Numbers
G	300	Starter		
F	500	Beginner	5/12.5%	2/5%
E	800	Elementary	25/62.5%	15/37.5%
D	1200	Low Intermediate	5/12.5%	18/45%
C	1600	Intermediate	5/12.5%	4/10%
B	1900	High Intermediate		1/2.5%
A	2200	Advanced		
X	3000	Bridge		
			Total:40/100%	40/100%

(C) Academic Knowledge Analysis:

Comparison with previous years' English-medium instruction revealed a 48-point increase in post-test scores after implementing EPER-based materials, demonstrating an improved understanding of professional knowledge among students.

Table 3 Professional cognitive ability comparison table

Human resources management taught in EMI	Average Pre-test Score	Average Post-test Score
2020 school year	40	80
2021 school year	42	82
2022 school year (adopt EPER)	41	89

Reflection and Suggestions:

The study revealed the challenges of implementing EMI, especially in courses requiring English language and specialized knowledge proficiency. While EPER proved beneficial, a small percentage of students struggled with English-medium instruction due to fear and resistance. Future implementations should address students' apprehensions and consider incorporating assessment and evaluation methods to enhance the learning experience.

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