

**Jagoda P. Topalov**  
University of Novi Sad  
Faculty of Philosophy,  
Department of English Studies  
jagoda.topalov@ff.uns.ac.rs  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7100-0444>

Original research paper  
UDC 378.016:811.111-057.4  
DOI: 10.19090/MV.2025.16.2.51-68

## **THE PARADOX OF PREPARATION: EMI TRAINING, NEED FRUSTRATION AND TEACHER DEMOTIVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>**

**ABSTRACT:** This study examines the demotivating role of competence and autonomy need frustration among instructors teaching via English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan 2000; Ryan & Deci 2020), it investigates whether three background variables – completion of EMI-specific training, EMI teaching experience and class composition (integrated versus separate groups of students) – explain variation in these psychological dimensions. Data were collected from university professors engaged in EMI and analyzed to assess the influence of these factors. Results revealed that EMI training was consistently associated with higher levels of both competence and autonomy frustration, whereas class composition and EMI experience showed no significant effects. These findings suggest that current training practices may inadvertently heighten instructors' awareness of challenges without sufficiently addressing structural and institutional constraints. The study underscores the need for training that not only develops pedagogical strategies but also supports instructors' psychological needs, thereby sustaining motivation and enhancing EMI teaching quality.

**Keywords:** Self-Determination Theory, needs frustration, demotivation, English as a Medium of Instruction, university professors.

## **PARADOKS PRIPREMLJENOSTI: OBUKA ZA UNIVERZITETSKU NASTAVU NA ENGLESKOM, FRUSTRACIJA POTREBA I DEMOTIVACIJA PROFESORA**

**APSTRAKT:** Istraživanje ispituje demotivaciju u nastavi na engleskom kao jeziku visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN), konceptualizovanu kroz prizmu frustracije potreba za

---

<sup>1</sup> The paper is based on research conducted as part of the project *Internationalization of the University of Novi Sad and the perspectives of English as a Medium of Instruction* (Internacionalizacija Univerziteta u Novom Sadu i perspektive engleskog kao jezika visokoškolske nastave) no. 000851277 2024 09418 003 000 001 04 002 funded by The Secretariat for Higher Education and Research of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

kompetencijom i autonomijom u okviru Teorije samoodređenja (Deci & Ryan 2000; Ryan & Deci 2020). Konkretno, istraživanje razmatra da li specifična obuka za EJVIN, nastavničko iskustvo u kontekstu EJVIN-a i sastav grupe (integrisane naspram odvojenih grupa međunarodnih studenata) predviđaju varijacije u ovim dimenzijama. Upitnik o demotivaciji popunili su univerzitetski nastavnici angažovani u nastavi putem EJVIN-a. Regresione analize pokazale su da je obuka bila jasno povezana sa višim nivoima frustracije kako kompetencije, tako i autonomije, dok sastav grupe i iskustvo u nastavi nisu imali značajne efekte. Nalazi ukazuju na to da trenutne prakse obuke mogu nehotice povećati svest nastavnika o izazovima, ali bez dovoljno pažnje posvećene strukturnim i institucionalnim ograničenjima. Rezultati naglašavaju potrebu za obukom koja ne samo da razvija pedagoške strategije, već i podržava psihološke potrebe nastavnika, čime se održava motivacija i unapređuje kvalitet nastave putem EJVIN-a.

*Ključne reči:* teorija samoodređenja, frustracija potreba, demotivacija, engleski kao jezik visokoškolske nastave, univerzitetski profesori.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in higher education has drawn considerable attention to its impact on student learning, yet the psychological experiences of instructors remain comparatively underexplored. While much EMI research highlights students' language proficiency, learning outcomes and classroom participation, relatively little systematic and theory-driven work has examined the motivation of those responsible for teaching (Lasagabaster 2018; Macaro 2018). This neglect is notable, as the sustainability and quality of EMI depend not only on institutional policies and student readiness, but also on instructors' willingness to engage and persist in this demanding pedagogical context.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan 2000; Ryan & Deci 2020) provides a valuable lens for examining teacher motivation in EMI. According to SDT, sustained motivation depends on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, or the perception of choice and control; competence, or the feeling of being capable and effective; and relatedness, or the sense of connection with others. When these needs are met, teachers are more likely to engage fully and persist in their work; when they are blocked, motivation can diminish, and disengagement may occur (Ryan & Deci 2020). In EMI contexts, teaching conditions such as institutional recognition, class composition and available training can either support or frustrate these needs, with direct consequences for instructors' professional well-being (Galloway & Ruegg 2020; Soruç & Griffiths 2018).

Recent studies in the Western Balkans and beyond reveal that EMI instructors frequently report difficulties balancing content delivery with language support, adapting teaching methods to diverse student needs and maintaining autonomy under institutional constraints (Bogdanović, Topalov & Gak 2025; Radić-Bojanić 2025; Pecorari & Malmström 2018). Although EMI training is often assumed to enhance competence and confidence, evidence suggests a more complex reality: training may raise instructors' awareness of linguistic and pedagogical challenges without equipping them with the institutional support required to address them, potentially increasing frustration rather than alleviating it (Tang 2020; Uehara & Kojima 2021).

In light of these challenges, the present study investigates competence and autonomy frustration as indicators of demotivation in EMI teaching. Specifically, it examines whether variation in these dimensions can be explained by three background variables: completion of EMI-specific training, level of EMI teaching experience, and class composition (whether international students are taught separately or integrated with domestic students).

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on SDT (Deci & Ryan 2000; Ryan & Deci 2020) to conceptualize the motivational factors influencing instructors' engagement in teaching international students in EMI contexts. SDT is a well-established macro theory of human motivation that explains the quality and persistence of engagement through the satisfaction or frustration of three basic psychological needs: autonomy (the perception of choice and self-direction in one's actions), competence (the perception of effectiveness in interacting with one's environment), and relatedness (the perception of connection and belonging with others). When the social and institutional environment supports autonomy, competence and relatedness, individuals are more likely to internalize extrinsic motivations and sustain engagement over time. Conversely, contexts that undermine these needs tend to lead to controlled motivation or amotivation. Whereas unmet psychological needs may limit the realization of individual growth, the active thwarting of these needs has been linked to defensiveness, reduced well-being and even the onset of psychopathology (Bartholomew et al. 2011). In line with this, scholars have recently emphasized that it is not only the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of psychological needs that matters, but also the possibility that these needs may be actively frustrated or undermined (Chen et al. 2015). Building on this perspective, competence satisfaction reflects a sense of effectiveness and capability in achieving desired outcomes, whereas competence frustration is characterized by

feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Similarly, autonomy satisfaction refers to experiencing self-determination, willingness and volition in one's actions, while autonomy frustration emerges when individuals feel controlled by external demands or internalized pressures (Chen et al. 2015).

In EMI settings, the teaching of international students presents unique challenges and opportunities that can influence these motivational processes. Linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom may enhance intrinsic motivation for instructors who value intercultural engagement but may also frustrate the need for competence when adequate training, resources, or institutional support are lacking. Similarly, institutional recognition, fair compensation and appreciation from students can bolster relatedness and promote more self-determined forms of motivation, whereas their absence may lead to controlled motivation or disengagement (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2017).

This study captures two dimensions consistent with SDT, the first being perceived ineffectiveness and lack of institutional recognition and the second being lack of autonomy and classroom connection. Perceived ineffectiveness primarily reflects competence need frustration, encompassing experiences of difficulty adapting teaching methods, challenges posed by language and cultural barriers, and the lack of institutional acknowledgment or compensation. These perceptions can erode teachers' sense of professional effectiveness and value within the institution (Slomp et al. 2018). Lack of autonomy and classroom connection, on the other hand, primarily reflects autonomy need frustration, including feelings of low purpose, insufficient prior experience to make confident instructional decisions, and inadequate institutional support. While some aspects also touch on student appreciation, the dominant theme is reduced volition and control over one's teaching in the EMI setting, with such experiences having been shown to predict lower engagement and higher burnout in teaching contexts (Van den Broeck et al. 2010; Bartholomew et al. 2011). Framing these dimensions within SDT allows for a more in-depth understanding of how both personal experiences and institutional structures influence instructors' motivation to adapt their teaching methods for international students in EMI environments. This theoretical grounding provides a basis for interpreting factor analytic results and for designing interventions that enhance need satisfaction and, in turn, more self-determined forms of motivation.

Although relatedness is a fundamental need within SDT, prior research suggests that competence and autonomy are more directly implicated in task-specific demotivation and disengagement (Ryan & Deci 2000; Vansteenkiste & Ryan 2013). In line with this, the present study focused on competence and autonomy frustration, as

these needs are most likely to capture the specific challenges instructors face in EMI contexts, such as linguistic barriers, institutional constraints and limited instructional volition.

When it comes to extralinguistic and contextual factors that may facilitate the development of self-determined beliefs and behavior, EMI training is a direct avenue for competence support, as it provides instructors with pedagogical strategies for managing linguistic diversity and integrating content and language. Prior research shows that EMI preparation courses improve instructors' perceived teaching efficacy, adaptability and confidence in classroom interaction (Macaro et al. 2018; Soruç & Griffiths 2018). Lack of training, by contrast, can leave instructors feeling underprepared, leading to competence frustration and reduced autonomy in instructional decision-making.

Apart from EMI training, EMI teaching experience is another key factor influencing need satisfaction. With experience, instructors develop and internalize strategies, gain confidence in their classroom management and enhance their ability to tailor instruction to diverse student needs. Studies have shown that novice EMI instructors are more likely to report difficulties in balancing content and language demands and to experience higher levels of stress (Lasagabaster 2018; Rose & Galloway 2019). In contrast, more experienced instructors tend to perceive EMI as a professional growth opportunity rather than an additional burden.

Class composition (whether international students are taught in separate groups or integrated with domestic students) can shape both competence and autonomy perceptions. Integrated classes may require greater scaffolding and differentiated instruction, potentially increasing competence demands and constraining autonomy (Pecorari & Malmström 2018). However, integrated classrooms can also offer opportunities for intercultural learning and relatedness if effectively managed (Jiang et al. 2019). Separate classes may allow for more tailored instruction and greater instructional control, but can limit cross-cultural interaction.

Taken together, these three factors – EMI training, EMI teaching experience and class composition – represent interconnected pathways through which competence and autonomy needs are either supported or frustrated in EMI contexts. The present study adopts a demotivation perspective, conceptualizing higher levels of competence and autonomy frustration as indicators of reduced motivation to teach EMI courses. While prior research has identified a range of institutional, pedagogical and experiential factors that may shape EMI teaching experiences, less is known about how specific background characteristics, such as EMI-specific training, years of EMI teaching experience and the composition of student groups, relate to perceived

competence and autonomy in this context. Addressing this gap, the study investigates (1) the overall level of professors' demotivation when teaching in EMI settings, and (2) whether EMI training, EMI experience level and class composition can explain variation in professors' perceived competence and autonomy for EMI teaching.

### 3. METHOD

Drawing on SDT and EMI literature and relying on a cross-sectional quantitative design, this study investigates the following research questions:

1. What is the level of professors' demotivation when teaching courses in EMI settings?
2. To what extent do EMI training, EMI experience level and class composition predict professors' perceived competence and autonomy for EMI teaching?

Based on prior research, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Professors who have attended an EMI teaching preparation course will report lower competence-oriented and autonomy-oriented demotivation than those without such training.

H2: Higher EMI teaching experience levels will be associated with lower competence-oriented and autonomy-oriented demotivation.

H3: Professors teaching in integrated classes will report higher competence-oriented and autonomy-oriented demotivation than those teaching in separate classes.

#### 3.1. Participants

The sample in this study included 102 professors (male = 65, female = 37) from the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad who have so far in their careers taught at least one EMI course to international students. Table 1 displays the frequencies of the participants' academic title cross-tabulated with their experience in working with international students.

	Experience in teaching international students				Total
	Novice (1 to 5 years)	Early career (6 to 10 years)	Experienced (11 to 15 years)	Highly experienced (16 years and more)	
Full professor	11	22	24	4	61
Associate professor	10	18	3	1	32

Assistant professor	4	2	3	0	9
Total	25	42	30	5	102

Table 1. Participants' academic level across the reported experience of teaching in EMI contexts

Of the total number of participants, 9.8% reported that they took a course specializing in EMI teaching methodology organized by the University of Novi Sad, while 90.2% reported that they did not attend such a course. Furthermore, 25.5% reported they teach EMI courses to integrated groups consisting of both international and domestic students, while 74.5% teach their courses to separate groups.

### 3.2. *Instrument*

Demotivation in teaching international students in EMI contexts was measured using a nine-item scale developed for this study. Items were designed to capture experiences of basic psychological need frustration as conceptualized by SDT (Deci & Ryan 2005), with an emphasis on the EMI teaching context. The items reflected barriers, lack of purpose, and constraints that could undermine teachers' autonomy and competence. Participants rated each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree), with higher scores indicating greater demotivation and higher need frustration. Because the items were all negatively worded, no reverse coding was applied.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on nine demotivation items using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .744, exceeding the recommended minimum of .60, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant,  $\chi^2(21) = 255.55$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the correlation matrix was suitable for factor analysis. Two components had eigenvalues greater than 1 and together they explained 66.99% of the total variance (Component 1 = 48.92%, Component 2 = 18.08%, see Table 2). Communalities after extraction ranged from .536 (item 6) to .980 (item 5). After rotation, the first factor (Competence-oriented demotivation) had strong loadings from five items (items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), ranging from .711 to .959. The second factor (Autonomy-oriented demotivation) had strong loadings from four items (items 6, 7, 8 and 9), ranging from .582 to .838. Cross-loadings were minimal, and the rotated solution exhibited a simple structure that aligned with theoretical expectations from SDT.

Item	Item (short description)	Communality	Factor 1	Factor 2	$\alpha$
1	Frustration due to language/cultural barriers	0.606	0.711	0.319	.819
2	Frustration due to not being paid	0.614	0.761	0.187	
3	No clear benefit from extra effort	0.762	0.873	0.010	
4	Effort not recognized by institution	0.586	0.757	0.113	
5	Lack of purpose in EMI teaching	0.980	0.959	0.245	
6	Difficult to find motivation to adapt methods	0.536	0.061	0.582	.768
7	Lack of experience reduces motivation	0.760	0.241	0.838	
8	Efforts limited by constraints on teaching	0.806	0.304	0.802	
9	Demotivated by lack of institutional support/resources	0.678	0.027	0.823	

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis of demotivation indicators in EMI teaching

For each factor, mean scores were calculated by averaging the item scores. Higher means indicate stronger demotivation related to the specific need frustration domain.

### *3.3. Procedure*

Participants completed the survey online via Google Forms during November and December 2024. The dataset contained no missing values. Categorical predictors were coded for analysis as follows: EMI training (0 = No, 1 = Yes), EMI teaching experience level (0 = Novice, 1 = Early career, 2 = Experienced, 3 = Highly experienced; with Novice as the reference category in regression) and Class composition (0 = Integrated classes, 1 = Separate classes). Factor scores for competence-oriented and autonomy-oriented demotivation were computed as the mean of the respective items identified in the exploratory factor analysis. All variables were checked for coding accuracy prior to analysis. The data were analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 25) using both descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis) and inferential statistics, including exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analyses.

## 4. RESULTS

To address the first research question (RQ1: What is the level of professors' demotivation when teaching courses in EMI settings?) descriptive statistics was calculated for each item and for the two composite factor scores representing competence-oriented and autonomy-oriented demotivation. To address the second research question (RQ2: Can EMI training, EMI experience level, and group composition explain the professors' level of perceived competence and autonomy for teaching EMI courses?), two multiple regression analyses were conducted, with competence-oriented demotivation and autonomy-oriented demotivation as dependent variables, respectively, and EMI training, class composition and years of EMI teaching experience as predictors.

Table 3 presents the results of descriptive statistics that was calculated for each item and for the two composite factor scores (competence-oriented demotivation and autonomy-oriented demotivation).

Item (short description)	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Frustration due to language/cultural barriers	2.40	1.37	0.57	-0.9
Frustration due to not being paid	3.38	1.39	-0.42	-1.01
No clear benefit from extra effort	2.67	1.33	0.17	-1.07
Effort not recognized by institution	2.59	1.28	0.21	-1.01
Lack of purpose in EMI teaching	2.28	1.27	0.48	-0.99
Competence composite score	2.65	0.97	-0.10	-0.86
Difficult to find motivation to adapt methods	2.19	1.16	0.41	-1.18
Lack of experience reduces motivation	1.97	1.10	0.92	0.01
Efforts limited by constraints on teaching	2.80	1.45	0.09	-1.30
Demotivated by lack of institutional support/resources	2.16	1.18	0.82	-0.12
Autonomy composite score	2.51	0.88	-0.08	-0.84

Table 3. Descriptive indicators of demotivation in EMI teaching

Item means ranged from 1.97 (Lack of experience reduces motivation) to 3.38 (Frustration due to not being paid). The competence-oriented demotivation factor had a mean of 2.65 (SD = 0.97), while autonomy-oriented demotivation had a mean of 2.51 (SD = 0.88), both below the midpoint of the 5-point scale, indicating that on average respondents reported relatively low to moderate demotivation. A paired samples t-test revealed that the competence-oriented

demotivation was statistically significantly higher than the autonomy-oriented demotivation ( $t = 4.653$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Skewness and kurtosis values for all items and composite scores were within acceptable ranges ( $\pm 1$ ), suggesting no severe deviations from normality.

A multiple regression was conducted to examine whether EMI training, class composition (separate vs. integrated), and years of EMI teaching experience predicted professors' perceived competence demotivation in teaching EMI courses (see Table 4). The overall model was not statistically significant,  $F(3,97) = 1.37$ ,  $p = .256$ , and explained 4.1% of the variance in competence ( $R^2 = .041$ ).

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
Constant	2.50	0.30	-	8.21	< .001	[1.89, 3.10]
EMI training	0.50	0.34	0.15	2.48	0.022	[-0.17, 1.18]
Class composition	0.23	0.22	0.11	1.07	0.290	[-0.20, 0.67]
Years of EMI experience	-0.04	0.11	-0.04	-0.38	0.707	[-0.26, 0.18]
Note. $R^2 = .041$ , $F(3,97) = 1.37$ , $p = .256$ .						

Table 4. Effects of training, class composition, and experience on teacher competence need frustration in EMI contexts

Of the three predictors, only EMI training emerged as a significant positive predictor ( $B = 0.50$ ,  $SE = 0.34$ ,  $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $t = 2.48$ ,  $p = .022$ ), indicating that professors who completed EMI training reported higher competence-oriented demotivation scores than those who did not. Class composition ( $p = .290$ ) and years of EMI teaching experience ( $p = .707$ ) were not significant predictors.

Another multiple regression was conducted to examine whether EMI training, class composition, and years of EMI teaching experience predicted autonomy-oriented demotivation (see Table 5). The overall model was statistically significant,  $F(3, 97) = 2.76$ ,  $p = .046$ , explaining 7.9% of the variance in autonomy scores ( $R^2 = .079$ ).

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p	95% CI for B
Constant	2.56	0.27	-	9.40	< .001	[2.02, 3.09]
EMI training	0.69	0.30	0.23	2.27	0.025	[0.09, 1.29]
Class composition	0.19	0.20	0.10	0.98	0.332	[-0.20, 0.58]
Years of EMI experience	-0.12	0.10	-0.12	-1.25	0.216	[-0.32, 0.07]
Note. $R^2 = .079$ , $F(3,97) = 2.76$ , $p = .046$						

Table 5. Effects of training, class composition, and experience on teacher autonomy need frustration in EMI contexts

EMI training emerged as a significant positive predictor ( $B = 0.69$ ,  $SE = 0.30$ ,  $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p = .025$ ), indicating that professors who completed EMI training reported higher autonomy-oriented demotivation scores. Class composition and years of EMI experience were not significant predictors (both  $p > .05$ ).

Because EMI training emerged as a significant predictor in the regression analyses for both competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation, independent samples t-tests were conducted to explore whether specific demotivation items differed between professors who completed EMI training and those who did not (see Table 6).

Item (short description)	No EMI training M (SD)	EMI training M (SD)	Mean diff.	t	p
Frustration due to language/cultural barriers	2.20 (1.28)	3.10 (0.88)	-0.90	-2.18	.032
Frustration due to not being paid	2.30 (1.34)	3.30 (1.34)	-1.00	-2.23	.028
No clear benefit from extra effort	3.38 (1.41)	3.40 (1.35)	-0.02	-0.04	.967
Effort not recognized by institution	2.59 (1.34)	3.40 (1.07)	-0.81	-1.86	.066
Lack of purpose in EMI teaching	2.53 (1.25)	3.10 (1.45)	-0.57	-1.34	.183
Difficult to find motivation to adapt methods	2.09 (1.14)	3.10 (0.99)	-1.01	-2.71	.008
Lack of experience reduces motivation	1.87 (1.10)	2.90 (0.57)	-1.03	-2.91	.004
Efforts limited by constraints on teaching	2.72 (1.44)	3.60 (1.35)	-0.88	-1.85	.067
Demotivated by lack of institutional support/resources	2.07 (1.17)	3.00 (1.05)	-0.93	-2.43	.017

Table 6. Independent samples t-tests comparing demotivation items by EMI training status

Results showed that EMI-trained professors reported significantly higher frustration due to language/cultural barriers,  $t = -2.18$ ,  $p = .032$  and frustration due to not being paid,  $t = -2.23$ ,  $p = .028$ . They were also more likely to report difficulty finding motivation to adapt teaching methods,  $t = -2.71$ ,  $p = .008$ , lack of experience as a source of reduced motivation,  $t = -2.91$ ,  $p = .004$  and demotivation due to lack of institutional support/resources,  $t = -2.43$ ,  $p = .017$ . Although differences for effort not being recognized by the institution and efforts being

limited by constraints on teaching approached significance ( $p = .066$  and  $.067$ , respectively), they did not reach the conventional threshold.

In the following section, these findings will be examined in relation to existing research and theoretical frameworks to explore possible explanations for the observed patterns of demotivation among EMI professors.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The goal of the research reported in this paper was to investigate competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation, as framed within SDT (Deci & Ryan 2005; Ryan & Deci 2020), among professors who teach international students using EMI. Specifically, the study addressed two questions: (1) What is the level of professors' competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation in EMI teaching? and (2) Can EMI training, EMI experience level, and group composition explain variation in these two demotivation dimensions? Descriptive analyses indicated that mean scores for both competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation were below the midpoint of the 5-point scale, suggesting generally low to moderate demotivation. However, paired-samples testing revealed that competence-oriented demotivation was significantly higher than autonomy-oriented demotivation, suggesting that competence-related challenges are a more prominent source of demotivation in EMI teaching than autonomy-related ones. From an SDT perspective, professors may experience greater frustration when they perceive that their skills, resources, or institutional recognition are insufficient to meet the demands of teaching in EMI contexts. Such perceptions may be heightened by the additional linguistic and cultural complexities of working with international students. In contrast, autonomy-oriented factors, while still relevant, may be less salient either because professors retain a degree of choice in instructional approaches or because restrictions on autonomy are perceived as a general feature of academic work, not unique to EMI (Han & Yin 2016).

Examining the individual survey items reveals that demotivation in EMI teaching arises from a mix of personal, institutional and structural challenges. Professors noted frustrations related to communication barriers, inadequate compensation and the limited recognition of their additional efforts. Some also pointed to constraints on teaching methods, lack of prior experience with international students and insufficient resources as factors that made it harder to adapt and act autonomously in the classroom. While overall demotivation levels were low to moderate, these indicators suggest that specific external constraints and perceptions of reduced professional effectiveness can nonetheless temper

enthusiasm for EMI teaching. Examining these patterns in light of previous research suggests that the challenges identified in this study are not isolated to the present context but are consistent with broader trends reported in EMI literature. Prior studies have documented similar sources of demotivation, including persistent language and cultural barriers (Tang 2020), insufficient pedagogical flexibility and resources (Zheng & Choi 2024), and a lack of institutional recognition and support (Uehara & Kojima 2021). The absence of financial or professional incentives for EMI teaching, as noted by Macaro (2018), further echoes the frustration linked to inadequate compensation and undervaluation observed here. Taken together, these parallels suggest that both the competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation reported by professors in this study reflect structural and contextual factors that have been repeatedly identified across diverse EMI settings, underscoring the need for systemic responses at policy and institutional levels.

Regression analyses showed that, across both demotivation dimensions, EMI training emerged as the only significant predictor, with professors who had received EMI training reporting higher demotivation scores. In contrast, class composition (separate vs. integrated) and years of EMI experience were not significant predictors. Overall, these findings suggest that while general demotivation levels were low to moderate, the observed positive association between EMI training and both competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation may reflect heightened awareness of instructional challenges among trained professors, a pattern that aligns with SDT's emphasis on the role of contextual factors in supporting or undermining the basic psychological needs in EMI settings. One possible explanation is that EMI training increases awareness of the pedagogical, linguistic, and intercultural demands of teaching in such settings, making professors more aware of the gap between recommended practices and their own institutional realities. When adequate institutional support, resources, or policy alignment are lacking, this heightened awareness may translate into greater frustration and demotivation, as the ideal conditions outlined in training remain unattainable in practice. Similar patterns have been observed in professional development research, where increased expertise can amplify dissatisfaction if the work environment does not enable the application of newly acquired skills (cf. Borg 2018; Macaro 2018; Rose et al. 2021). In the context of EMI, Macaro (2018) and Galloway and Ruegg (2020) have noted that training alone is insufficient to improve teaching outcomes unless accompanied by structural changes and sustained institutional backing. From the perspective of SDT, this finding may

reflect a mismatch between increased competence awareness and the satisfaction of the other two basic psychological needs: autonomy and relatedness. EMI training is designed to enhance perceived competence by equipping professors with new strategies and knowledge. However, if the institutional context does not provide sufficient autonomy (e.g., flexibility in course design, freedom to adapt materials) or relatedness (e.g., collegial support, recognition), the result may be a heightened sense of constraint and isolation. In this way, training can inadvertently magnify demotivation by making the unmet needs more salient. Previous studies (e.g., Lamb 2017; Sugino 2010) have reported that professional development without corresponding systemic support can exacerbate feelings of frustration, particularly when teachers are aware of what should be done but are unable to implement these practices.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the level and sources of professors' demotivation in teaching courses through EMI, as well as to examine whether EMI training, EMI experience and class composition could predict competence- and autonomy-oriented demotivation. Descriptive analyses revealed that while overall demotivation levels were low to moderate, professors reported notable frustration stemming from communication barriers, inadequate compensation and the lack of tangible benefits and recognition for their efforts. Paired-samples analysis indicated that competence-oriented demotivation was significantly higher than autonomy-oriented demotivation, suggesting that perceived professional effectiveness is a more pressing concern than autonomy in this context. Regression analyses identified EMI training as the only significant predictor of both demotivation dimensions, with trained professors reporting higher demotivation scores – likely reflecting increased awareness of pedagogical and institutional shortcomings when recommended practices cannot be implemented. This pattern aligns with SDT (Deci & Ryan 2005), which posits that motivation depends on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness. While EMI training may enhance perceived competence, unmet needs for autonomy (e.g., flexibility in course design) and relatedness (e.g., institutional recognition and collegial support) can undermine the overall motivation. Similar findings have been reported in professional development literature, where training without corresponding systemic change may heighten awareness of constraints, thereby increasing dissatisfaction (Borg 2018; Lamb 2017; Macaro et al. 2018; Rose et al. 2021; Sugino 2010).

These findings underscore the need for universities to couple EMI training with sustained institutional and structural support to ensure the fulfilment of all three basic psychological needs outlined in SDT. Beyond equipping professors with pedagogical strategies, institutions should foster environments that provide autonomy, recognize contributions and facilitate collegial engagement. Policy measures could include allowing flexibility in course design, offering tangible recognition or incentives for EMI teaching and ensuring adequate material and human resources. Drawing on suggestions from Galloway and Ruegg (2020) and Macaro (2018), follow-up initiatives such as mentoring, peer-support networks and collaborative problem-solving workshops can help bridge the gap between training and practice. In the university classroom, such systemic alignment can transform the heightened awareness gained through training into sustained motivation, innovation and improved learning experiences for international students, rather than allowing it to become a source of frustration and disengagement.

## REFERENCES

- Bartholomew, K. J., Ntoumanis, N., Ryan, R. M., Bosch, J. A., Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C. (2011). Self-determination theory and diminished functioning: The role of interpersonal control and psychological need thwarting. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37(11): 1459–1473. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211413125>
- Bogdanović, V., Topalov, J., Gak, D. (2025). Enhancing collaboration in English as a Medium of Instruction: Challenges for content area lecturers and ESP instructors, in *Jezik i društvene nauke u kontaktu: Izazovi interdisciplinarnosti*, ed. N. Ilić, J. Marčeta & K. Pejković (Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet): 205–261.
- Borg, S. (2018). Teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices, in *The Routledge handbook of language awareness*, ed. P. Garrett & J. M. Cots (London: Routledge): 75–91.
- Chen, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Beyers, W., Boone, L., Deci, E. L., Van der Kaap-Deeder, J., Duriez, B., Lens, W., Matos, L., Mouratidis, A., Ryan, R. M., Sheldon, K. M., Soenens, B., Van Petegem S., Verstuyf, J. (2015). Basic psychological need satisfaction, need frustration, and need strength across four cultures. *Motivation and Emotion* 39(2): 216–236.
- Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry* 11(4): 227–268. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01)

- Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M. (2005). *Self-determination theory: An approach to human motivation and personality*. Retrieved from <http://selfdeterminationtheory.org>
- Galloway, N., Ruegg, R. (2020). The provision of student support on English Medium Instruction programmes in Japan and China. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 45: 100846. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2020.100846>
- Han, J., Yin, H. (2016). Teacher motivation: Definition, research development and implications for teachers. *Cogent Education* 3(1): 1217819. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1217819>
- Jiang, L., Zhang, L. J., May, S. (2019). Implementing English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in China: Teachers' practices and perceptions, and students' learning motivation and needs. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 22(2): 107–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1231166>
- Lamb, M. (2017). The motivational dimension of language teaching. *Language Teaching* 50(3): 301–346. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000088>
- Lasagabaster, D. (2018). Fostering team teaching: Mapping out a research agenda for English-medium instruction at university level. *Language Teaching* 51(3): 400–416. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444818000113>
- Macaro, E. (2018). *English medium instruction: Content and language in policy and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., Dearden, J. (2018). *English Medium Instruction: Content and language in policy and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching* 53(1): 36–76. <https://doi:10.1017/S0261444817000350>
- Pecorari, D., Malmström, H. (2018). At the crossroad of TESOL and English Medium Instruction. *TESOL Quarterly* 52(3): 497–515. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.470>
- Radić-Bojanić, B. (2025). English as a medium of instruction as part of the internationalization strategy at the University of Novi Sad. *Current Issues in Language Planning*: 26 (5): 706–723. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2024.2405759>
- Rose, H., Curle, S., Aizawa, I., Thompson, G. (2021). What drives success in English medium taught courses? The interplay between language

- proficiency, academic skills, and motivation. *Studies in Higher Education* 46(11): 2301–2315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1590690>
- Rose, H., Galloway, N. (2019). *Global Englishes for language teaching: Preparing teachers for English Medium Instruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist* 55(1): 68–78.
- Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L. (2020). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Skaalvik, E. M., Skaalvik, S. (2017). Teacher stress and teacher self-efficacy: Relations and consequences, in *Educator stress: An occupational health perspective*, ed. T. Mendonça McIntyre, S. E. McIntyre & D. J. Francis (Cham: Springer International Publishing): 101–125.
- Slemp, G. R., Kern, M. L., Patrick, K. J., Ryan, R. M. (2018). Leader autonomy support in the workplace: A meta-analytic review. *Motivation and Emotion* 42(5): 706–724. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-018-9698-y>
- Soruç, A., Griffiths, C. (2018). English as a Medium of Instruction: Students' strategies. *ELT Journal* 72(1): 38–48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccx017>
- Sugino, T. (2010). Teacher demotivational factors in the Japanese language teaching context. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 3: 216–226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.036>
- Tang, K. N. (2020). Challenges and importance of teaching English as a medium of instruction in Thailand international colleges. *Journal of English as an International Language* 15(2): 97–118.
- Uehara, T., Kojima, N. (2021). Prioritizing English-medium instruction teachers' needs for faculty development and institutional support: A best–worst scaling approach. *Education Sciences* 11(8): 384. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11080384>
- Van den Broeck, A., Vansteenkiste, M., De Witte, H., Lens, W. (2010). Unemployed individuals' work values and job flexibility: An explanation from expectancy-value theory and self-determination theory. *Applied Psychology* 59(2): 296–317. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2009.00391.x>
- Vansteenkiste, M., Ryan, R. M. (2013). On psychological growth and vulnerability: Basic psychological need satisfaction and need frustration as a unifying principle. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration* 23(3): 263–280.

Zheng, Q., Choi, T. H. (2024). English-medium instruction as an internationalisation strategy at a second-tier Chinese University: instructors' challenges and their shaping factors. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 9(1): 76. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00295-9>

Jagoda P. Topalov  
Univerzitet u Novom Sadu

## PARADOKS PRIPREMLJENOSTI: OBUKA ZA UNIVERZITETSKU NASTAVU NA ENGLESKOM, FRUSTRACIJA POTREBA I DEMOTIVACIJA PROFESORA

### *Sažetak*

Ovo istraživanje bavi se demotivacijom univerzitetskih nastavnika u nastavi na engleskom kao jeziku visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN), posmatranom kroz teorijski okvir teorije samoodređenja (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Polazna pretpostavka istraživanja jeste da održiva motivacija nastavnika zavisi od zadovoljenja osnovnih psiholoških potreba za kompetencijom i autonomijom, dok njihova frustracija dovodi do smanjenog angažovanja i odustajanja. Ispitivano je u kojoj meri tri nezavisne varijable – završena specifična obuka za EJVIN, nivo nastavničkog iskustva u EJVIN nastavi i sastav studentske grupe (odvojene ili integrisane grupe međunarodnih i domaćih studenata) – mogu objasniti razlike u stepenu frustracije kompetencije i autonomije. Podaci su prikupljeni od nastavnika zaposlenih na Tehničkom fakultetu Univerziteta u Novom Sadu, koji su uključeni u izvođenje nastave na engleskom jeziku. Regresione analize ukazale su na jasan obrazac: završena obuka za EJVIN povezana je sa višim nivoom frustracije kako u domenu kompetencije, tako i u domenu autonomije, dok druge varijable – iskustvo u izvođenju EJVIN nastave i sastav studentske grupe – nisu pokazale značajan uticaj. Taj rezultat upućuje na zaključak da postojeći programi obuke, iako osmišljeni da podrže nastavnike, mogu nehotice pojačati njihovu svest o izazovima i ograničenjima sa kojima se suočavaju, a da pri tom ne nude dovoljno praktičnih alata i institucionalne podrške za njihovo prevazilaženje. Rezultati istraživanja imaju značajne praktične implikacije. Potrebno je da obuke za EJVIN ne budu samo usmerene na razvijanje pedagoških i metodičkih strategija, već i na jačanje osećaja kompetentnosti i autonomije nastavnika. To podrazumeva i sistemsku podršku univerziteta kroz prepoznavanje dodatnog rada, obezbeđivanje adekvatnih resursa i veću fleksibilnost u prilagođavanju metoda nastave. Na taj način mogu se stvoriti uslovi za očuvanje motivacije nastavnika i unapređenje kvaliteta visokoškolske nastave na engleskom jeziku.

*Ključne reči:* teorija samoodređenja, frustracija potreba, demotivacija, engleski kao jezik visokoškolske nastave, univerzitetski profesori.

Received: 18 August 2025

Accepted: 6 October 2025