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## LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF EMI EDUCATOR TRAINING: INSIGHTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** Unlike Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where a certain degree of educators' familiarity with linguistics may be expected, an EMI environment typically does not involve explicit knowledge of linguistic phenomena. However, educators in EMI classrooms frequently face doubts about their language proficiency in English, often disproportionately focusing on linguistic performance rather than the content and delivery of the lecture. Since it can arguably be claimed that a vast majority of academic publications related to EMI focus on pedagogical aspects, a need to consider the role of linguistics in EMI teacher training is due. Hence, this paper addresses the scope, method, and need of explicit linguistic instruction following the elaboration of classroom discussion data from teacher-training lectures of NNES educators from the University of Kragujevac in the period of 2020-2024. The presented insights underscore the significance of incorporating a pragmatic and context-sensitive approach to EMI training, balancing linguistic accuracy with communicative clarity and intercultural awareness.

**Keywords:** EMI, teacher training, internationalization, linguistic aspects of EMI, English as a *lingua franca*.

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## ЈЕЗИЧКИ АСПЕКТИ ОБУКЕ УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКИХ ПРЕДАВАЧА ЗА НАСТАВУ НА ЕНГЛЕСКОМ ЈЕЗИКУ: УВИДИ СА УНИВЕРЗИТЕТА У КРАГУЈЕВЦУ

**АПСТРАКТ:** За разлику од интегрисаног учења садржаја и језика (енгл. CLIL), где се од наставника може очекивати одређени степен познавања лингвистике, окружење у ком је фокус на енглеском као језику високошколске наставе (ЕЈВИН) обично не подразумева експлицитно познавање лингвистичких феномена. Међутим, наставници универзитета укључени у програме енглеског као језика високошколске наставе често сумњају у своје знање енглеског језика, те се неретко несразмерно фокусирају на језичке вештине, а не на садржај и начин извођења наставе. Колико нам је познато, већина академских публикација које се баве ЕЈВИН-ом фокусира се превасходно на педагошке аспекте, па се чини сасвим оправданим размотрити улогу лингвистике у обуци наставника у датој сфери. Имајући у виду претходно наведено, у тренутном истраживању покушавамо да сагледамо обим, метод и потребу за експлицитном наставом лингвистике, а на основу обраде података са предавања за обуку неизворних едукатора са Универзитета у Крагујевцу од 2020. до 2024. године. Резултати наглашавају значај укључивања прагматичног и контекстуално осетљивог приступа ЕЈВИН-у, уз праву равнотежу прецизне употребе језика, јасног преношења комуникативне намере и интеркултуралне свести.

**Кључне речи:** енглески као језик високошколске наставе, обука предавача, интернационализација, језички аспекти, енглески као *lingua franca*.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For better or worse, the strategic move of educational institutions to extend their reach beyond local borders in order to remain competitive in the academic arena has led to a worldwide adoption of practices that could allow linguistically and culturally diverse groups of students to be educated through a shared medium of instruction. This is especially the case in higher education (HE), where the increased demands for the internationalization of studies and research, especially in Europe and Asia (Wang, Yuan & De Costa 2025: 146), additionally driven by the rising academic mobility levels of both students and faculty members, have brought about the need to bridge the gap of successfully conveying academic content in a linguistically diverse classroom. The choice of English (as the apparent *lingua franca*) for the shared instruction medium has engendered English Medium of Instruction (EMI), a teaching model whereby academic content is taught by means of English as the teaching language. Although the last decade has witnessed an exponential proliferation of academic papers elaborating on various aspects of EMI (e.g. its definition, implementation and development, domains of application, design and realization of policies, stakeholder perspectives), the question of its

status as a full-fledged discipline distinct from its ‘paternal’ disciplines of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) or ESP (English for Specific Purposes) has still remained largely unanswered. Furthermore, the lack of clear demarcation lines between EMI and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning, representing a blend of teaching non-linguistic content *and* English as a language), further complicates its status as a separate discipline and illustrates its complexity in numerous ways (see Macaro 2018 for a detailed elaboration). This notwithstanding, the fact remains that EMI represents an area of increasing interest and, as such, demands further exploration. To that end, this paper aims to provide a description of a linguistic framework that might be employed in the training of non-native English-speaking (NNES) instructors for their engagement in an EMI classroom, focusing solely on English serving as a vehicle of transferring knowledge while itself not being the subject of learning.

Among numerous topics covered in the research publications, two dominant thematic areas emerge in the context of EMI-based classroom: issues regarding the use of the English language in an EMI lecture and pedagogical aspects of an EMI lecture (Macaro 2018, Doiz & Lasagabaster 2020, Vander Borgh et al. 2025). Language-wise, a vast majority of publications investigate issues connected with the language proficiency of participants in an EMI lecture (NNES instructors and students), commonly elaborating on the problems of intelligibility between the participants or students’ and instructors’ opinions regarding the use of language. However, scant attention is paid to the specific linguistic aspects pertaining to the training of NNES instructors for teaching in the EMI setting (cf. Deroey 2023). Despite the purported proclivity of EMI researchers to focus on language topics at the expense of pedagogic ones (Vander Borgh et al. 2025: 2), to the best of our knowledge, no paper investigating the specific aspects of linguistic phenomena in EMI teacher-training has been published yet (Deroey 2023 touches upon the topic, but only cursory). Consequently, the present paper is aimed at filling this void as a contribution to both general considerations of linguistic training of NNES instructors and as an illustration of the implementation of such training in a specific instance of the University of Kragujevac (UNI KG). This time, it goes a bit further – from the domain almost exclusively reserved for applied linguistics (Macaro 2019: 274) incorporating findings from areas tangent with theoretical linguistics, namely corpus linguistics as well as descriptive linguistics.

## 2. LANGUAGE USE IN AN ACADEMIC (EMI) CLASSROOM

### 2.1. Background

To better understand the structure of an EMI academic lecture, it may be best to first consider empirical analyses of authentic HE lectures held by native-speakers of English. Especially helpful for such purposes are corpus-linguistic studies investigating various modes of communication in real-life classrooms. Because they reveal much about the actual language used in such situations, without speculating what language components should or should not be included, they can serve as a benchmark for EMI lectures. Naturally, it should be noted that the ‘nativeness’ of a speaker of English is in no way a guarantee that the lecture would be more successful than the one held by a NNES instructor. Numerous factors come into play, as most experienced instructors probably know. Some of them are linguistic in nature, but others may be quite beyond the realm of linguistic performance (for instance, teacher motivation, level of expertise, personal classroom involvement, and the like; Vander Borgh et al. 2025). On the other hand, it also seems futile to rely on empirically unsubstantiated or prescriptively proclaimed models of language use not corresponding to the actual teaching context *in situ*. Therefore, we think that it is best to treat the corpus-based elaborations, such as the one presented below, as the base to build upon rather than a complete frame to be uncritically adopted. In other words, it does not mean that the situation from a genuine university classroom run by a native English speaker should be uncritically mirrored in the EMI setting, but insights into the native-English linguistic performance can certainly serve as something to be observed and built upon, with all the necessary accommodations.

One of the most comprehensive corpus-based research studies investigating specificities of the HE classroom discourse was conducted by Douglas Biber (2006). Based on a large corpus stemming from the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language (T2K-SWAL) Project, Biber gives a comprehensive account of the discourse used by native English-speaking participants in HE environment in all relevant university settings and across a wide range of disciplines. For our purposes, we will concentrate on oral classroom discourse, touching also upon the language used in student’s textbooks for comparison since they can also, but less obviously so, fall within the purview of EMI as a discipline. While the EMI community usually draws a sharp line between the differences occurring when the research-publication English and classroom-based English are compared, what Biber’s study showed is that, contrary to potential expectations,

there is a considerable discrepancy between the use of English by lecturers in HE classrooms and the language use in handbooks on the same topic. More specifically, Biber established that “classroom lectures tend to use many linguistic characteristics that are more typical of conversation than academic writing” (2006: 3). This was illustrated by a transcribed section from a lecture, where the following linguistic constructions were used: questions (*did everybody get one of these?*); comprehension checks (*ok?*); personal pronouns (*I/you/they*); mental verbs (*know, think*); stance adverbials (*really* and *a lot*); (semi)modal verbs (*can* and *be going to*), accompanied by “repetitions, ‘false starts’, pauses (*um*), and the frequent use of ‘discourse markers’ (*well, so* and *ok*)” (2006: 4). Furthermore, the analysis revealed that in terms of structural features, the discourse of lectures is characterized as being essentially clausal, relying on short clauses and less complex phrasal constructions, which is typical of a spontaneous kind of oral communication (*ibid.*). Finally, the use of lexical units in lectures abounds in everyday, common terms interspersed with specialized, technical vocabulary, thus reflecting both an awareness of the audience’s structure and a strategy to elaborate complex notions. Maintaining coherence appears not to be a priority since “[t]he discourse often consists of a loosely connected sequence of ideas, with many utterances functioning to provide personal background for the main ideas” (*ibid.*). When all this is compared to the other principal instance of communicating knowledge to students – the textbooks, Biber observes that “textbook language never includes the production features or dysfluencies that are common in classroom teaching” (Biber 2006: 5), thus accentuating a sharp divide between the two teaching genres.

So, how can we associate these findings with an EMI situation? Judging from the Biber’s findings, it is clear that the term *academic English* should not be associated only with the language use found solely in written academic prose, as sometimes is the case. Consequently, the assumption sometimes made by NNES instructors that an EMI lecture needs to primarily be based on set patterns corresponding to the formal discourse (cf. Vander Borgh et al. 2025: 1), as manifested in the written academic register, can be rejected as it has evidently been shown that native-speaking lecturers themselves do not conform to such a mode of communication.<sup>2</sup> Biber (2006: 227) also noted that classroom teaching does not

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<sup>2</sup> Since Biber’s corpus is restricted to four renowned American universities (Biber 2006: 23), a remark could be made that this may be attributed to the mainstream style of lecturers determined by geographical and cultural conditions, but it stands to reason that the situation in other predominantly English-speaking countries should not differ too much in this respect, given the level of mutual influence of respective educational systems.

comprise of a uniform set of features, but varies across multiple variables, such as “class size, preference for lecture or discussion formats, and level of instruction” (*ibid.*). Other pedagogic genres where an EMI instructor may play a role also occur, such as lab sessions, office hours and guided study groups, potentially employing somewhat different linguistic features than those found in lectures, although bearing obvious resemblance with lectures as the main exponents of HE spoken academic discourse.

Surprisingly or not, these insights reveal that EMI NNES lecturers actually pay more attention to establishing a connection with the students through direct linguistic communication, and not to the matters of professed linguistic appropriateness. We find these findings critical since they define the entire EMI training paradigm, allowing EMI trainers to focus on the type of language use attested in a genuine teaching environment and warranted for the EMI classroom as the attested means of academic communication.

## 2.2. *EMI instructors’ linguistic challenges*

Opposite to the layperson belief that teaching in a foreign language entails a mere switch from using one language to another, it has rightly been pointed out that EMI teaching engagement is a much more complex endeavour (Lasagabaster & Fernández-Costales 2024: 3). As Carrió-Pastor (2022: 177) observes, “[u]niversity students are learning complex subjects through English and their language proficiency entails being able to use grammar and pragmatics to communicate in an effective way.” This observation has been made about students, but it appears to be even more relevant when it comes to the students’ EMI instructors. These instructors are responsible not only for the content-related segment of lectures, where they employ communicative functions of defining, describing, illustrating, or demonstrating content to students, but also for the lecture’s organizational part. Therefore, what NNES instructors face is not only a matter of choice of the language used, yet a matter of being able to adapt to the specificities of a new multilingual/multicultural environment, too. On top of that, they sometimes need to adapt to a most likely different pedagogical approach,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A recent study by Malmström, Vander Borght & Warnby (2025) showed that Scandinavian-based EMI teachers with high-level English proficiency do not necessarily opt for student-focused teaching approach, but those with lower-level command predominantly chose the teacher-focused approach. This can be interpreted in such a manner that instructors with considerable command of the language are more open to

which in turn requires additional language processing than the one realized in a ‘regular’ classroom. The previously mentioned complexity of factors illustrates how vital it is for the EMI instructors to possess adequate linguistic competencies so that they can be able to tackle complex concepts, provide intricate elaborations, and still be linguistically competent to manage a diverse student audience.

Challenges NNES instructors face when delivering lectures have been well documented (Carrió-Pastor 2022, Dimova & Kling 2018, Doiz & Lasagabaster 2020, Lasagabaster & Doiz 2021, Macaro 2019, Vander Borghet et al. 2025). In terms of linguistic skills in an EMI context, two factors play important roles: a) NNES instructors’ confidence level concerning their command of the language and b) the proficiency level of English required for a successful transmission of knowledge. Although delivering a lecture in the NNES instructor’s mother tongue does not typically pose a problem, using the foreign language may prove to be a challenging task even to NNES instructors with a high level of English command due to the decreased confidence level, which in turn may detrimentally affect their lecturing performance (Vander Borghet et al. 2025: 2). Reported reasons for the lack of confidence are mostly related to NNES instructors’ insecurities when switching to the new mode of communication and “feeling less spontaneous and flexible” (*ibid.*: 3), or, in some instances, to their doubts concerning the limited use of their native tongue in an EMI classroom in times of need (the so called ‘translanguaging’) (Lasagabaster 2022).

The proficiency factor concerns the necessary language-command level required for the successful and seamless realization of an EMI lecture. Proficiency requirements vary from one country to another, with thresholds going from high B2 CERF<sup>4</sup> level to C1 level (Vander Borghet et al. 2025: 3) or even C2 (Lasagabaster & Fernández-Costales 2024: 6), the highest level of language proficiency according to CEFR. However, there is a general consensus in the literature that (high) English proficiency represents one of the key factors in EMI theory and practice (Lasagabaster & Fernández-Costales, 2024).

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consider alternative teaching methods since the language hurdle is small or non-existent, while the ones who are not as proficient choose the less language-intensive approach of frontal monologic teaching. Whatever the interpretation, it appears that the choice of pedagogical approach does in some manner play a role in the choice of classroom language, thus calling for the need to include this topic as a part of the NNES instructor training considerations.

<sup>4</sup> Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (for more details visit: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions>)

### 2.3. Linguistic components involved in EMI teacher training

Taking into account the considerations presented above, we now turn to the content we deem relevant for the linguistic training of NNES instructors. The initial classification is made on the conceptual basis, across the main communicative dimensions perspectivized through the linguistic lens – phonological, structural, semantic, interactional, and sociolinguistic dimensions. Such a division has been made following the general direction of focusing on functional linguistic aspects of EMI teacher-training rather than formal representations of linguistic phenomena. However, as trained linguists, we can specify the main exponents of the latter in Table 1 either as the most prominent linguistic features or as areas of interest from respective dimensions germane to the EMI context. The table below mostly draws on phenomena elaborated in Biber (2006):

Potential linguistic training component	Specific feature/area of interest
<p>a) <i>Phonological dimension</i> Aspects of classroom speech related to pronunciation and listening components, focusing on a proper channel to establish oral intelligibility between participants in an EMI setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>English segmentals</i> (key features of English sounds);</li> <li>• <i>English prosody</i> (an overview of intonation/tempo/rhythm/loudness in an EMI classroom)</li> </ul>
<p>b) <i>Structural dimension</i> Aspects of grammatical accuracy at all levels of linguistic analysis (morphological/syntactic/discursive).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Temporal and modal structures</i> (classroom-typical uses of common verb forms, modal constructions, etc.)</li> <li>• <i>Structural markedness</i> (exploring syntactic means of – passives, extraposed sentences, (pseudo-)cleft sentences);</li> <li>• Achieving <i>coherence</i> and <i>cohesion</i> in oral academic discourse (connectives and discourse markers);</li> <li>• Elements of <i>reduced syntax</i> in oral academic discourse (fragmented clauses, nominalizations, ellipsis...)</li> </ul>



<p>c) <i>Semantic dimension</i> Lexical and sentential specificities of conveying intended meaning of utterances in EMI settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Academic vs. general</i> vocabulary (key features and scope of academic word-lists in contrast to general lexis);</li> <li>• <i>Discipline-related</i> terminology;</li> <li>• <i>Lexical perspectivisation</i> (stance adverbials, hedging expressions, factual adverbials, using reflective language, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p>d) <i>Interactional dimension</i> Dealing with linguistic mechanisms of bidirectional verbal communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of <i>dialogic language use</i> (turn-taking mechanisms, eliciting feedback, etc.)</li> <li>• Using <i>demonstrational</i> language (use of spatial and discourse deictics, mechanisms of giving instructions and directions, etc.);</li> <li>• <i>Sign-posting</i> expressions;</li> <li>• <i>Pragmatic aspect</i> of language use (avoiding ambiguities and misunderstandings due to situational circumstances).</li> </ul>
<p>e) <i>Sociolinguistic dimension</i> Considering linguistic aspects in a potentially multicultural and multilingual teaching environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English as the <i>lingua franca</i>;</li> <li>• <i>Regional varieties</i> of English in an EMI classroom;</li> <li>• Elements of <i>academic register</i>;</li> <li>• Avoiding <i>linguistic bias</i> and <i>discriminatory discourse</i>;</li> <li>• <i>Politeness</i> strategies;</li> <li>• Using <i>humour</i> in an EMI classroom (linguistic features of jocular discourse).</li> </ul>

Table 1. An overview of relevant linguistic EMI teacher-training phenomena

As can be seen, Table 1 covers a wide range of EMI-related linguistic phenomena. It should not be seen as exhaustive, but it may serve as a solid basis for further consideration when planning a teacher-training syllabus. Since we expect the EMI teacher-trainers to be professionals highly trained in linguistics, the list itself should be self-explanatory to them, without needing further elaboration of what each item represents. It is, of course, utterly unrealistic for most of the listed items to be taught or elaborated in an EMI training context as formulated in Table 1, with trainees certainly being lay in the matters of linguistics. Instead, a linguist

expert may take into consideration a particular topic or areas of interest and adapt it to suit the intended training goal by simplifying it or integrating a specific item within a set of instructions in the form of an illustration, depending on the intended aims and resources at their disposal. We will, however, provide a brief overview of each dimension as much as it concerns the thematic frame presented in the following section.

### 3. EMI TEACHER TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC

#### 3.1. Background

The EMI training program at the UNI KG was realized as a part of a '*Study in Serbia*' HE internationalization initiative conducted by TEMPUS Serbia organization. The initiative encompassed four major Serbian state universities: University of Belgrade, University of Novi Sad, University of Niš, and University of Kragujevac, whose representatives attended a three-day trainers' training seminar held by renowned EMI experts from the University of Oxford (Prof. Ernesto Macaro and Mark Searle) and University of Southampton (Prof. Mary Page). Although the trainers' training was predominantly oriented towards teaching methodology, aspects of a linguistic nature were covered as well.

#### 3.2. Implementation

As of January 2025, there have been five training cycles taking place annually from 2019 to 2025 (with a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic). Our paper covers the first four training cycles, excluding the most recent one due to the lack of relevant data. It is worth mentioning that during the application process, it was emphasised that the training sessions did not involve teaching the language, but were aimed at honing specific linguistic and pedagogical skills for the instructors' engagement in an EMI classroom. Such a remark in the call for application was considered necessary since the duration of training did not allow for systematic language lessons tailored for EMI classrooms. Moreover, the required language proficiency level was considered as sufficient for both being able to teach in English and to attend and follow training sessions. Organisationally, each cycle involved 15 two-hour sessions divided into three parts – six sessions dedicated to teaching methodology and linguistic topics respectively, while the remaining three sessions were dedicated to microteaching sessions aimed

at evaluating the trainees' progress and adoption of training content.<sup>5</sup> The training team (n=5) consisted of two experts in English linguistics, two experts in English teaching methodology, and an expert in English literature and culture. As mentioned earlier, prospective applicants were required to take a diagnostic test to determine the participants' English proficiency level, while the minimum required proficiency level of English for the participation was set to B2 of CEFR framework (applicants with IELTS score 7.5 and higher), TOEFL (score 90 and higher), as well as Cambridge FCE/CAE/CPE exam certificates of English proficiency were exempt from taking the diagnostic test). The initial assessment was conducted in the form of the computer-based British Council's APTIS test (evaluating listening, writing, speaking, and reading skills), while the latter ones were compiled and administered by the trainers from the UNI KG, concentrating on grammatical and reading components.

The total number of trainees successfully completing the programme during the four cycles was n=118 (by year: 2019/20: n=35; 2021/22: n=37; 2022/23: n=24; 2023/24: n=22). The academic areas of the participants included STEM disciplines, medicine, arts and humanities (excluding English language instructors), with medical sciences constituting the largest portion of participants due to a more extensive presence of foreign students studying at the local Faculty of Medical Sciences than other faculties at UNI KG. To the best of our knowledge, the participants had no previous experience with EMI training in any form.

### *3.3. Methodological considerations*

The present paper is grounded in qualitative data collected in the context of EMI practices at the University of Kragujevac. The insights of the paper did not rely on standardized instruments or formal questionnaires, yet they draw on evidence gathered through classroom interaction. The material includes class observations, spontaneous feedback from participants, and anecdotal classroom evidence obtained during the course of actual instruction. The data sources were not intended to produce quantifiable or generalizable findings, but to offer an informed overview of how EMI functions in practice and what linguistic aspects emerge in authentic university settings. The use of spontaneous evidence provides

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<sup>5</sup> Lasagabaster (2024: 16) notes that "research shows that work based on mini-lectures or teaching demonstrations is highly profitable", affirming our choice of micro-teaching (or mini-lecture) sessions for evaluative purposes as valid. See also Molino (2024) for more on positive and negative aspects of micro-teaching assessment.

access to the lived experiences of both instructors and students, leading to richer understanding of instructional patterns, language use, and communicative challenges. Therefore, the methodological approach is interpretative and descriptive in nature. By doing so, the goal is not to perform exploratory testing of hypotheses but to synthesize insights gathered from everyday academic practice. To sum up, the study presents a broad overview of linguistic aspects of EMI, highlighting patterns and tendencies relevant to the local and international academic context, remaining mindful of the limitations of informal classroom-based data collection.

### 3.4. *Linguistic areas covered*

The linguistic part of the UNI KG training programme was conceptualized in such a way that its main focus was on maximizing the trainees' communicative teaching potential in English, conducted through a set of elaborations aimed at providing practical applications of selected linguistic phenomena presented in Table 1. This approach was aligned with the guidelines presented to the UNI KG trainers by English instructors at the trainers' training seminar (cf. §3.1) and responses from the needs analysis questionnaire distributed to UNI KG prospective attendees prior to the beginning of the first training cycle. A commonly employed training strategy was to (whenever possible) implicitly elucidate these linguistic phenomena not as respective thematic teaching units, but through a variety of contextualized examples or by means of implicit answer elicitation. For instance, when areas of interest were elaborated descriptively, they were always accompanied by sentential examples or contextualized real-life classroom situations. On the other hand, the content which was presumedly novel to the trainees was introduced through short elucidations, again accompanied by relevant illustrations. The training content was conceptually divided into two main domains – the classroom-management domain and the content-related domain. It is, however, important to mention that numerous phenomena classified as distinct entries in Table 1 were often subsumed within a single instructional unit: for instance, illustrating the use of *interactional* classroom-specific language also involved the *variational* aspect of choosing the appropriate register, accompanied by the trainer's comment regarding the lack of *structural* complexity (often misattributed to academic language use in general), as observed in actual classroom-related situations (Biber 2006). To gain more concrete insight, the following analysis represents an account of linguistic training of NNES instructors,

i.e., insights obtained through class observation and content analysis of the UNI KG dimensions from Table 1.

### *3.4.1. Phonological dimension*

Phonetic and phonological features of language production are often the hardest to expound upon owing to highly technical characteristics of their description and difficulties in recognizing the relevant phenomena by linguistically untrained NNES (cf. Archibald 2021; Alkhaleefah 2023). As such, these features are often allotted the least priority in explicit elaborations of EMI specificities. A rule of thumb is that as long as there is sufficient intelligibility between the interlocutors, pronunciation should not be a matter of special interest. This, however, does not mean that phonological issues are not to be addressed as they may affect mutual and self-perceptions of NNES instructors and students in an EMI classroom (cf. Gómez-Lacabex & Gallardo-del-Puerto 2023). In our case, they received due attention by being frequently integrated into other elaborations (when discussing regional varieties of English, for example) or as distinct thematic units involving English sounds problematic for Serbian L1 speakers and matters of prosody in an EMI classroom (for instance, the effects of English intonational patterns in forming questions and achieving emphasis). The issue that merited more attention in this sense was the question of whether the trainees were supposed to imitate native-like pronunciation, as the majority of trainees believed that this was one of the crucial factors for a successful EMI lecture. To illustrate the point of overcoming the pronunciation barrier, on one occasion, the trainees listened to a one-minute video clip about photovoltaic solar cells of a natively Spanish-speaking EMI lecturer with a heavy English accent. The listening section was followed by a discussion on the matters of general intelligibility of the sample, leading to the general conclusion that although the presented topic did not correspond to any of the trainees' areas of expertise, overall comprehension was satisfactory, save certain highly discipline-specific terms. Interestingly enough, during the classroom discussions some trainees expressed an opinion that what in lay terms might be called 'incorrect' pronunciation (that is, the one not adhering to any of the mainstream standard pronunciation systems, such as Southern British Standard or General American) may turn out to be an asset in an EMI context if students share similar linguistic articulatory performance with the NNES instructor, rendering spoken communication more intelligible.

### *3.4.2. Structural dimension*

Another important topic tackled at UNI KG NNES instructors' training concerned the issue of achieving sufficient grammatical accuracy. Again, when asked about the importance of this dimension during the informal in-class discussions, the trainees emphasised the role of grammatical 'correctness' in conveying knowledge, but eventually expressed surprise when informed about the disfluent nature of a genuine lecture held by a native speaker of English. Being academically oriented professionals, the trainees were assumed to be familiar with the discourse of academic research publications, so our task was to draw parallels between the already familiar use of academic language with the one described in Biber (2006). In doing so, we attempted to activate their existing grammatical linguistic skills, but now adapted to fit into the EMI context. Therefore, the emphasis was not so much on elaborating the syntactic mechanisms through a set of 'rules' or 'principles' but on recognition and employment of those structures that facilitate the communicative purposes relevant for the occasion. By means of sentential examples, syntactic features that were covered included passive structures, copulative constructions, existential sentences, causal structures and extraposed constructions, all presented as potential, yet not mandatory ways of EMI communication and almost always contrasting their potential classroom use and the one in academic papers. In other words, since the audience was not linguistically trained and the time restrictions did not allow for any sensible elucidation of these structures, trying to provide elaborate explanations was considered futile and was not attempted. Additionally, a certain portion of all of the three linguistic sessions was dedicated to the explanation and subsequent consolidation of new concepts, such as: a) the notion of linguistic markedness, which was recognized as an important segment of academic communication;<sup>6</sup> b) aspects of dialogic language use (indirect questioning, use of turn-taking and corrective feedback constructions, paraphrasing, elements of linguistic cohesion and coherence), which in turn served as somewhat preparatory basis for the student-centred pedagogical considerations that followed.

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<sup>6</sup> Macaro (2019: 5) explores a similar concept of linguistic 'keyness' to identify important elements of a text at the lexical level.

### 3.4.3. *Semantic and interactional dimension*

Being one of the most prominent areas of academic language use, vocabulary considerations were given special attention. Two main domains were in focus – the use of general academic vocabulary and disciplinary-specific vocabulary. Before engaging in the specific uses of the two lexical domains, a concise overview of the key academic vocabulary features was presented, with reference to the well-known Academic Word List (AWL) and its possible applications in an EMI context. Illustrating discipline-specific terminology use was conducted by using examples from four academic areas: medicine, technical engineering, pedagogy, and law. Each list of terms contained academic expressions that extend across a majority of disciplines, which enabled trainees to identify common grounds in the use of academic vocabulary. In line with the findings of Biber (2006), a portion of attention was also given to lexical units signifying personal involvement of NNES instructors in EMI lectures, covering expressions conveying stance, assuming reflective positions, and employing hedging mechanisms. Other semantic considerations were not as extensive as the vocabulary ones and were mostly touched upon as *ad hoc* occurrences when elaborating on other topics.

Although represented as two separate dimensions in Table 1, the semantic and interactional dimensions were not treated as distinct thematic units within our training sessions since both rely on predominantly lexical grounds. Conforming to the strategic decision to favour a student-centred pedagogical approach, this dimension dealt with features and examples of a dialogic mode of classroom communication (principles of adequate conversational turn-taking, ways to elicit information from students, direct and indirect questions, uses of terms for demonstrations and instructions). Additional attention was paid to using the so-called *sign-posting* language, whereby instructors achieve a successful transfer of knowledge to students by employing linguistic cues that guide the listener through various aspects of the discourse spoken in the classroom.

### 3.4.4. *Sociolinguistic dimension*

Since it was observed that sociolinguistic matters had often stayed under the radar of EMI research, and because it was estimated that this dimension was one of the most distinctive features of an EMI lecture owing to its multilingual and multicultural orientation, our training also addressed these issues. Topics discussed involved the upsides and downsides of English being the *lingua franca* of the

academic world, as well as main features and questions pertaining to the NNES instructor's viewpoints about the choice of a suitable variety of the English language, both in terms of register (academic vs. colloquial; formal vs. informal; written vs. spoken; and the like) and in terms of regional preference (American vs. British English). Rarely discussed, but highly topical issues also received their due attention – linguistic mechanisms for the avoidance of biased language in an EMI classroom (linguistically neutral language regarding gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability), aspects of politeness in a culturally diverse setting, and scope and limitations of using humorous language to maintain positive rapport in the classroom.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In line with Deroey's (2023: 1) view that "[p]ractitioners charged with developing EMI training programmes could [...] benefit from knowing how others have approached such training and what their experiences were", we hope that the presented insights have shed additional light on linguistic aspects of NNES instructor training. The informed overview we provided underscores the need to observe factors not only traditionally associated with language learning, but also with those pertaining to specific skills needed to competently govern in a foreign language class. To achieve this, we believe that NNES instructor training programmes should be tailored to enable instructors to handle both language-related issues, on the one hand, and provide a pedagogically sound foundation for successful communication with the audience and transfer of knowledge, on the other. For this to happen, we suggest that formal linguistic training should not come to the fore, but should be used only as a complementary mechanism in the process of raising the NNES instructors' awareness of the EMI-specific language issues.

Such a premise was the main guideline at the described UNI KG training programme, bearing in mind that NNES instructors possessing a sufficiently high level of English language command would benefit less from explicit learning about the linguistic mechanism underlying a specific area of the language structure than from the elaboration of formal and functional aspects of the specific language uses attested as valid for the EMI domain. Given the usually limited temporal scope of the training programme and probable reluctance of the trainees to be extensively engaged in a lengthy EMI teacher-development programme due to their primary obligations, it is reasonable that adjustments to the traditional treatment of linguistic content are made. Our attempt to do so involved making them aware of a



wide range of linguistic phenomena at their disposal, accompanied by a set of recommended instructions for language use aligned with the student-centered pedagogical approach, favouring interaction and a dialogic mode of classroom communication. We aimed primarily at enhancing their already high communicative potential in English without sacrificing their identity as experts in a particular field, but still being able to recognize and apply the presented mechanisms. Ideally, the outcomes would mean that they assume the roles of facilitators who are able to independently and competently explain linguistic phenomena within reasonable limits, as well as demonstrate procedures, deliver clear instructions, provide corrective feedback, discuss complex topics, and ultimately, if needed, resolve potential language issues in English as a primary means of communication.

All things considered, addressing linguistic aspects of NNES instructor training represents an ambitious endeavour both in the theoretical and practical sense. Due to teaching content complexity, teaching at the HE level can itself pose a considerable challenge, which becomes even more onerous with English as the medium of instruction entering the scene. Drawing on previous research and NNES instructor training programme at UNI KG, our elaboration has shown that an effective linguistic training of HE instructors needs to take into account not only the instructors' development towards being highly proficient users of the English language, but also factors aligned with pedagogic orientation of the instructor, socio-cultural setting and even instructors' individual perspective towards an EMI classroom. Achieving this is no easy task, but efforts directed towards making a general instructor-training framework may prove fruitful bearing in mind that the volume of relevant research has grown considerably. Considering the fact that different educational institutions have diverse policies, available resources, and student populations, we are aware of the limitations of the generalizability of the insights presented here. Furthermore, due to the current incapacity to isolate factors affecting EMI success, such as class dynamics or institutional support, in future research, we aim at delving more deeply into the actual contribution of linguistic factors alone. Looking ahead, future perspectives in the field leave room for various additional investigations, some of which may include issues concerning pre- and post-training language assessment, effects of the interaction between linguistic and pedagogical training segments, as well as evaluation of language skills necessary for effective EMI across diverse academic disciplines.

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#### ЈЕЗИЧКИ АСПЕКТИ ОБУКЕ УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКИХ ПРЕДАВАЧА ЗА НАСТАВУ НА ЕНГЛЕСКОМ ЈЕЗИКУ: УВИДИ СА УНИВЕРЗИТЕТА У КРАГУЈЕВЦУ

##### *Сажетак*

Све распрострањенија употреба енглеског као језика високошколске наставе (ЕЈВИН) је неизворне едукаторе, који су у обавези да држе наставу на енглеском језику, суочила са значајним језичким изазовима. За разлику од Интегрисаног учења садржаја и језика (енгл. CLIL), где се од наставника може очекивати одређени степен познавања лингвистике, окружење у ком је фокус на енглеском као језику високошколске наставе обично не подразумева експлицитно познавање лингвистичких феномена. Међутим, наставници универзитета укључени у програме ЕЈВИН-а често сумњају у своје знање енглеског језика, те се неретко несразмерно фокусирају на језичке вештине, а не на садржај и начин извођења наставе. Колико нам је познато, већина академских публикација које се баве ЕЈВИН-ом фокусира се превасходно на педагошке аспекте и имплементацију образовне политике, па се чини

сасвим оправданим размотрити улогу лингвистике у обуци наставника у датој сфери. Имајући у виду претходно наведено, у тренутном истраживању покушавамо да сагледамо обим, метод и потребу за експлицитном наставом лингвистике на основу обраде података са предавања за обуку неизворних едукатора са Универзитета у Крагујевцу од 2020. до 2024. године. Рад доноси увиде након примене четири кључне лингвистичке димензије током обуке неизворних предавача у Крагујевцу, и то фонолошке, структурне, семантичке и социалингвистичке. Кроз све димензије подједнако је наглашавана разговетност и разумљивост, комуникативна ефикасност и контекстуална осетљивост уместо нефлексибилног прилагођавања нормама изворних говорника. Резултати још једном наглашавају значај укључивања прагматичног и контекстуално осетљивог приступа наставе на ЕЈВИН-у, уз праву равнотежу прецизне употребе језика, јасног преношења комуникативне намере и интеркултурне свести. Да би се постигле жељене лингвистичка компетенција и ефикасност, обука универзитетских наставника треба подједнако да се фокусира на језичке компетенције едукатора, али и на њихову педагошку оријентацију, социјално и културно окружење, па и саме индивидуалне преференције наставника у односу на појединачни контекст у коме држе наставу на енглеском језику.

*Кључне речи:* енглески као језик високошколске наставе, обука предавача, интернационализација, језички аспекти, енглески као *lingua franca*.

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