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Original research paper  
UDC 811.111'243:378  
DOI: 10.19090/MV.2025.16.2.89-111

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## **NAVIGATING THE EMI TRANSITION: EXPLORING THE PROFESSIONAL NEEDS OF TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**ABSTRACT:** In order to provide high quality courses in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) university settings, teachers need to be equipped with competences which enable smooth lecturing aligned with contemporary teaching approaches. However, insufficient attention has been given to teachers' preparation for EMI contexts. This study examines content area lecturers' understanding of EMI teaching and explores their strengths and weaknesses in terms of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural competences. The aim is to obtain guidance for devising professional support programmes. The sample consisted of social sciences teachers with little or no EMI experience who completed a questionnaire and participated in an interview. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and content analysis. The results indicate the teachers' overall recognition of the importance of professional development, with most focus placed on the need to enhance English for academic purposes and classroom management skills. While the findings provide some insight into the training needs of future EMI practitioners, further research with a larger and more diverse sample would deliver more generally applicable results.

**Keywords:** English as a Medium of Instruction, higher education, social sciences, competences, professional development.

## **TRANZICIJA KA NASTAVI NA ENGLESKOM JEZIKU: ISPITIVANJE PROFESIONALNIH POTREBA NASTAVNIKA U VISOKOM OBRAZOVANJU**

**APSTRAKT:** Kako bi ponudili kvalitetne kurseve u kontekstu univerzitetske nastave na engleskom jeziku, nastavnici treba da poseduju kompetencije koje će omogućiti efikasno držanje predavanja u skladu sa savremenim pedagoškim pristupima. Međutim, nedovoljno pažnje se pridaje pripremi nastavnika za dato nastavno okruženje. Ovaj rad ispituje shvatanje nastave na engleskom jeziku od strane nastavnika stručnih predmeta, kao i njihove prednosti i slabosti u pogledu lingvističkih, pedagoških i interkulturnih

kompetencija. Cilj je dobijanje smernica za kreiranje programa koji će pružiti profesionalnu podršku. Uzorak se sastoji od nastavnika iz oblasti društvenih nauka koji imaju malo iskustva u držanju nastave na engleskom jeziku ili ga nemaju. Oni su popunili upitnik i učestvovali u intervjuu. Analiza podataka je obuhvatila deskriptivnu statistiku i analizu sadržaja. Rezultati ukazuju na to da nastavnici prepoznaju važnost stručnog usavršavanja, pri čemu je poseban naglasak stavljen na unapređenje engleskog jezika za akademske svrhe i razvoj veština upravljanja učionicom. Iako rad pruža određeni uvid u potrebe za obukom za nastavu na engleskom jeziku, dodatna istraživanja sa većim i raznolikijim uzorkom nastavnika obezbedila bi šire primenljive rezultate.

*Ključne reči:* nastava na engleskom jeziku, visoko obrazovanje, društvene nauke, kompetencije, stručno usavršavanje.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in study programs and courses, as one of the driving forces of internationalization of universities, has witnessed remarkable growth in the past two decades. In order to increase international visibility, strengthen their position in a competitive market, and address declining enrollment due to a demographic factor, Serbian universities have also embarked on this trend. A growing number of higher education institutions have started offering undergraduate and/or postgraduate courses and programmes, joint degree programmes and the like in English to both home and international students. This has put additional pressure on teachers who not only require a high level of proficiency in English, but also need to employ various strategies to meet the specific pedagogical and intercultural demands of this teaching context. Against this backdrop, the existing research has highlighted overall concern among the teaching staff regarding the implementation of EMI courses (Beltrán-Palanques 2021; Fortanet-Gómez 2020; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022; Yuan 2023) as well as the issue of insufficient availability of training programmes addressing various aspects of EMI educational environment (Alhassan 2021; Lasagabaster 2021; Radić-Bojanić 2025). Taking into account the rapid spread of EMI in Serbian higher education and a key role that teachers play in preparing students for a highly competitive and changing international labour market, addressing teachers' competences and needs in the EMI context is of crucial importance. This is additionally emphasized by the fact that the area of EMI is significantly under-researched in Serbia.

Therefore, with the aim of contributing to the research body within this field as well as EMI practice, the study explores the competences, attitudes towards and needs for professional development of higher education teachers within the

area of social sciences. In other words, the research focuses on the following specific tasks:

- examining teachers' perception of various aspects of their linguistic competence;
- identifying potential challenges in an EMI classroom within linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural domains;
- examining teachers' perception of their professional development needs in terms of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural competences.

The choice of the field was made based on the fact that it had not been considered in previous studies (Đorđević & Blagojević 2019; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022; Popović et al. 2016; Radić-Bojanić 2025). Another reason was the understanding that EMI teaching is discipline-dependent, which implies that teacher training should be sensitive to the specific subject area (Banks 2018). The paper particularly focuses on content area lecturers (CALs) with little or no experience in teaching in English, as they require greater guidance to develop necessary competences and gain confidence. This might have a positive long-term impact on their future EMI practices. The results will provide a valuable insight into the types of support CALs need in order to deliver high-quality courses.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A widely adopted definition provided by Dearden (2014: 4) perceives EMI as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English”. Many authors note that the concept is not easy to capture due to its recent emergence as a research field (Macaro 2018) and its implementation in “a wide range of contexts with varying linguistic histories and landscapes, educational policies, as well as school systems” (Yuan 2023: 269). However, determining what it entails has important implications for conducting high quality courses and teacher development programmes. Since this research is focused on CALs and their professional competences, this section will address EMI and its dimensions in that context.

There is a general agreement among researchers (Piquer-Piriz & Castellano-Risco 2021; Radić-Bojanić 2025) that effective teaching and successful accomplishment of learning outcomes in the EMI classroom requires much more than CALs proficiency in the English language, which is often considered a central concern in both lecturing and teacher training programmes (Beltrán-Palanques

2021; O'Dowd 2018). In recent research, particular focus has been placed on the pedagogical and intercultural dimensions of EMI teaching (Đorđević & Blagojević 2019; Fortanet-Gómez 2020; Mancho-Barés & Arnó-Macià 2017; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022) so as to cater for the needs of students who come with diverse linguistic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will explore in greater detail the issue of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural competences, which also represent central topics of the empirical research.

English language competence, often referred to as English proficiency or linguistic competence in the EMI literature encompasses the knowledge of general English, English for specific purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). General English knowledge can be determined through indicators of proficiency described in *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume* (Council of Europe, 2020). ESP refers to the knowledge and use of vocabulary, genres, and skills related to a specific discipline (e.g. economics), whereas EAP includes the ability to read and write academic texts, give presentations, hold lectures, lead discussions, provide feedback, and similar communicative academic-related skills. English language competence also entails the ability to deliver comprehensible utterances and adjust speech in terms of intonation, speed, volume, and the like, as well as the usage of language for classroom management (providing and exchanging information, resolving conflicts, negotiating, giving instructions, etc.) (Rubio-Alcalá & Mallorquín 2020). Various studies indicate that this area presents the greatest challenge for CALs (Broggini & Costa 2017; Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Lasagabaster 2018).

The language proficiency level required for EMI lecturing in the Serbian as well as many other national contexts has not been defined explicitly (Macaro et al. 2018; Radić-Bojanić 2025). Some authors suggest that it should be at C1 level (CEFR) minimum, as this can enable clear and coherent lecture delivery (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović 2018; Lasagabaster 2021). Mišić-Ilić and Đorđević (2022: 18), however, note that a high level of proficiency

does not necessarily include near-native pronunciation or flawless grammar. It is not so much about 'good English' as about providing good understanding of what the teacher wants to communicate in English as well as having a sufficient range of general and discipline-specific vocabulary, and interaction skills to communicate with EMI students. It especially means using various strategies to explain subject-specific terminology to the students and using simplified sentence structures to communicate, if necessary.

Although it is often assumed that university teachers have a high level of English language proficiency with English being the *lingua franca* in academia and science, the studies suggest that participating in research, projects, and conferences cannot adequately equip teachers to tackle complex and dynamic interaction occurring in the EMI setting. Teachers may have a good command of academic or discipline-specific English, but some authors (Dang et al. 2023; Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022) notice that when faced with informal and unanticipated situations (e.g. making digressions, using humour, resolving conflicts, using alternative explanations for technical vocabulary, etc.), they encounter linguistic limitations. These limitations may impact “how classes progress and sometimes may even hinder the rapport between teachers and students, where communication-skill-related weaknesses may cause teachers to avoid certain conversational situations” (Lasagabaster 2021: 51).

Alongside linguistic competence, pedagogical competence has recently also come to the forefront of EMI discussion, though it is still often overlooked in the EMI training programmes. This observation is significant as university teachers often lack adequate pedagogical training, which can pose a particular challenge in an English-taught class (Đorđević & Blagojević 2019; Rubio-Alcalá & Mallorquín 2020). The pedagogical competence implies the ability to “design, deliver and manage a content lecture/class that can suit and appeal to different types of students with different educational backgrounds and different types of learning styles, etc.” (Alhassan 2021: 9). It comprises “all elements of a curriculum in the stages of planning and instruction: context, objectives, contents, competences, methodology, attention to diversity, evaluation and materials” (Rubio-Alcalá & Mallorquín 2020: 47). The EMI lecturer is expected to shape the learning experience, which involves making adjustments, adopting flexibility, and utilizing approaches that promote active student participation (Rubio-Alcalá & Mallorquín 2020). Dynamic, interactive, and student-centred nature of classes are particularly emphasized in the EMI literature (Dang et al. 2023; Wilkinson 2013) as they can benefit both teachers and students. Students’ more extensive engagement reduces reliance on teachers’ linguistic competence and provides more opportunities for them to improve their own language proficiency (Dang et al. 2023), deepen the understanding of the content taught, and generally enhance discipline-specific and transversal skills (e.g. critical thinking, cooperation, etc.). Yet, the literature suggests that it represents one of key challenges in certain educational contexts (Dang et al. 2023; Dearden 2018; Macaro 2018; Vidaković 2023).

Another issue that has been brought to attention is the adaptation or design of the curriculum and teaching materials. The researchers (Briggs, Dearden & Macaro 2018; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022; Rivera Trigueros & Sánchez Pérez 2020; Zayas-Martínez & Estrada-Chichón 2020) have identified the following specific difficulties: designing/selecting materials and (interactive) activities and assessing students' performance bearing in mind their English proficiency and needs, classroom management, fostering and maintaining student motivation, and time-consuming nature of class preparation. CALs are frequently expected to start teaching in the EMI context and do it well though they have not received any kind of training (Airey 2011, as cited in Dang et al. 2023), which may cause great anxiety. Therefore, Macaro et al. (2018) and O'Dowd (2018) concluded that a focus on improving EMI educators' English language competence must be combined with developing their pedagogical competence as both are prerequisites for implementation of high quality EMI courses.

Considering that EMI courses take place in an international, multicultural classroom, teachers' intercultural competence is another key factor contributing to successful communication and accomplishment of learning outcomes (Bendazzoli et al. 2020; Fortanet-Gómez 2020; Wang, Yuan & De Costa 2025). Students' cultural and associated educational traits strongly affect their communication style, which in turn influences their interaction with peers and teachers, integration into the group, classroom dynamics, and their commitment (Bendazzoli et al. 2020). Hence, it is necessary to consider the cultural dimension in all phases of curriculum design and implementation as well as in classroom management. Given that EMI students are being prepared for geographically and culturally diverse markets, teachers should add the international dimension and multiple perspectives to their courses (Bendazzoli et al. 2020; Fortanet-Gómez 2020). Furthermore, special attention should be paid to the design of activities and assessment, as students' academic background may be different from the approach adopted in the receiving institution.<sup>1</sup> Dressen-Hamouda (2008) gives the example of French students who were reluctant to employ a process-oriented approach to writing (based on deductive reasoning and commonly used in North America), which conflicted with their experience grounded in an inductive approach (commonly used in Europe). Bendazzoli et al. (2020), Briggs et al. (2018), and Zayas-Martínez and Estrada-Chichón (2020) have also highlighted the challenges related to sparking student

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, the term receiving institution refers to the institution which hosts students coming from abroad.

motivation and addressing reduced participation in a multicultural classroom, which they link to varying levels of students' English proficiency, their previous educational experience (e.g. teacher-centred classroom), and cultural background.

Another issue associated with the intercultural competence is related to stereotypes, prejudice, and generalizations, which can hamper students' learning process and their integration into a group (Bendazzoli et al. 2020; Fortanet-Gómez 2020). Participants in the TAEC<sup>2</sup> project (Bendazzoli et al. 2020) emphasize that each student should be approached as an individual and not as one adhering to generalized norms. This can be achieved by incorporating D.I.E. (describe, interpret, evaluate) activity, which entails analyzing each critical situation before taking any concrete action. Such approach reduces impulsiveness and promotes positive outcomes (Bendazzoli et al. 2020).

Studies indicate that some teachers do not fully recognize the importance of intercultural competence in the EMI setting (Beltrán-Palanques 2021). Huang and Fang (2023) observed that the respondents from the field of social sciences were more willing to incorporate the cultural element in their lecturing compared to teachers with STEM<sup>3</sup> background. However, there is the overall agreement among researchers (Fortanet-Gómez 2020; Huang & Fang 2023; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022; Wang, Yuan & De Costa 2025) that intercultural dimension is integral to EMI teaching and should undoubtedly be included in teacher training programmes. It also needs to be emphasized that this dimension should not be perceived separately from the linguistic and pedagogical ones. All three are inextricably linked and influence one another.

The previous passages have shown that teaching in the EMI context is a complex endeavour and that CALs face numerous challenges in terms of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural aspects. Yet, a structured and systematic professional support to EMI teachers is still scarce or limited (Alhassan 2021; Lasagabaster 2018; Macaro et al. 2018; Radić-Bojanić 2025).

As far as the situation in Serbia is concerned, there have recently been some efforts to address the issue of professional development of CALs working or preparing to work in EMI settings. Mišić-Ilić, Đorđević and Tatar (2022: 25), for example, created a specialized intensive course within the ERASMUS+ project<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> TAEC stands for Transnational Alignment of English Competences for University Lectures.

<sup>3</sup> STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, mathematics.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the ERASMUS + project is Strengthening Teaching Competencies in Natural and Mathematical Sciences (*TeComp*) <http://www.tecomp.ni.ac.rs/tewe-course/>.

titled *Teaching and Academic Writing in English for Natural and Mathematical Sciences (TAWES)*, whose aim was to develop competences related to “university teaching in an EMI environment and discipline-specific academic writing in English”. Another training opportunity was offered by the TEMPUS foundation with the aim of “empowering higher education teachers to teach their courses in English by using the EMI approach” (Fondacija TEMPUS, n. d.). The course was initiated in 2019 and consisted of four cycles at four largest state universities in Serbia: the University of Belgrade, the University of Novi Sad, the University of Niš, and the University of Kragujevac (ibid). However, as Radić-Bojanić (2025) notes, it was accessible to a very limited number of CALs. Taking into account the emphasis placed on promoting internationalization and increasing the international student enrollment in higher education institutions, the current situation regarding teachers’ professional development in Serbia calls for reconsideration and increased focus.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study aims to provide a general insight into higher education CALs’ understanding of EMI teaching and to investigate their strengths, weaknesses, and needs in terms of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural competences. The obtained results can serve as a valuable guidance on devising targeted professional support for teachers embarking on EMI experience.

#### 3.1. Sample

In order to obtain relevant data for the research, a purposive sampling approach was adopted. Therefore, the sample comprises CALs from the field of social sciences at the University of Novi Sad who have little or no experience in teaching in English; 61 completed the questionnaire and 10 participated in the interview.

#### 3.2. Research instrument and procedure

Two research instruments were employed in the analysis – a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire, which were developed based on existing relevant literature (Beltrán-Palanques 2021; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022; Piquer-Píriz & Castellano-Risco 2021; Rubio-Alcalá & Mallorquín 2020). The application of two research instruments (methodological triangulation) contributes to the



objectivity and reliability of the study. The aim of the interview was to gain initial insight into CALs' perception of (possible) similarities and differences between teaching in L1 and L2. The interview took place on Teams platform. It was recorded and transcribed. The questionnaire, administered via Google forms, consisted of 15 closed, mixed (multiple-select and Likert scale) and open-ended questions. It was divided into three sections. The first section comprised questions regarding respondents' sex, age, academic title, the length of teaching career in higher education institution, and self-evaluation of English language skills. The second section referred to surveyed participants' experience in terms of EMI teaching and training, whereas the third one dealt with teachers' competences, expected challenges in EMI classes, and needs for professional development. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain more structured responses and identify general key issues related to the topic. Both instruments were in Serbian in order to alleviate language barriers and anxiety.

### *3.3. Procedure*

The interview and the questionnaire were administered in May and June 2025. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined employing content analysis. The latter means that the participants' responses were assigned codes which enabled categorisation of the obtained qualitative information and examination of its relationship with the quantitative data.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results section of the research combines data gathered via both instruments used, wherever applicable. Although the tables and diagrams included are obviously based on the questionnaire analysis, unless specified differently, the results obtained through the interview align with the statistically manageable data.

Examination of the participants' background information reveals that the majority of the informants are female (61%), and that the most represented academic title is associate professor (31%). Even so, the distribution of other titles suffices for the desired heterogeneity of the sample (full professors 21%, assistant professors 17%, teaching assistants 23%, and junior teaching assistants 8%). The given variety brings along a range from 0.8 to over 30 years of teaching experience in higher education, enabling it safe to assume that the collective of the respondents' answers combines perspectives from different stages of professional

career. On the other hand, the participants' self-reported linguistic competence, as shown in Table 1, appears to be more aligned within the group since most of them are at the B2 or C1 level, with their confidence being considerably higher, as is common among users of a non-native language, in receptive than productive skills. The identified levels of English proficiency approximate the linguistic threshold commonly set before EMI lecturers (Drljača Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović 2018; Lasagabaster 2021) but also point to the skills in need for improvement.

Level	Speaking	Writing	Listening Comprehension	Reading Comprehension
A1	0%	1.64%	0%	1.64%
A2	4.92%	4.92%	3.28%	1.64%
B1	16.39%	14.75%	8.20%	11.48%
B2	45.90%	45.90%	37.70%	26.23%
C1	29.51%	31.15%	45.90%	47.54%
C2	3.28%	1.64%	4.92%	11.48%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 1. Participants' self-reported English proficiency across skills

According to the obtained data on the participants' previous experience with EMI practices and training, as Diagrams 1 and 2 show, slightly over a half of the participants have had some opportunity to teach in English, with only a small portion of the overall number receiving the relevant training. Experiences of the informants already familiar with EMI contexts are restricted to sporadic teacher/student mobility programmes or summer schools indicating a lack of long-term EMI engagement. Such results suggest that either their need for training has not yet been identified or the reason lies in the low availability and/or visibility of training opportunities, as implied by a number of researchers (Alhassan 2021; Lasagabaster 2018; Macaro et al. 2018; Radić-Bojanić 2025).

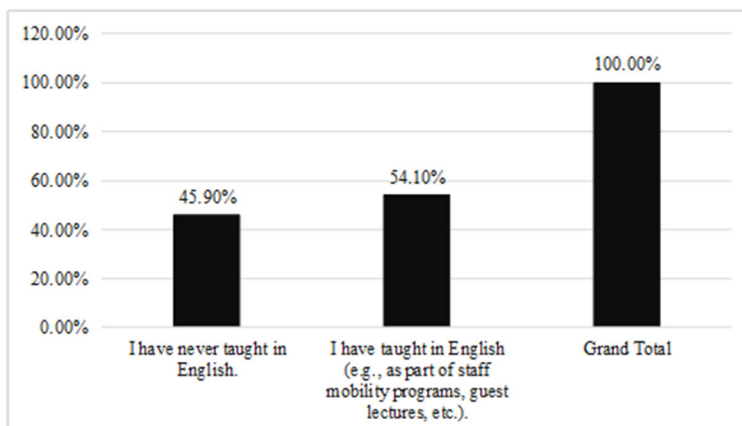


Diagram 1. Have you ever taught in English?

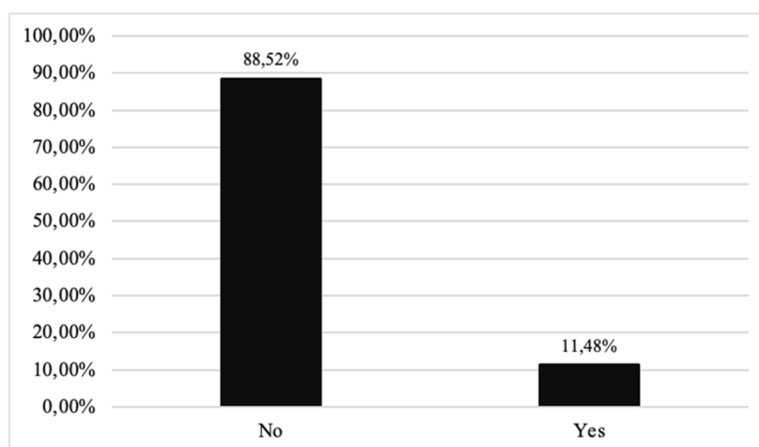


Diagram 2. Have you had any training for teaching in English?

In line with the previously noted considerable level of concern among CALs regarding EMI implementation at their institutions (Alhassan 2021; Lasagabaster 2018; Macaro et al. 2018; Radić-Bojanić 2025), research data referring to the participants' attitudes toward EMI training indicate that there is a general agreement within the group on the importance of training to deliver high-quality output, as can be seen in Table 2. Adversely to the given finding, a larger scale study (O'Dowd, 2018) that surveyed EMI teachers from 70 European universities reports on a 30% incidence of disagreement with the importance of teacher training. Such a discrepancy between research findings may follow from differences in sample structure as O'Dowd's pool (2018) included greater diversity of academic backgrounds, while the participants of the present study are

exclusively oriented toward social sciences. Similar differences were already referred to in terms of a lower willingness for the incorporation of cultural element in EMI practice of lecturers with STEM background (Huang & Fang 2023).

R	I believe EMI training is important to deliver high-quality courses.
I agree.	36.07%
I completely agree.	49.18%
I disagree.	1.64%
Neither agree nor disagree.	13.11%
Grand Total	100.00%

Table 2. Attitudes toward the importance of EMI training

However useful it is to recognise a need for development, further measurements of the already existing abilities and the lack thereof from the perspective of anticipated challenges are required to make cross-sectional comparisons and outline the shape and form of appropriate training. In addition to the linguistic data provided earlier, a more detailed breakdown of the participants' competences is given in Table 3. It draws a clearer picture of how the informants perceive their abilities across more specific domains of language use, particularly those most relevant for participation in EMI programmes. Importantly, the results obtained from self-reports on seemingly linguistic abilities in different domains, may serve as a roundabout that surpasses a possibly compartmentalised view, from the participant side, of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural components of EMI.

Self-reports on EMI related linguistic competences	I can easily communicate in English in spontaneous and unanticipated situations.	I have sufficient knowledge of English for academic purposes.	I have sufficient knowledge of linguistic devices needed for classroom management.	I have sufficient knowledge of English in the context of my professional discipline.
I agree.	65.57%	42.62%	36.07%	52.46%
I completely agree.	26.23%	21.31%	21.31%	29.51%
I completely disagree.	0%	1.64%	1.64%	0%
I disagree.	3.28%	8.20%	13.11%	1.64%
Neither agree nor	4.92%	26.23%	27.87%	16.39%

disagree.				
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 3. Participants' self-reports on EMI related competences

As the questionnaire results indicate, lower levels of competence are mainly associated with the use of English for academic purposes and classroom management. This aligns with the findings of Fortanet-Gómez's study (2012, in Macaro et al. 2019) where the respondents highlighted that there's a marked difference between presenting a paper in English at a conference (76.9 % believed their English is up to a sufficient standard for this) and being able to teach through EMI (only 51.9% felt they knew English well enough to do this effectively). With further regard to the established weaknesses, the results are compatible with findings of other studies where the issue of classroom management was identified as one of the major EMI related challenges (Broggini & Costa 2017; Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Lasagabaster 2018). On the other hand, the self-perceived degree of ability increases when using the language in spontaneous speech and in contexts relying on the knowledge of English in the area of expertise. Even so, the comments obtained during the interview session are revealing of certain discrepancies between the two sets of answers. Namely, concerns were raised regarding the need to occasionally step out of the prepared lines and improvise during class so as to provide additional examples, digress or use humour to raise student engagement and motivation or further clarify a point. In one of the participant's own words *"I don't have such a wide range of vocabulary to spontaneously insert a joke or make a connection with another situation, which I do quite often in Serbian ... I wasn't that prepared"*. The identified concern echoes in conclusions of many other researchers (Dang et al. 2023; Doiz & Lasagabaster 2018; Mišić-Ilić & Đorđević 2022). Considering the noted asymmetry of the results within this study, it may be a consequence of the participants' mistaken understanding of the relevant questionnaire item to refer to language use in spontaneous, informal speech outside of class. The given results imply that the participants are not only aware of their strengths and weaknesses but also acknowledge that their lack of skill on one dimension (e.g. linguistic) may trickle down to affect the competence in another (e.g. pedagogical).

Similarly, in terms of the challenges the participants anticipate facing in EMI educational environments, research data from Table 4 show that their greatest concerns can be placed at the intersection of all three investigated dimensions – the linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural aspects of EMI teaching. The issue that

received the highest score is that of uneven distribution of proficiency levels among students. This concern is supported by Zayas Martínez and Estrada Chichón's (2020) research, which indicated that a significant portion of EMI students experience English proficiency limitations. Such limitations may impact their comprehension and cause hesitation when speaking. Additionally, this issue may also force teachers to simplify the teaching content at the expense of quality and depth of instruction. The second highest rating relates to the use of English for teaching, i.e. the knowledge of English for academic purposes. The result underscores the previously noted teacher's awareness that the effective EMI instruction requires the ability to scaffold the student learning drawing on knowledge of EAP. Effective classroom management follows right after – generally CALs are experts in their own discipline but may lack pedagogical competence (Rubio-Alcalá & Mallorquín 2020). Classroom management is particularly challenging in EMI settings, as teachers need to simultaneously deliver content and interact with students in a non-native language. The fourth highest score shows a concern with testing and assessing the knowledge of non-native English speakers. It points to the underlying EMI requirement for adjustment of assessment methods as low scores on tests in English may not necessarily be a reflection of poor content knowledge (Shohamy 2012). To address this issue, more time and support may be provided during exams as well as alternative task and question types (Macaro et al. 2018, in Méndez-García & Luque-Agulló 2020).

EMI challenges	What do you consider your greatest challenge in teaching in English? (Add others if applicable)?
Classroom management (introducing topics and objectives, giving clear instructions, encouraging motivation and interaction, time management, responding appropriately to behavior, etc.).	18.03%
English slang.	1.64%
It is certainly more time-consuming, but I have not experienced difficulties.	1.64%
Preparing teaching materials adapted to participants and context (teaching in English for students with different proficiency levels, international students, etc.).	4.92%
Providing feedback.	3.28%
Spontaneity and timeliness during lectures and communication.	1.64%
Testing and assessing students whose native language is not English.	11.48%

Use of the English language for teaching.	24.59%
Varying levels of English proficiency among students.	31.15%
All previously listed responses are valid. I believe the training discussed in this survey is extremely important and should be organized as broadly as possible.	1.64%
Grand Total	100.00%

Table 4. Participants' perceptions of EMI related challenges

Once again, joint consideration of the questionnaire and the interview data provides additional insight into the matter under investigation. Preparation of teaching materials that went relatively unnoticed as a questionnaire item received considerable attention during the interview in terms of the time-intensive nature of the activity. The participants emphasised their greater reliance on thorough preparation when teaching in English to alleviate the concerns identified in the questionnaire. This also appears to affect their pedagogical approach, as pointed above, since the materials they use in class (e.g. PowerPoint presentations) contain considerably more text to balance out both their own linguistic issues and those of the less proficient students.

The analysis of the final sections of the questionnaire, that focus on the recognition of the areas in need for improvement, reveals a relative match with the previously identified strengths and weaknesses of the participants in terms of their existing competences as well as challenges they expect to encounter in EMI settings. According to the data presented in Table 5, the majority of the participants find they would benefit from all types of training given, particularly such that addresses their use of English in academic contexts, language use for classroom management, and skills needed to juggle cultural diversity. The need for guidance when managing intercultural issues is also underscored in the interview data, as implied in comments such as “... *there were even students from different cultural regions that are, unfortunately, involved in – let’s say – certain social conflicts. So how do you handle a situation like that?*”. The suggested importance of addressing the cultural aspect of EMI teaching is a common finding of other studies and projects (Bendazzoli et al. 2020; Fortanet-Gómez 2020; Wang, Yuan & De Costa 2025).

Need for training	Improving the knowledge of English in the professional domain.	Improving the knowledge of English for academic purposes (lecturing, presentations, discussions, feedback,	Improving the knowledge of linguistic devices needed for classroom management.	Improving paralinguistic aspects (voice, intonation, emphasis, pauses, speech rate, etc.).	Improving pedagogical competencies.	Improving intercultural competencies.
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		academic writing and reading).				
Extremely high level of need.	18.03%	22.95%	18.03%	13.11%	16.39%	19.67%
High level of need.	19.67%	22.95%	26.23%	13.11%	26.23%	22.95%
Low level of need.	18.03%	18.03%	19.67%	24.59%	27.87%	16.39%
Moderate level of need.	39.34%	32.79%	34.43%	42.62%	21.31%	37.70%
No need.	4.92%	3.28%	1.64%	6.56%	8.20%	3.28%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 5. Participants' self-reported needs for training

A somewhat lower recognition of the need for the advancement of pedagogical skills, may be a consequence of an instinctive understanding that competences of this kind largely overlap in the native and a foreign language. While such a stand could find some ground, the lack of a complete match reveals itself in high scores on competences where the seemingly distinct linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural skills are inextricably interrelated, such as those needed for classroom management, especially when working with culturally heterogeneous groups. At the same time, the interview data suggests that the participants are well aware of the need for pedagogical adaptations of different sorts to meet the requirements of the EMI classroom. A teaching requirement that received significant recognition by the participants refers to the scope of the overall content being, at times, either simplified or reduced. At other times, with additional time invested in preparation, the content may also be adapted through extensions to include a wider range of perspectives relevant for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds and/or aspiring to compete in the international labour market, as is usually the case with EMI programmes. While call for attention to cultural diversity that underlies the noted pedagogical adjustment has already been made (Bendazzoli et al. 2020; Fortanet-Gómez 2020), it is also well captured in one of our CAL's remarks: "... I constantly look for some equivalents of examples that work well in Serbia, because I cannot simply tell them something relevant to the Serbian context, they're just not interested in that". A related pedagogical outcome is seen in the modification of their assessment methods, as one of the participants noted: "Maybe there would be fewer follow-up questions, and these wouldn't be too open but more specific. [...] That way I could assess more fairly because,



*again, I don't know if their language knowledge is at the same level, and I'm not a highly proficient speaker myself".*

Another result that, at first glance, may appear surprising is a rather high ranking of the need for linguistic improvement in the professional domain as it contrasts the data on the participants' strengths. While this may signal an awareness of the importance of continual professional upgrade due to the rate of new scientific developments, when paired with the comparably high value assigned to advancements in the domain of English for academic purposes, it may direct toward the need for greater consolidation of their linguistic skills, as insisted by some researchers (Beltrán-Palanques 2021; O'Dowd 2018). What is important is that the participants did not dismiss any type of training as unnecessary, including the one on paralinguistic aspects of communication, which may also be mistakenly understood as a directly transferable set of skills from the native language. On the other hand, there are studies (Aguilar & Rodriguez 2012; Dafouz 2014) where the respondents were predominantly concerned with the improvement of linguistic skills with considerable disregard of the pedagogical and intercultural EMI component. Such results were, however, interpreted along the lines of participant preoccupation with academic promotion, toward which high English proficiency is one of the fast tracks with EMI participation being solely a means to the same end.

In sum, a cross-sectional comparison of the participants' competences, expected challenges, and training needs lands on a couple of common denominators: the use of English for academic purposes and classroom management, both of which figure prominently across all research sections. While the varying level of English proficiency among students was added as another major challenge for the participants, the ability to use the language more spontaneously, and the competence to overcome any potential linguistic barriers when testing and assessing student knowledge also appear to be some of their concerns. At the same time, the section on the needs for training introduced the issue of managing cultural diversity and, somewhat surprisingly, the use of English for specific purposes, previously identified as one of the participants' major strengths, resurfaced in the examination of training needs.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Before making any conclusions, it must be pointed to a serious limitation of the study, which lies in a rather small research sample including teachers from only one university. Conducting larger scale research could provide a firmer base to treat the results not only as more generally applicable but also as offering a more

valuable contribution to the scientific field. Also, given that the use of interview as a research tool greatly facilitated results interpretation, its use with a larger sample size would be regarded useful. Considering that the authors are well-aware of the noted research flaw, the study is attributed an exploratory character pointing to the need for further investigation.

Combined results of the two research instruments provide support for several important inferences. Firstly, CALs without extensive experience and training in EMI readily recognise the need for professional guidance that would enable a smoother transition to teaching in a non-native language. Based on the participants' answers, training should ease the burden of issues related to their perceived lack of skills required to meet the challenges they expect to face in their future EMI engagements. In addition, the examined CALs generally did not express concerns that could be localised on any one EMI dimension more than the other but were rather focused on competences where the linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural dimensions are intertwined and support each other. This may appear as a vague indicator of the favourable training direction but actually underscores the importance of parallel development within all three EMI domains. Importantly, the participants did not alienate themselves from the perspective of any type of additional guidance, not even on the skills they already feel confident about. Also, based on the established preference for beforehand practice among the informants, a custom-made training tailored around the most likely future scenarios for which potential solutions are discussed and rehearsed at group level would provide a much-needed scaffolding for real-life experience. The training could include discrete microteaching sessions where the focus would initially be divided along separate EMI dimensions (e.g. EAP, ESP, activity and assignment design) before the joint use of skills should be required. Participation of professionals with different expertise (e.g. ESP teachers, experts in teaching methodologies) could also be a valuable contribution. Placing accent on stronger productive skills that connect with cultural and pedagogical sensitivity needed for EMI classrooms is of essence to ensure efficient language content integration. Development of such competences could be supported through EMI lecture simulations where recommendations toward the best practices should be collaboratively agreed. Such an approach could additionally not only help identify any potential needs that might have been overlooked but would also enable a more effective use of the sum of individual abilities. The last aspect of the proposed guidelines mirrors the very essence of EMI practice, which lies in the synergy of linguistic, pedagogical, and intercultural competences. While the recommendations provided may serve as a

broad sketch, a more specific action plan requires more extensive research. A useful extension to the presented research may include a study conducted with more experienced EMI practitioners, who could contribute by adding their perspective on the needed competences, identified weaknesses as well as major classroom challenges.

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## TRANZICIJA KA NASTAVI NA ENGLESKOM JEZIKU: ISPITIVANJE PROFESIONALNIH POTREBA NASTAVNIKA U VISOKOM OBRAZOVANJU

### *Sažetak*

U radu se razmatraju stavovi univerzitetskih nastavnika u oblasti društvenih nauka, sa malo iskustva ili bez njega u nastavi na engleskom jeziku, o potrebi za stručnim usavršavanjem koje bi im omogućilo efikasno uključanje u novo nastavno okruženje sa optimalnim rezultatom. Iako je česta praksa da nastavnici započnu svoj angažman u sve popularnijim programima internacionalizacije na visokoškolskim ustanovama bez prethodne obuke, rad ukazuje na očigledne nedostatke takvog pristupa, pre svega utvrđivanjem a zatim i poređenjem postojećih nastavničkih kompetencija i očekivanih izazova nastave na stranom jeziku, iz kojih posledično proizlazi identifikacija potreba za stručnom podrškom. U skladu sa opšte prihvaćenim tendencijama u literaturi iz oblasti, korišćeni istraživački instrumenti, upitnik i intervju, oslanjaju se na tri ključne dimenzije nastave u jezički i kulturološki raznolikoj učionici: jezičku, pedagošku i interkulturnu dimenziju. Deskriptivna statistička obrada podataka iz upitnika i analiza sadržaja intervjua ukazuju da, iako ispitanici svoje opšte jezičke kompetencije ocenjuju relativno visoko, kao percipirane slabosti izdvajaju produktivne veštine upotrebe jezika u akademskom i kontekstu upravljanja učionicom. Isti činioici se izdvajaju i u analizi očekivanih izazova i potreba za usavršavanjem. Dodatno, ispitanici jasno prepoznaju poteškoće vezane za neujednačen nivo poznavanja jezika nastave među polaznicima; svoje ograničene sposobnosti za spontanu upotrebu jezika koja izlazi iz okvira pripremljenog izlaganja; neophodnost prilagođavanja pedagoškog pristupa; i specifične kulturološke zahteve datog okruženja. Navedeni rezultati potvrđuju i ranije ustanovljenu međusobnu povezanost jezičkih, pedagoških i interkulturnih komponenti držanja nastave na engleskom jeziku. Kao jedan od najvažnijih rezultata istraživanja, svakako se izdvaja pozitivan stav o značaju profesionalne nadogradnje u istraživanom pravcu, na kojem se dalje zasniva otvorenost i spremnost za učešće u stručnoj obuci koja bi osim unapređenja potrebnih veština doprinela boljoj konsolidaciji sume kompetencija duž pojedinačnih dimenzija obuhvaćenih istraživanjem. S obzirom na to da je rad prevashodno orijentisan ka dobijanju korisnih smernica za kreiranje programa podrške, prostor za praktičnu primenu prikazanih rezultata svakako postoji.

*Ključne reči:* nastava na engleskom jeziku, visoko obrazovanje, društvene nauke, kompetencije, stručno usavršavanje.

Received: 1 September 2025

Accepted: 16 October 2025