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TEACHING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE: COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION¹

ABSTRACT: The internationalization of higher education in Serbia is a complex process in which English-medium instruction (EMI) plays a central role. Although familiar with it, content area lecturers (CALS) often face a variety of communication-related challenges when teaching in English, which directly impact teaching quality. This study explores these challenges through the perspectives of 102 content area lecturers at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad. Their questionnaire responses were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings reveal communication challenges in teaching international students, particularly regarding content area lecturers' language proficiency and classroom interaction. Teachers also describe strategies they adopt to minimize misunderstandings, manage ongoing communication, and enhance clarity. Additional concerns include (the lack of) institutional and collegial support, which further shape the effectiveness of communication in EMI contexts. The study underscores the pedagogical importance of targeted professional development and sustained institutional support to promote effective communication in internationalized higher education.

Keywords: EMI instruction, internationalization of higher education, content area lecturers, language proficiency, communication challenges.

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NASTAVA NA STRANOM JEZIKU: KOMUNIKACIONI IZAZOVI ENGLESKOG KAO JEZIKA VISOKOŠKOLSKE NASTAVE

APSTRAKT: Internacionalizacija visokog obrazovanja u Srbiji predstavlja složen proces gde značajnu ulogu ima engleski kao jezik visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN). Iako ga poznaju i koriste, predmetni nastavnici često se suočavaju sa različitim komunikacionim izazovima tokom izvođenja nastave na engleskom jeziku, što neposredno utiče na kvalitet nastave. Ovo istraživanje posmatra pomenute izazove iz perspektive 102 predmetna nastavnika na Fakultetu tehničkih nauka Univerziteta u Novom Sadu. Njihovi odgovori dati u upitniku analizirani su primenom kvalitativnog i kvantitativnog pristupa. Rezultati ukazuju na izazove u komunikaciji sa međunarodnim studenima, posebno vezano za jezičku kompetenciju i interakciju u učionici. Nastavnici su takođe opisali strategije koje primenjuju kako bi smanjili nesporazume, omogućili i unapredili komunikaciju. Dodatne teškoće obuhvataju (nedostatak) institucionalne podrške, kao i podrške kolega, što dodatno oblikuje efikasnost komunikacije u EJVIN okruženju. Istraživanje naglašava pedagoški značaj ciljanog profesionalnog usavršavanja i kontinuirane institucionalne podrške radi podsticanja efikasne komunikacije u internacionalizovanom visokom obrazovanju.

Ključne reči: EJVIN, internacionalizacija visokog obrazovanja, predmetni nastavnici, jezička kompetencija, komunikacioni izazovi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the internationalization of higher education has represented the process of integrating an international, cultural, and global dimension into the teaching and research practices of a university (Zhang 2018). It has been organized around several key elements: global and intercultural competence, mobility, research, knowledge transfer, competitive global positioning (Oesterle 2025; Zhang 2018), and insertion of universities into global networks of international universities (Block 2022). As a result, university classrooms worldwide are becoming increasingly multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural spaces (Murray et al. 2021), where English is often introduced as the primary means of communication.

English-medium instruction (EMI) is commonly defined as the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries where the first language of the majority of the population is not English (Macaro 2018). Bradford and Brown (2017) emphasize that EMI refers to the teaching of academic content through English in classes that do not focus on language teaching or learning goals. While language learning may be perceived as a potential benefit of EMI, it is not its primary aim (Rose & McKinley 2024). Importantly, content-area lecturers do not provide explicit English-language instruction, nor are they responsible for students' language development (Block 2022). Rather, the

expectation is that students will simultaneously advance their disciplinary knowledge and their English language skills, thereby enhancing their career prospects in an increasingly globalized labor market (Galloway et al. 2024).

Universities in Serbia seeking greater international visibility and academic competitiveness have adopted EMI as part of their modernization agendas. Expanding the number of EMI courses is viewed by university management as a positive step towards attracting international students and strengthening the institution's profile. However, this trend also creates additional challenges and pressure for CALs who must deliver instructions in a second language, without being trained in EMI pedagogy, thus navigating both disciplinary and communication challenges in their classrooms.

To our knowledge, few studies have examined EMI implementation in Serbia, and research focusing specifically on communication challenges in tertiary education remains scarce (e.g., Bogdanović et al. 2025). Addressing this gap, this study explores the experiences of content area lecturers in EMI at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad. The research aims to identify the types of communication difficulties that content area lecturers face, examine how adapted curricula and teaching materials are designed to support communication between non-native speakers of English, and explore the strategies they employ to mitigate communication problems. By doing so, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of communication challenges in an EMI setting and provide insights into the pedagogical measures necessary to enhance communication in internationalized higher education.

Building on the primary aim, the study explores the following research questions:

1. How do content area lecturers approach class preparation in English, and in what way does their language proficiency influence their ability to clearly communicate subject content to international students?
2. How do content area lecturers perceive the adaptation of curricula and teaching materials for facilitating successful communication in multilingual classrooms?
3. What strategies do content area lecturers employ to ensure successful communication with students in the EMI context?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last few decades, EMI has emerged as a new field of study and has become a noteworthy area of research, particularly among linguists (Sah 2022).

Even though educational systems combine content and language learning, the global expansion of EMI has been unprecedented (Galloway & Rose 2021). And yet, research on EMI is seen in its infancy (Galloway & Rose 2021), with much more research needed to understand the EMI phenomenon and the challenges. The major challenge reported by the researchers is the absence of solid EMI theoretical frameworks needed to examine the effectiveness of EMI programs. As an alternative, linguists regard EMI through the lens of communication theories or cognitive linguistics.

Researchers emphasize that EMI is a complex phenomenon encompassing multiple dimensions, ranging from policy issues (regulations, implementation, and management) to university-level practices such as teaching, research, and teacher professional development. Within this landscape, English has become a central mediator of communication in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, reflecting the broader reality of internationalized higher education (Defouz & Smit 2021).

Discipline-specific language-supported EMI through strategic and purposeful collaboration between content area lecturers and English language teachers has the most potential for achieving learning goals in the EMI context (Galloway et al. 2024: 255). The challenges it confronts include language preparedness by both students and teachers, lecture comprehension (Taguchi & Naguma 2006), insufficient academic English skills, and mastery of discipline-specific academic vocabulary (Evans & Morrison 2018).

Policy-oriented perspectives argue that effective EMI implementation requires collaboration among policy-makers, language specialists, CALs, and students. Ou (2022) stresses the importance of inclusive practices that analyze the language resources and support structures necessary for successful EMI delivery. At the classroom level, Sah (2022) raises important questions about the role of additional languages in EMI settings, noting that many teachers are not sufficiently proficient to deliver complex disciplinary content exclusively in English. This raises critical issues: should EMI be delivered entirely in English, predominantly in English, or as a blended approach involving both first and second languages? Furthermore, the question focuses on the extent of instruction in a second language, which can affect content mastery, overall communication, and teaching effectiveness (Sah, 2022: 128).

An additional recurrent topic in EMI research is the type and adequacy of language support provided to students and staff. Many institutions rely on general English courses, which are often insufficient for the demands of academic and professional communication. Increasingly, researchers call for the development of

ESP courses and discipline-specific language support. Galloway, Sahan, and McKinley (2024) confirm limited ESP support and provide insights into staff and students' perceptions due to the lack of ESP. Similarly, Wingate & Hakim (2022) call for more research into both EAP and ESP influence on successful communication in EMI.

Communication plays a crucial role in the EMI context. It relates to the interaction between content area lecturers and students, enhancing the teaching and learning process, motivation, and engagement. It also includes students' willingness to participate in classroom activities using English in verbal and non-verbal disciplinary communication. Communication in EMI can be affected by the choice of topic, students' perceptions, interaction patterns, or type of task (Zarrinabadi 2014). These factors then influence learners' sense of excitement, security, and responsibility (Kang 2005), as well as their self-confidence, anxiety, and perception of learning environment (Leger & Storch 2009). This is to be expected, since students may not be familiar with discipline-specific terminology (Gronchi 2024). Additionally, apart from linguistic proficiency, communication is also influenced by a number of non-linguistic interpersonal and intrapersonal factors (Peng 2025). "In an EMI context, it can be assumed that more interactions lead to better learning and language development" (Chien & Valcke 2020: 132). Teacher support plays a crucial role in the EMI context, including dimensions such as instrumental support, academic support, appraisal support, and affective support (Hejazi & Sadoughi 2023). Feedback (Mohd Khatib & Maarof 2015) also appears to be an appropriate way to boost students' self-efficacy, improve their performance, encourage oral communication, and provide opportunities for discussion, leading to better communication between CALs and students.

The existing literature on EMI in the Serbian context is markedly limited, indicating a gap that warrants further investigation. Mišić-Ilić and Đorđević (2022) conducted an international project on internationalization in higher education, creating a specialized course to develop competencies necessary for teaching in English. The course is based on theoretical background and practical guidelines by ESP and EMI and is intended for highly educated senior lecturers, experts in the fields of mathematics and natural sciences, with upper-intermediate and advanced English level proficiency and proficiency in reading professional literature in English. Radić-Bojanić (2025) also addresses internationalization strategies at the University of Novi Sad with an emphasis on EMI. The author investigates how clearly language education policy is formulated, how it is implemented, and how clearly content area lecturers perceive it. The implementation of EMI in Serbian

higher education and university teachers' attitudes towards it are the focus of the research by Đorđević and Blagojević (2019). They highlight potential challenges and obstacles to implementing EMI in Serbia. In their research, senior lecturers highlight several key issues: the lack of awareness about the importance of teaching methodology in EMI, potential resistance to EMI, inadequate language proficiency, and a lack of interest in self-improvement and acquiring new skills. On the other hand, younger lecturers view the EMI context as a highly motivating and challenging endeavor that fosters international educational cooperation. Popović et al. (2015) investigate students' preferences towards EMI, concluding that, among the students of a case study faculty, students of lower academic year do not want to invest their time in learning the EMI postulates, while final year students are aware of the need for continuous improvement and find the EMI courses useful. It appears that communication issues in EMI contexts have received limited attention from Serbian researchers. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap and contribute new insights into the phenomenon.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a part of a larger project, “*Internationalization of the University of Novi Sad and the perspectives of English as a Medium of Instruction*”. The aim of the project was to investigate the challenges of teaching in English using the experience of the content area lecturers at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, thereby contributing to the prospects of internationalization in higher education.

The primary aim is to examine the types of communication difficulties experienced by content area lecturers delivering courses in English, to analyze the extent to which lecturers' language proficiency shapes the quality of communication, and to identify the strategies teachers employ to prevent or overcome communication problems in EMI classrooms.

3.1. Research instrument

At the beginning of the project, in the fall of 2024, a questionnaire was developed by project team members. The questionnaire consisted of 85 statements, distributed across 10 diverse categories. The first category was related to demographics. The remaining sections were divided into statements on instruction-related and non-instructional information, both related to diverse aspects that can influence EMI. The former categories included Curriculum and Syllabus

Adaptation, Classroom Communication and Interaction, Assessment and Evaluation Practices, Course Design and Preparation, and Teaching Delivery and Pedagogical Approaches. The latter categories included Institutional Support and Resources, EMI Training and Professional Development, Collegial Collaboration and Peer Support, and Challenges and Demotivation. All the questions were in Serbian, so content-area lecturers could better understand them.

Statements related to demographic data were followed by multiple answers, allowing the participant to select only the most appropriate one. Additionally, some questions were open-ended to gather more detailed data from participants. On the other hand, participants were asked to rate their agreement with statements on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Completely disagree) to 5 (Completely agree).

For the purpose of this study, only the category Classroom Communication and Interaction will be discussed in more detail in the Results and Discussion section.

3.2. Research participants

As already stated, the potential respondents included all professors from the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad, who previously had participated in at least one teaching course with Erasmus+ mobility exchange students. All students were from non-Serbian-speaking countries; therefore, all lectures should have been delivered in English as the medium of instruction.

The number of CALs who participated in the research was 102. 63.7% were male and 36.7% female lecturers. Most of them were in the age group 41-50 years old (46.1% or 47 persons), followed by 51-60 years of age (28.4%), and 15% of younger lecturers (31-40 years). There were also 9.8% (10 professors) who were more than 60 years old. Subsequently, more than half of the participants (54.9%) have been teaching for over 20 years, while 45 professors (44.1%) spent between 11 and 20 years in the classroom. Only 1 participant had less than 10 years of teaching experience. Among participants, there were 62 full professors, 32 associate professors, six assistant professors, and two lecturers.

Open-ended questions offered some interesting insights about the participants. 90.2% of participants had never attended a preparatory training for teaching in English, meaning that only 10 participants attended an EMI course. Similarly, it became obvious that content area lecturers were not trained in methodology. 79.4% (81 professors) had never attended any seminar on methodology and pedagogy during their undergraduate studies, while only 21

professors (20.6%) were taught methodology during their undergraduate studies. Later, after being employed, only 14 professors attended any training or seminar on teaching with EMI, while 88 participants did not attend any training before participating in the Erasmus+ programs.

Finally, the demographic set of questions revealed that the majority of content area lecturers (74.5%) taught international students separately from domestic ones, and they used English exclusively. Twenty-six professors (25.5%) placed international students alongside Serbian students, using Serbian, German, or Italian alongside English, while the majority of CALs (89.2%) decided to teach those mixed-language classes in English only.

3.3. Procedure

After the questionnaire was prepared and a pilot survey was conducted, it was distributed to CALs. To provide the full range of possible answers in a micro context, the questionnaire was distributed only to professors from one faculty, the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad. All invited participants had taught at least one course to students who spent some time studying at the Faculty as part of the Erasmus+ student mobility exchange program.

The initial idea was to organize meetings with professors and have them complete the questionnaire in the presence of project members, in case they had any additional questions regarding it. However, toward the end of 2024, episodes of social unrest and public protests in Serbia resulted in the closure of universities. This context prevented the research team from administering the questionnaire in person to professors, necessitating its distribution via alternative channels.

Thus, the questionnaires were sent via email, and the link was provided for the Google Form Questionnaire. That email was followed by shorter or longer follow-up messages to participants, to reach the team members and let them know if they needed some clarification. This was an effective solution, as several participants sought discussions on specific categories. The links were sent and resent over a two-month period, resulting in 102 completed questionnaires.

4. RESULTS

This study investigated the communication challenges that content-area lecturers encounter when delivering instruction in English to their international students. These challenges were observed through three interrelated dimensions:

(1) teachers' approaches to teaching in English, viewed through the lens of their language proficiency, (2) the degree to which the curricula and teaching materials are adapted to meet the linguistic and cultural diversity of international students, and (3) the range of strategies teachers employ to facilitate and enhance communication in multilingual classroom settings.

4.1. Approach to teaching in English

The majority of participants were highly experienced educators, with 54.9% having more than twenty years of teaching experience. Despite their extensive professional backgrounds, almost all respondents (90.2%) reported not having received any preparatory training for teaching in English. This lack of formal preparation plays a significant part in communication in an EMI setting.

Their approach to teaching in English became evident through their responses to statements regarding class preparation. When asked to evaluate the statement "*I prepare for each class I teach in English by practicing pronunciation and studying the content of the lecture*," they reported a wide range of practices. Specifically, 29.4% of CALs reported total disagreement, 19.6% partial disagreement, 24.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, 18.6% partially agreed, and 7.8% totally agreed. These results suggest substantial variation in how content-area lecturers perceive the need for linguistic rehearsal before teaching, reflecting differing levels of awareness or confidence in their English language proficiency.

Furthermore, the teachers were also asked to respond to the statement "*I prepare for my classes by practicing before English language teachers*." More than 80% strongly disagreed with this statement, suggesting that CALs rarely seek linguistic support when preparing for their classes.

Another item provided additional insight into lecturers' perceptions of their communicative competence in the content area. When asked to evaluate the statement: "*My international students fully understand my instructions and explanations*.", the majority expressed confidence in their communicative clarity, with 50% strongly agreeing and 42.2% partially agreeing. This may confirm a high level of self-assurance among teachers, but it may not align with students' actual comprehension.

Further statistical analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation test to explore potential relationships between the examined variables.

		International students understand my instructions.	I prepare for my classes by rehearsing.	I prepare with an English language specialist.
International students understand my instructions.	r	1	.131	-.014
	p		.189	.890
I prepare for my classes by rehearsing.	r	.131	1	.353**
	p	.189		.000
I prepare with an English language specialist.	r	-.014	.353**	1
	p	.890	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

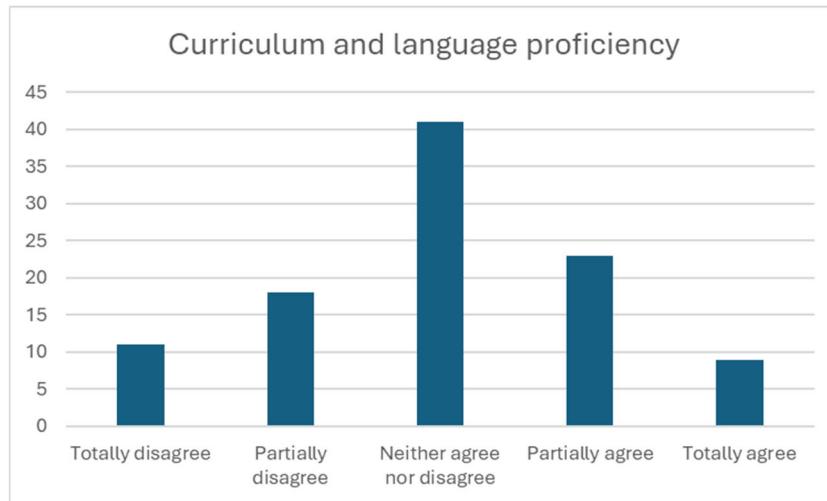
Table 1. Results of the Pearson's correlation test.

As observed from Table 1, the only significant relationship is between the two preparation strategies (rehearsing and practicing in front of colleagues), suggesting that these preparation behaviors are related and often go together. Neither preparation method shows a significant correlation with students' reported understanding of instructions.

4.2. *Adaptation of curricula and teaching materials*

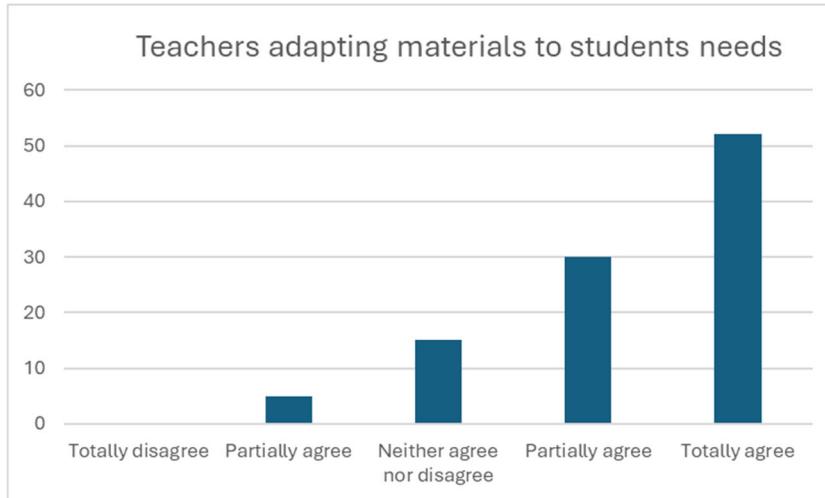
The second dimension examined in this study concerns the extent to which curricula and teaching materials impact communication in the EMI context. Teaching international students requires adapting curricula and materials to accommodate their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

When asked whether or not the curriculum takes into account the various levels of language proficiency of international students (Graph 1), only a small percentage of respondents (8.8%) totally agreed with this statement. A considerably larger group (40.2%) reported neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this statement, suggesting that many teachers may be unaware whether curriculum design formally incorporates students' linguistic diversity or whether such information is communicated to them.



Graph 1. Whether the curriculum takes into account the language proficiency of international students

Although CALs may not be directly involved in curriculum design, their classroom practices provide valuable insight into how they address the language needs of their international students.



Graph 2. Teachers adapt materials to the language needs of international students

When presented with the statement "*I use materials which help international students understand the content*," 51% of them totally agreed and 29.4% partially agreed (Graph 2). These findings indicate that, despite limited

awareness of formal curriculum adaptation, most teachers demonstrate a strong awareness of the necessity to modify teaching materials to facilitate comprehension and communication.

4.3. Strategies for overcoming language barriers

The majority of teachers report using diverse strategies that facilitate communication (31.4% totally agree, 47.1% partially agree, 19.6% neither agree nor disagree, 2% partially disagree). Specifically, they welcome feedback from their international students, offer additional instructions and explanations, provide diverse forms of interaction, and establish communication channels outside the classroom.

When asked to reflect on the statement "*I ask for feedback from international students so that I can better communicate with them*," 42.2% of respondents strongly agreed, while 33.3% partially agreed. Similarly, in response to "*I actively encourage international students to participate in class discussion*," 47.1% strongly agreed and 33.3% partially agreed. These results suggest that content area lecturers recognize the value of interactions, both as a means of clarifying communication and as a tool for fostering engagement in international classrooms.

Teachers also emphasized their role in providing additional instructions and clarifications as needed. For the statement: "*In classes, I offer additional instructions and explanations to international students if necessary*," 62.7% strongly agreed and 27.5% partially agreed. These practices extend beyond the classroom, with teachers using supplementary resources on digital platforms to provide students with continuous access to clarification and guidance.

A substantial proportion of respondents reported relying on multiple forms of communication to reinforce understanding. For the statement "*In classes, I use various forms of communication and interaction*," 59.8% strongly agreed and 26.5% partially agreed. Teachers also reported establishing accessible communication channels, such as email, Microsoft Teams, or Dropbox, with 68.6% strongly agreeing and 25.5% partially agreeing that these tools were an integral part of their practice.

Further analysis of data was conducted using Pearson's correlation test, which measures the strength and direction of linear relationships between pairs of variables. Table 2 demonstrates the results of this analysis.

		Have strategies for overcoming language barriers	Seek feedback from international students	Encourage discussion	Provide additional instructions	Provide multiple forms of interaction	Establish communication channels (email, Teams)
Have strategies for overcoming language barriers	r	1	.403**	.485**	.458**	.436**	.124
	p		.000	.000	.000	.000	.214
Seek feedback from international students	r	.403**	1	.553**	.485**	.438**	.143
	p	.000		.000	.000	.000	.150
Encourage discussion.	r	.485**	.553**	1	.551**	.460**	.184
	p	.000	.000		.000	.000	.064
Provide additional instructions	r	.458**	.485**	.551**	1	.566**	.253*
	p	.000	.000	.000		.000	.010
Provide multiple forms of interaction	r	.436**	.438**	.460**	.566**	1	.367**
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
Establish communication channels (email, Teams)	r	.124	.143	.184	.253*	.367**	1
	p	.214	.150	.064	.010	.000	

Table 2. The results of the Pearson's correlation test.

Strategies for overcoming language barriers correlated significantly with all in-class practices: use of supportive materials ($r = .216$, $p = .029$), seeking feedback ($r = .403$, $p < .001$), encouraging participation ($r = .485$, $p < .001$), providing additional instructions ($r = .458$, $p < .001$), and using multiple communication modes ($r = .436$, $p < .001$). No significant relationship was observed with the establishment of communication channels ($r = .124$, $p = .214$). The use of supplementary materials correlated significantly with several communicative practices, including seeking feedback ($r = .291$, $p = .003$), encouraging participation ($r = .334$, $p = .001$), providing additional instructions ($r = .334$, $p = .001$), using multimodal communication ($r = .293$, $p = .003$), and establishing communication channels ($r = .218$, $p = .028$). Feedback-seeking

behavior was strongly associated with encouraging participation ($r = .553$, $p < .001$), providing additional explanations ($r = .485$, $p < .001$), and employing varied communication modes ($r = .438$, $p < .001$). Encouraging active participation exhibited strong correlations with providing supplementary instructions ($r = .551$, $p < .001$) and using multimodal communication ($r = .460$, $p < .001$). Providing additional instructions demonstrated the strongest link with varied communication methods ($r = .566$, $p < .001$) and also correlated significantly with establishing communication channels ($r = .253$, $p = .010$). Multimodal communication strategies correlated significantly with all supportive practices, including the establishment of communication channels ($r = .367$, $p < .001$). Although comparatively weaker, significant correlations were identified between establishing communication channels and the use of supportive materials ($r = .218$, $p = .028$), providing additional instructions ($r = .253$, $p = .010$), and employing varied communication methods ($r = .367$, $p < .001$). The weaker associations involving communication channels imply that while teachers recognize the value of external communication platforms, they prioritize real-time, multimodal engagement and classroom-based scaffolding when addressing students' language-related needs.

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion that follows interprets the findings in relation to three central research questions. The first question explores how content-area lecturers approach class preparation in English and how their language proficiency influences the delivery of subject content and overall communication. The second question examines teachers' perceptions of the curriculum and its adaptation as a means of facilitating communication in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. The third investigates the additional strategies teachers employ to enhance communication.

As emphasized in the literature, many CALs possess extensive disciplinary knowledge; however, a limited command of English as a second language may restrict their ability to convey complex concepts with accuracy and fluency (Sah, 2022). Such linguistic limitations can lead to oversimplification of content, overreliance on rehearsal, and over-preparation. This may reflect teachers' attempts to compensate for lower linguistic confidence (Airey 2010; Helm & Guarda 2015; Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović 2018).

The results of this study indicate considerable variation in the extent to which content-area lecturers rely on rehearsing course content in English before instruction, with nearly one-third of participants expressing total disagreement with

the practice. This variation may reflect differing levels of self-awareness or confidence regarding their English language proficiency. However, these findings should be interpreted in light of the broader institutional context: almost none of the participants reported receiving formal training in teaching through English, and approximately 80% stated that they do not seek linguistic support from language specialists. Taken together, these results suggest that many content area lecturers operate in relative isolation, without structured professional or institutional support. This lack of systemic guidance reinforces the perception that teaching through English constitutes an individual struggle rather than a collaborative pedagogical endeavor (Zhang & Choi 2024).

While EMI programs are frequently introduced as part of broader institutional goals for internationalization, as is the case at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, the curricula are often based on pre-existing programs designed for monolingual and monocultural students (Jinghui 2023). In practice, however, EMI programs frequently involve learners with varied levels of language proficiency. Consequently, it is crucial to adapt both pedagogy and materials in response to linguistic diversity (Yang et al. 2019). Content area lecturers in this research, although mainly stating that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement that the curriculum accounts for language differences of international students, nevertheless demonstrate personal initiative and choose to adapt the teaching materials to meet students' communicative and comprehension needs. Over half of the participants strongly agreed and nearly one-third partially agreed that they actively use teaching materials designed to help international students understand the content. This pattern suggests that, despite the absence of formal curriculum adaptation at the institutional level, content area lecturers recognize and respond to the linguistic realities of their classrooms.

The third segment of the research also highlights CALs' proactiveness and signals their openness to diverse strategies to enhance communication in multilingual classrooms. The majority of teachers reported utilizing a range of strategies to mitigate communication challenges and ensure active participation. These include soliciting student feedback, encouraging discussion, and providing additional explanations and guidelines when necessary. Such practices demonstrate not only teachers' adaptability but also their commitment to creating a communication-rich environment (Zheng & Choi 2024).

Moreover, content area lecturers rely on multiple forms of communication and interaction, establishing accessible channels and digital platforms, such as emails, Microsoft Teams, and Dropbox, to maintain engagement beyond the

physical classroom. The use of diverse communication modes, written, visual, and oral, enhances clarity of communication for international students (Moorhouse & Wan 2023).

Collectively, these practices emphasize teachers' capacity to understand the challenges, their ability to navigate complex communicative demands, and ensure effective communication.

6. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore that communication challenges in English-medium instruction are not the result of a single factor but emerge from the interplay of language proficiency, curricular design, and classroom strategies. These results reveal a notable discrepancy between content area lecturers' extensive professional experience and their limited formal preparation for teaching in English. Despite their confidence in communicating subject content and in students' understanding of instructions, the data suggest that EMI teaching is still largely approached as an individual endeavor rather than as a supported institutional practice. The absence of preparatory training and the low level of collaboration with English language professionals indicate that most teachers rely on personal strategies rather than structural linguistic development.

Although they frequently encounter obstacles, content-area lecturers demonstrate considerable resilience and agency in developing practical strategies to overcome them. By actively inviting feedback, encouraging discussion, and offering supplementary explanations, they attempt to create more inclusive spaces for communication. Their reliance on multiple modes of communication further extends opportunities for interaction beyond the classroom, reflecting a growing awareness of the communicative dimension of teaching in multilingual environments.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results carry several important pedagogical implications for the effective implementation of EMI. Communication challenges in EMI classrooms are multifaceted and cannot be resolved solely through individual teacher effort. Instead, they demand systemic, pedagogical, and institutional responses that align with the realities of multilingual and multicultural higher education environments. Teachers, therefore, require structured training not only in English proficiency but also in classroom communication strategies. Only through systematic support, integrated language assistance, and sustained professional training can EMI programs in Serbia fulfill their promise of delivering high-quality, inclusive education to international students.

While this study offers important insights into the communication challenges experienced by EMI practitioners, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a single institutional context, the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad. Comparative research across institutions and disciplines would provide a more comprehensive picture of how communication challenges vary across contexts. Second, the data collection relied on self-reported perceptions of teachers, gathered primarily through questionnaires. While this approach captures valuable subjective experiences, it may not fully reflect classroom dynamics or students' perspectives.

Ultimately, the findings reaffirm that the success of English-medium instruction in Serbia will depend on how institutions value communication as the heart of teaching. Empowering lecturers through structured linguistic and pedagogical support is not merely a matter of policy, but a precondition for equitable, high-quality education in international contexts. Addressing this need should therefore remain a central priority for both institutional leaders and future research in EMI.

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NASTAVA NA STRANOM JEZIKU: KOMUNIKACIONI IZAZOVI U NASTAVI NA ENGLESKOM KAO JEZIKU VISOKOŠKOLSKE NASTAVE

Sažetak

Rad istražuje komunikacione izazove sa kojima se suočavaju predmetni nastavnici koji predaju na engleskom kao jeziku visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN) na univerzitetima u Srbiji. Iako poznaju i koriste EJVIN, predmetni nastavnici se često suočavaju sa različitim komunikacionim izazovima koji neposredno utiču na kvalitet nastave. Na osnovu podataka prikupljenih upitnikom koji su popunili 102 nastavnika sa Fakulteta tehničkih nauka Univerziteta u Novom Sadu, istraživanje pokazuje kako nastavnici pripremaju i realizuju nastavu na engleskom jeziku, kako prilagođavaju nastavne materijale za višejezične grupe studenata i koje strategije koriste da bi obezbedili uspešnu komunikaciju sa međunarodnim studentima. Analiza, koja kombinuje kvalitativne i kvantitativne pristupe, pokazuje da teškoće proizilaze iz jezičke kompetencije nastavnika i studenata, dizajna nastavnih programa i strategija koje nastavnici primenjuju kako bi smanjili nesporazume, kao i omogućili i unapredili komunikaciju u učionici. Iako nastavnici pokazuju značajnu inicijativu u prevazilaženju prepreka, njihovi naporci uglavnom ostaju individualni i bez institucionalne podrške. Studija naglašava potrebu za sistematskim profesionalnim usavršavanjem i institucionalnim angažmanom radi unapređenja komunikacije u EJVIN kontekstu. Zaključuje se da uspešna implementacija programa na EJVIN-u u Srbiji zavisi ne samo od jezičkih sposobnosti nastavnika, već i od trajne pedagoške i strukturalne podrške koja komunikaciju prepoznaće kao srž kvalitetne nastave i učenja u internacionalizovanom visokom obrazovanju.

Ključne reči: EJVIN, internacionalizacija visokog obrazovanja, predmetni nastavnici, jezička kompetencija, komunikacioni izazovi.

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