

LISTENING BEYOND SILENCE: SUBJECT MATTER'S ECHOES FROM THE EMI CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This article is a report on a pedagogical seminar entitled "Heeding Subject Matter's Voices: Insights from the EMI Classroom, run face-to-face at Ziane Achour University of Djelfa, Algeria. The seminar aimed to investigate teachers' concerns at the pre-implementation stage of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). By grouping educators from diverse disciplines, it was a collective platform for sharing experiences and challenges related to the transition towards EMI. There was a range of principal concerns raised throughout the discussions. Language proficiency was chiefly mentioned by the participants as a main challenge, with issues about their inability to teach complex subjects in English due to a lack of confidence in their linguistic capacity. Second, the availability of resources was also an urgent issue, with educators citing the lack of appropriate teaching materials adapted to the EMI setting. Third, intensive professional development modules were also seen as a need, with educators citing the importance of systematic training to ensure a smoother transition. Notwithstanding these issues, educators highly appreciated the seminar, highlighting the importance of collaboration for exchanging best practices and experiences in EMI implementation. Also, they all agreed on the integration of guest language instructors into EMI courses, recognizing the potential of the practice to enhance both teacher and student language levels. Through the facilitation of interdisciplinary collaboration and institutional support, the project can serve as a springboard for the effective implementation of an Integrated Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) approach.

Keywords: *EMI implementation; subject matter instructors; language proficiency; pedagogical challenges; professional development*

How to cite the article:

Ouarniki, O., & Alhasani, M. (2025). Listening Beyond Silence: Subject Matter's Echoes from the EMI Classroom. *Journal of Studies in Language, Culture, and Society (JSLCS)*8(1), 171-181.

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1. Introduction

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) has become more widespread at higher education institutions globally intending to support internationalization and equip students for international study and working contexts. Nevertheless, EMI poses significant challenges for subject teachers, particularly in non-language fields, due to the inadequacy of generic language courses in addressing discipline-specific linguistic needs (Bouguebs, 2023). This paper discusses knowledge gained in a pedagogical seminar titled "Heeding Subject Matter's Voices: Insights from the EMI Classroom," conducted at Ziane Achour University of Djelfa, Algeria, on February 27, 2024. This seminar was an important forum for subject matter teachers to share experiences, challenges, and solutions to implement EMI.

1.1 Background and Relevance of EMI in Higher Education

The implementation of EMI is based on the need to provide students with both content knowledge in a specific field and English language proficiency. In Algeria, just as in most countries, the practice aims at bringing teaching practice to international standards, developing multilingual competence, and promoting academic mobility (Rouagh et al., 2025). The shift towards EMI is a strategic move towards internationalization and preparing students to function effectively in international scholarship and professional networks.

1.2 Recap of the Pedagogical Seminar

The seminar "Heeding Subject Matter's Voices: Insights from the EMI Classroom" brought together teachers from various fields such as medicine, computing, law, and biology. Interestingly, participants were registered for learning English in the English Department or UFC, demonstrating a double commitment to subject specialization and language development proficiency. The seminar provided a forum for open discussion and interactive debate with the overall objective of closing theory gaps with the practical issues faced in the implementation of EMI.

1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Paper

This paper tries to summarize some of the seminar results with a specific focus on four general objectives:

- Give explanations of issues confronting subject matter teachers in EMI use.
- Determine real-world solutions and ideas developed during the seminar for addressing these challenges.
- Discuss the influence of language proficiency on subject-matter teaching and student achievement.
- Propose evidence-based pedagogical practice and approaches for optimal EMI integration into disciplinary contexts.

2. Literature Review

The adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in universities has attracted intense scholarly attention, resonating both with the benefits and challenges of this trend. With an increasing number of universities across the world employing EMI to advance their internationalization plans and enhance students' global capacities, it is imperative to know its theoretical basis, practical realities, and situational dilemmas. The objective of this literature review is to find out major aspects of EMI implementation, with a focus on the interaction between subject learning and language learning, challenges of language capacity on the part of the lecturers, the impact of institutional support and resource availability, and the overarching importance of professional development. By doing so, the review offers an

understanding of the intricacies of EMI and establishes a basis for addressing the intricacies in its successful implementation in Algerian universities.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of EMI and Language Acquisition

The theoretical underpinnings of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) are based on the premise that language proficiency is a prerequisite for effective learning and communication in education. Cummins (2000) believes that academic language proficiency allows learners to access content matter substantively, highlighting the interdependence of language and content knowledge. This model stresses the need to embed language learning in disciplinary content for optimal learning in multilingual settings (Coyle et al., 2010). EMI subject teachers are confronted with the task of making sure that learners not only grasp difficult subject matter but also learn to use the language of learning, which may be different from their native language.

This twin emphasis on language and content is a specific pedagogical issue that calls for instructors to use approaches conducive to both linguistic gain and academic success (Macaro, 2018).

The synthesis of language and content learning in EMI contexts is also backed by evidence supporting methods that stimulate learners' cognitive and linguistic growth at the same time (Airey, 2015). Through integrating language learning within subject contexts, teachers can stimulate deeper understanding and critical thinking ability in students irrespective of their language background (Marsh, 2002). Such integration is achievable only through continuous teacher professional development to manage the challenges of EMI teaching (Cummins, 2008).

2.2 Issues in Language Proficiency among Subject Matter Teachers

Content teachers who take part in EMI programs have pertinent issues concerning language proficiency that influence their classroom dynamics and student involvement. Most of the instructors are concerned about whether they will manage to teach complex content effectively in a non-native language (Bamford & Mizokami, 2018). This uncertainty in themselves about their language capacity can create obstacles to communication and understanding, and this will influence the quality of teaching and student learning (Airey & Linder, 2006). All the seminar participants emphasized the need for specially designed language modules that address the linguistic problems of academic communication in their disciplines (Seikkula-Leino, 2007). Besides matters of individual competency, institutional language support is also pivotal to the provision of an inclusive learning environment. Institutions should offer support in the form of language classes, subject-specific terminological support, and in-service training specifically targeting EMI teachers (Dimova et al., 2019;). What is more, collaboration between content experts and language specialists can help facilitate effective pedagogy with a successful incorporation of language and content knowledge (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015; Hellekjaer & Stray, 2018). These issues need to be addressed through an overall solution to providing teachers with language proficiency and pedagogical expertise in catering to the diverse needs of EMI program students (Ouarniki, 2023).

2.3 Institutional Support and Availability of Resources towards Integration of EMI

Successful implementation of EMI in universities depends on sufficient resources and support from the institution to maintain quality teaching practice. Participants in the seminar recognized the poor availability of subject-specific teaching materials and teaching aids in English as a critical limitation in providing quality education (Sahki, 2025; Fortanet-Gómez,

2013). This inadequacy restricts the capacity of teachers to access content and provides adequate lessons to meet the anticipated academic standards.

In addition, institutions must develop supportive policies and invest adequately in programs of professional development that strengthen teachers' pedagogical approaches and linguistic ability (Costa & Coleman, 2010). The seminar brought to fore the necessity for institutional commitment in providing a supporting environment for the integration of EMI through policies focused on language support and pedagogical training (Dearden, 2015). By investing in such resources as bilingual teaching materials, language courses, and collaborative platforms, institutions can empower instructors to deliver effective EMI teaching across different academic disciplines (Lillis & Curry, 2010). Additionally, collaboration among language centers and academic departments can enable the creation of customized support programs that address the subject-specific needs of EMI teachers (Wächter & Maiworm, 2008).

2.4 Importance of Professional Development in EMI Contexts

Professional development constitutes a critical component in equipping subject teachers to face the challenges of EMI teaching by providing them with adequate knowledge and skills to effectively combine language and content. Successful professional development initiatives need to include pedagogies that facilitate active learning and critical thinking in EMI classrooms (Doiz et al., 2014). The seminar underscored the changing function of ongoing training programs and interactive learning format in improving instructors' teaching practice and students' engagement (Murray, 2009). Through the culture of support and continuous betterment, institutions can develop a talent pool of quality EMI instructors capable of providing quality education as per international standards (Beelen & Jones, 2015).

3. Methodology

This research follows a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques to investigate the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at Algerian universities. Thus, the research design achieves a holistic picture of instructors' experience, problems, and institutional support mechanisms through triangulating data from surveys, focus group discussions, qualitative case studies, and audio-recorded plenary debates.

3.1 Description of Pedagogical Seminar Design

The instructional seminar "Heeding Subject Matter's Voices: Insights from the EMI Classroom" allowed a multi-dimensional exploration of EMI challenges and solutions. In particular, the seminar included plenary sessions with expert-facilitated discussion and breakout groups designed to enable focused, discipline-specific engagement. This balance enabled exploration of the theoretical and practical dimensions of EMI uptake within a range of disciplines

Plenary sessions gave a general overview of the problem and solution of EMI in the form of keynote presentations by EMI experts and interactive panel discussions. These sessions, therefore, set the stage for cross-disciplinary discussion and facilitated the gathering of expert opinions on best practices and implementation plans. Conversely, breakout sessions facilitated heated debates within single disciplines, enabling participants to have in-depth discussions regarding field-specific concerns. Structuring the seminar this way, the researchers made certain that data collection addressed both general EMI themes and subtle, discipline-specific concerns.

3.2 Participant Demographics and Selection Criteria

Participants were chosen from Ziane Achour University of Djelfa from a wide variety of academic disciplines to obtain a general concept of EMI experiences. Thus, all teachers of subject matter were invited, and around 30 teaching staff took part in the seminar from disciplines in medicine, computing, law, and biology.

In addition, some of these lecturers were also taking English language courses provided by the English Department or UFC, showing an active interest in enhancing their language proficiency in tandem with subject-matter knowledge. This dual participation attests to the value of EMI as part of their professional development activities.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data gathering in the seminar utilized a range of methods to provide quantitative and qualitative information regarding EMI implementation issues and solutions. In this way, the multi-faceted approach provided an even and holistic exploration of the issues at hand. For instance, plenary sessions and keynote speeches were recorded to track the productive discussion and expert opinions shared by panelists. The recordings subsequently turned out to be effective instruments for refreshing major concepts and integrating expert opinions into the subsequent analyses. Besides, questionnaires were employed to gather quantitative feedback from the participants on certain dimensions of EMI implementation. More specifically, the questionnaires touched on perceived language problems, institutional support, and professional development needs. Consequently, the questionnaire responses yielded strong quantitative data that supplemented the qualitative data gathered using the other instruments.

Additionally, qualitative case studies concentrated on teachers' experiences and perceptions. In doing so, they provided an in-depth understanding of individual challenges and successes in EMI practice. As such, these case studies revealed distinct disciplinary orientations and guided the formulation of specific strategies to meet discipline-specific demands. Similarly significant, focus group discussion sessions were incorporated as a core component of data collection. Discussion offered a structured avenue for lecturers to present their experiences, share ideas, and negotiate solutions as a group. The interactive sessions thus yielded reflective qualitative data that enhanced an insight into complex issues concerning EMI implementation in courses.

Lastly, through the triangulation of data from various sources recorded sessions, surveys, case studies, and focus groups, the seminar offered a detailed and in-depth examination of EMI challenges and strategies. This strict methodology paved the way for well-supported recommendations and future activities for the further implementation of EMI in Algerian universities.

4. Results

This article presents significant challenges and solutions for effective EMI at Ziane Achour University. It highlights disciplinary teachers' language issues, their implications on teaching professional courses, and the need for professional development and institutional support. The findings also offer pragmatic recommendations to enhance language and content integration in higher education.

4.1 Challenges Encountered in Language Proficiency by Subject Matter Instructors

The seminar emphasized noteworthy issues on the language capacity of subject instructors changing to English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at Ziane Achour University. Instructors from various disciplines depicted issues with their capacities to articulate academic material satisfactorily in English. As one Medicine instructor explained, *"Describing complex medical ideas in English requires specific terminology and clarity, hard to achieve without*

native fluency." Likewise, as one Computing instructor explained, *"Conveying complex algorithms and technical ideas in English without loss of accuracy is intimidating."*

Syllabus design was also identified by participants as another significant challenge, where tailoring to EMI contexts is not done. One instructor in Law commented, *"Our existing syllabi are not matched to language proficiency objectives, so it is difficult to teach legal subtleties appropriately."* Educators underscored the necessity for standard syllabus templates mapping content to language development objectives, thereby facilitating instructional coherence and students' understanding.

Suggested strategies were collaborative learning sessions in which teachers could *"share strategies for adapting content and overcoming language barriers,"* as one Biology teacher clarified. Professional development workshops in syllabus design and language support were highlighted by participants. Ongoing support was seen by participants as playing a critical role in lessening teaching challenges and improving instructional clarity in the EMI setting.

4.2 Impact on Teaching Complex Subjects in English

The degree of English proficiency has a great influence on subject teachers' confidence in delivering complex course content. As one Computing teacher said, *"Explaining complex algorithms and technical details precisely in English requires cautiousness to avoid misunderstanding."* Teachers with greater language proficiency reported that they were more confident in being able to explain complex ideas clearly and accurately. On the other hand, language-proficiency-challenged teachers cited difficulty in ensuring instructional clarity while struggling with language limitations. A Law teacher noted, *"It is difficult to articulate complex legal notions and precise meanings and interpretations in English."* Participants echoed the pressing need for focused professional development in pronunciation, syllabus design, and language upgrading optimizing instructional effectiveness in EMI environments. Participants emphasized the contribution systematic training could make in resolving syllabus design deficiencies and strengthening language proficiency across disciplines.

4.3 Language Skills Improvement Strategies and Perceptions

Several strategies were suggested by participants to enhance their own language abilities and teaching styles within the EMI context. As noted by a Computing participant, *"Peer mentoring has been invaluable in refining my English fluency and adapting teaching methods to better engage students."* Others cited attendance at language workshops and independent learning activities as useful strategies to enable language skills. The incorporation of language-oriented teaching methods into pedagogic practices was also emphasized as necessary to address gaps in language within subject-specific environments. The seminar highlighted the need for specialized professional development workshops intended to address subject teachers' specific linguistic and pedagogical needs across disciplines. As one of these participants in Law put it, *"Workshops on integrating language skills and subject knowledge have been instrumental to making me more effective in teaching EMI."*

4.4 Institutional Support and Availability of Resources

Institutional support and resource availability were highlighted by participants as being instrumental in enabling successful EMI implementation. Constraints, based on feedback, were few English language materials for disciplines and teaching resources that were either outdated or in limited supply. One participant from Law commented, *"The lack of updated course materials in English constrains our ability to effectively deliver content."* Suggestions made were the creation of discipline-specific English teaching materials, offering language

training programs for lecturers, and creating support policies that encourage institution-wide EMI embedding. The participants emphasized the necessity of cooperation between language centers and academic departments in creating tailored resources. They also suggested institutional policies acknowledging and rewarding subject matter lecturers' unique challenges in EMI settings.

These findings underscore the necessity of resource infusion and institutional investment to create supportive learning environments to enable effective EMI delivery. Addressing these challenges proactively allows institutions to foster a supportive learning environment to enhance student engagement and academic performance across different disciplinary contexts.

4.5 Gaps Identified and Areas for Improvement

From the forums, some gaps, and suggestions on how to enhance access to resources and institutional support were made. These included:

- Collaboration among academic departments and language centres in creating discipline-based English language content.
- Launching professional development programs incorporating language enrichment along with pedagogical training.
- Institutional policy support for acknowledging and adapting to the specific challenges of subject matter lecturers in EMI contexts.
- Allocation of financial resources to provide sufficient infrastructure and technology support for EMI classrooms.

5. Professional Development Needs and Initiatives

The seminar emphasized the need for long-term professional development programs to assist content teachers in their shift towards EMI. The participants recognized the benefits of collaborative learning communities, peer mentoring schemes, and systematic language enrichment courses geared towards the needs of various disciplines. Successful professional development programs must prioritize practical, evidence-driven approaches enabling teachers to balance language and content in their teaching practice in a consonant manner.

6. Seminar Outcomes and Future Training Implications

The seminar emphasized the significant role of guest language teachers in ICL support. Indeed, guest teachers bring in, besides expert linguistic knowledge, valuable pedagogical experience that complements subject teachers' expertise. Consequently, through cooperation with guest teachers, institutions can enrich language teaching and thus respond better to diversified learning demands. In addition, this partnership promotes cross-cultural interaction among instructors and learners, an essential element in an internationalized learning environment. Finally, this form of partnership not only enhances the quality of the overall learning experience but also creates institutional capacity for offering high-quality EMI programs according to international standards. Hence, incorporating guest language instructors is a strategic step towards mitigating many of the challenges that come with EMI implementation.

7. Significance of Language and Content Integration in Tertiary Education

Integrated Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) practices hold supreme significance to boost student motivation and academic achievement in EMI settings. With the integration of language learning with subject matter content, teachers can design content-rich learning experiences that can address both the development of language and the learning of

disciplinary knowledge. The seminar discussions concentrated on the transformatory potential ICL must prepare students for global academic and professional contexts, emphasizing the need for new pedagogies that can join language and content

7.1 Implementation Strategies for ICL

Successful implementation of ICL needs to be planned strategically and pedagogically innovated. Seminar participants explored several strategies, such as:

- Developing cross-disciplinary courses that integrate content and language goals.
- Language-based tasks and assignments support subject-specific learning outcomes.
- Coordination with language experts and guest lecturers to promote language support within departmental settings.
- Offering continuing professional development activities that enable teachers to teach ICLHE effectively.

These approaches are targeted at supporting an inclusive learning experience in which language ability and subject knowledge converge to strengthen student learning outcomes in various fields of study.

7.2 Guest Language Teachers' Role in the Promotion of ICLHE Approaches

The seminar highlighted the mediating role of guest language teachers in ICL strategies. Guest teachers, in fact, not only introduce specialist language expertise but also pedagogical content knowledge to supplement subject teachers' knowledge. Consequently, through cooperation with guest teachers, institutions can improve language teaching and thus respond better to various learning needs. Additionally, practice promotes cross-cultural understanding between students and lecturers, a requirement in an internationalized learning environment. Additionally, not only does collaborative practice enhance the learning experience in general but also enhances institutional capacity to provide high-quality EMI programs following international standards. Hence, the use of guest language instructors is a strategic implementation to resolve most of the issues related to the implementation of EMI.

8. Policy Recommendations for Enhancing EMI Integration

Based on the findings of the seminar, some policy suggestions are put forward to strengthen the integration of EMI into Ziane Achour University and similar-status universities:

- Detailed language support programs based on the subject matter instructors' language needs should be developed.
- There must be clear institutional policies encouraging and rewarding the use of EMI in disciplinary programs.
- Investments are to be made in order to create subject-specific English language content and instructional aids.
- Interdepartmental collaboration among academic departments, language centers, and instructional support units needs to be promoted for the successful implementation of EMI.
- Regular processes to monitor and enhance the language skills and pedagogical growth of teachers in EMI contexts should be implemented.

9. Institutional Strategies in Facilitating Subject Matter Instructors

The following approaches should be given priority by institutions to assist subject teachers in their shift towards EMI:

- Such opportunities for continuous professional development shall be provided, which blend pedagogical training with language improvement.
- Mentorship programs must be initiated where experienced EMI teachers mentor newcomers and share best practices.
- Communities of practice need to be created that support peer-to-peer interaction and sharing of resources among subject teachers.
- Access to discipline-specific English language materials and technological tools should be increased to facilitate the delivery of EMI.
- Institutional acknowledgment of the double role of subject teachers as both content specialists and language teachers in EMI settings should be promoted.

10. Suggestions for Next Seminar and Professional Development Activity

To maintain momentum and ensure ongoing enhancement in EMI implementation, the following suggestions for future seminars and professional development activities are made:

- Regular workshops and seminars need to be conducted that deal with future issues and trends in EMI teaching.
- Collaborations among international institutions and linguistic professionals need to be enhanced to facilitate opportunities for professional development.
- Feedback mechanisms must be included to get feedback from stakeholders and teachers on the effectiveness of EMI programs.
- Interdisciplinary dialogue must be encouraged that examines points of intersection among language learning, content knowledge, and global competence in higher education.
- Foster research activity that examines the effects of EMI on the academic performance, language development, and academic attainment of students.

11. Conclusion

The seminar on pedagogy, "*Heeding Subject Matter's Voices: Insights from the EMI Classroom*," was a much-needed platform for subject matter instructors at Ziane Achour University to present and discuss the challenges of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Interestingly, significant concerns like language proficiency, resource availability, and institutional support surfaced as key areas to impact EMI implementation. Thus, in the future, institutions need to prioritize some professional development activities that integrate pedagogical content knowledge with linguistic competence. Besides, it is also crucial to establish collaborative learning communities through peer coaching and interdisciplinary workshops. Furthermore, the development of enabling institutional policies — i.e., the creation of discipline-specific English materials and the availability of proper infrastructure — is necessary for the development of effective EMI practices. Briefly, by implementing these approaches, institutions will enable teachers to provide quality EMI instruction (Idri, 2025). By doing so, the practice will not only enhance learning experiences but also prepare students with competencies for global academic and professional success.

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Appendix

Table 1 :

Distribution of Participants by Discipline

Discipline	Number of Participants
Medicine	10
Computing	8
Law	6
Biology	4
Other Disciplines	2