Journal of Language Teaching, *6*(1), 1-16, 2026
https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2026.011

Check for updates

Original Research OPEN ACCESS

Exploring the instructional communication strategies of English Medium Instruction lecturers in Macao's higher education: A qualitative study

Kenton Cheng Tak Chan[1, 2], Katja Lochtman[1], Huilin Shen[3]

[1] **Brussels Center for Language Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium**
[2] **Faculty of Innovative Hospitality Management and Faculty of Creative Tourism and Intelligent Technologies, Macao University of Tourism, Macao SAR, China**
[3] **Faculty of Education, University of Macau, Macao SAR, China**

Received: October 25, 2026 / Accepted: November 20, 2026 / Published Online: November 23, 2026
© Pioneer Publications LTD 2026

Abstract

Driven by the internationalization of higher education, English Medium Instruction (EMI) has expanded rapidly in Macao. However, as universities increase the enrolment of students from traditional Chinese medium backgrounds, many of them face challenges in adapting to EMI learning environments. While existing EMI literature has explored this shift from various perspectives, there remains a notable lack of research on how lecturers employ instructional communication (IC) strategies to navigate these interactive challenges. Adopting a qualitative approach, this study draws on in-depth interviews with 18 EMI lecturers at a university in Macao, utilizing thematic analysis to examine their self-reported classroom communication practices. The findings indicate that these IC strategies including teacher clarity, content relevance, self-disclosure, nonverbal immediacy, rapport, teacher confirmation, and instructional humor operate primarily across two dimensions within the framework of Rhetorical and Relational Goal theory. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that EMI is not a mere direct linguistic substitution, but rather a complex process of intercultural communication and interaction. Based on these findings, we suggest that EMI practitioners consciously integrate IC strategies into their pedagogy. It is suggested that by balancing the transmission of disciplinary knowledge with interpersonal meaning negotiation and relationship-building, educators can cultivate a more inclusive and interactive learning environment.

Keywords English Medium Instruction, instructional communication, lecturer strategies, Macao higher education, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

Macaro (2018) defines English Medium Instruction (EMI) as the practice of teaching academic subjects through the medium of English in jurisdictions where the first language of the majority is not English. Driven by the growing emphasis on the internationalization of higher education, EMI has rapidly grown in non-Anglophone countries, serving as a key catalyst for this global trend (Shimauchi, 2018). In the Macao Special Administrative Region, a multilingual hub where Chinese, Portuguese, and English coexist, several higher education institutions have already adopted English as their primary language of instruction and administration (Botha, 2013). However, the rapid commercialization and expansion of Macao's higher education sector in recent years have presented unprecedented challenges to this pedagogical model. Recent data reveal a dramatic surge in non-local student enrollment in Macao's universities, skyrocketing from about 23,000 in the 2020/2021 academic year to over 47,000 in 2024/2025, a remarkable increase of around 104%, with students from Chinese mainland constituting the vast majority (Education and Youth Development Bureau, 2025).

With this growing influx of students transitioning from traditional Chinese Medium Instruction (CMI) secondary schools to predominantly EMI universities in Macao, the academic challenges and language anxiety they experience have become increasingly apparent. Recent empirical evidence indicates that these students often endure a heavy cognitive load, struggling with English reading materials and lectures. Furthermore, driven by a fear of negative evaluation, they are often reluctant to participate in classroom discussions, which consequently hinders their deep-level comprehension and leads to knowledge attrition (Wang & Yu, 2025; Wang et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2021). To navigate these difficulties and bridge learning gaps, students tend to resort to self-regulatory coping strategies, such as first-language translation and peer support (Wang & Yu, 2025; Wang et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2021). At the same time, some attention has been directed toward how lecturers pivot their classroom language practices in response to their pedagogical beliefs and students' language proficiency (Liu & Li, 2025).

Despite these insights, current EMI literature in Macao remains confined to the disciplinary silos of applied linguistics and language policy, emphasizing language proficiency. Even when studies address teacher-student interactions, they tend to examine these behaviors in isolation as piecemeal tactics, lacking cohesive, systematic integration. Overcoming this theoretical bottleneck requires adopting an interdisciplinary perspective grounded in Instructional Communication (IC). Through this lens, IC focuses on how teachers use verbal and nonverbal messages to stimulate and construct meaning in students' minds (Mottet & Beebe, 2006), emphasizing the broader communicative dynamics they orchestrate within the classroom (Farris et al., 2017).

Through an IC lens, researchers can move beyond the isolated examination of single communication variables (Goodboy & Kashy, 2017). Instead, this framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of how lecturers deploy communication strategies to mitigate cognitive barriers, foster higher-order cognition, and cultivate positive affect (Alhamami, 2023). However, empirical investigations into the specific IC strategies utilized by EMI lecturers remain sparse. This gap is evident in Macao, a region boasting a unique multilingual ecology where Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese, and English intersect. The recent higher education expansion has drastically diversified the demographic backgrounds of both faculty and students, creating formidable linguistic and communicative divides. This complex educational environment necessitates the development and deployment of targeted IC strategies to ensure pedagogical effectiveness.

To bridge this gap in the literature, the present study employs a qualitative approach to explore the IC strategies adopted by EMI lecturers in Macao universities. In particular, this study addresses the following research questions:

(1) What IC strategies do EMI lecturers identify in the Macao higher education context?

(2) How are these IC strategies implemented within the EMI classroom context?

(3) How do EMI lecturers perceive these strategies as shaping classroom interaction and teaching and learning dynamics?

This study aims to enrich the empirical literature at the intersection of EMI and IC in higher education. In particular, it seeks to uncover localized insights into how lecturers overcome communication barriers within Asia's complex, multilingual, and multicultural contexts. On a practical level, the findings will offer actionable EMI pedagogical recommendations for universities in Macao and other regions undergoing internationalization. By assisting lecturers in optimizing classroom interactions and instructional design, this research aims to elevate overall teaching quality so as to enhance student learning outcomes. It is important to note that in the context of this study, the terms "lecturer" and "teacher" are used without distinction. Furthermore, established theoretical constructs from the IC literature, such as teacher clarity, teacher rapport, and teacher confirmation, are retained in their original forms and applied to describe the communicative behaviors of the EMI lecturers investigated in this research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. English Medium Instruction in the Context of Macao's Higher Education

In recent years, EMI has emerged as a core strategy for the internationalization of global higher education (Macaro, 2018), undergoing swift expansion as a key mechanism for enhancing global competitiveness (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). However, EMI is not implemented in a vacuum; local social and policy contexts shape its execution. In Macao, a complex and unique multilingual ecosystem where Chinese, English, and Portuguese intersect, the higher education landscape is undergoing significant transformation. In response to

the Macao government's educational industrialization (Li & Liu, 2022) and its dual emphasis on bilingualism and internationalization, local universities have scaled up their EMI course offerings to drive both the internationalization and commercialization of higher education (Wang & Yu, 2025). This rapid Anglicization, driven by regional development agendas, has become a hallmark of Macao's higher education transition (Choi & Moody, 2024). Within this context, the adoption of EMI transcends a mere shift in the language of instruction; it serves as a strategic policy tool for universities to build international brand identities, elevate global rankings, and bolster regional competitiveness (Hu & Lei, 2014).

Against the backdrop of this substantial EMI expansion, research examining EMI practices in Macao's higher education has increased. Yet, a review of the existing literature reveals that most studies remain focused on policy implementation outcomes, student English proficiency assessments, or the attitudes and beliefs of lecturers and students toward EMI (Botha, 2013; Liu & Li, 2025; Wang & Yu, 2025; Yuan et al., 2025). In contrast, the literature in Macao seldom examines the specific IC behaviors and strategies that lecturers employ to navigate these complex classroom dynamics. This limitation makes it difficult to comprehend the complex teaching and learning dynamics within EMI classrooms.

In EMI settings, lecturers and students encounter interactional challenges. When processing non-native disciplinary knowledge, students often experience heightened cognitive load and language anxiety (Macaro et al., 2018; Roussel et al., 2017). Compounded by the cultural tendency of Chinese students to prioritize "face-saving", these factors often lead to pervasive classroom silence (Xie, 2010). Simultaneously, EMI lecturers, who are subject-matter experts, often encounter face role conflict as they attempt to balance content delivery with language scaffolding (Airey, 2012), which impacts teacher-student interactions.

To address these dilemmas, the current literature explores lecturers' linguistic accommodations and scaffolding strategies, such as code-switching (Liu & Fang, 2022), slowing down speech rates, or simplifying vocabulary (Evans & Morrison, 2011). While these strategies are part of IC and help lower students' cognitive barriers, previous studies have confined them within the frameworks of applied linguistics and cognitive comprehension. As a result, the equally critical "affective and relational" dimensions of IC have been overlooked. In reality, relation barriers often exacerbate the psychological distance between lecturers and students, undermining the effectiveness of traditional teaching strategies.

Teaching is not merely the encoding and decoding of knowledge; it is an interpersonal process. Relying only on linguistic adjustments may fail to dismantle students' psychological defenses or alleviate their anxiety. To cultivate psychological safety and encourage student participation, lecturers must also employ relationship-oriented communication skills, such as demonstrating immediacy through verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Goldman & Goodboy, 2014; Hsu, 2012). Therefore, this study advocates introducing the IC perspective from communication studies to examine how EMI lecturers in Macao report using IC strategies to support teaching and build supportive teacher-student relationships, thereby providing more robust learning support for students navigating dual academic and linguistic challenges.

2.2. Theoretical Foundations of IC

To better understand the interactional dynamics within EMI classrooms, introducing the theoretical lens of IC is vital. Mottet and Beebe (2006) define IC as the process by which teachers and students stimulate meaning in each other's minds through verbal and nonverbal messages. As an interdisciplinary field, IC draws on educational psychology (Mottet & Beebe, 2006), pedagogy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022), and communication studies (Beebe et al., 2016). It posits that teaching is a communicative act; without the transmission of verbal and nonverbal messages, learning cannot occur (Mottet & Beebe, 2006).

Throughout the historical development of IC, scholars have proposed three evolutionary communication models to explain the teaching and learning process: (1) Communication as Action: a linear, one-way transmission model where the lecturer (source) encodes and delivers messages to the students (receivers) without affording them an opportunity to respond. This model, akin to traditional one-way lecturing, fails to promote deep learning. (2) Communication as Interaction: this model introduces a feedback loop, allowing students to respond to or question the lecturer's messages. Lecturers can then adjust their instructional delivery based on students' verbal or nonverbal feedback. (3) Communication as Transaction: this is the most regarded model among contemporary IC scholars. In this paradigm, lecturers and students are simultaneously expected to act as senders and receivers of messages. As equal communication partners, they use verbal and nonverbal cues to co-create and negotiate shared meaning. This non-linear, dynamic process forms the core foundation for establishing effective, interactive, and inclusive classrooms (Mottet & Beebe, 2006).

The goal of IC extends beyond the unidirectional transmission of disciplinary content; it aims to facilitate substantive changes in learners across multiple dimensions, specifically, their intellectual comprehension, emotional attitudes, and practical skills. Scholars assert that effective IC is designed to promote three core learning outcomes: cognitive learning (understanding and retaining content), affective learning (developing positive attitudes toward the subject and instructor), and psychomotor and behavioral learning (acquiring specific physical or communicative skills) (McCroskey et al., 2004; Richmond, 2002). In other words, IC is believed to serve as the critical bridge connecting disciplinary knowledge with pedagogy (McCroskey et al., 2002). When lecturers and students engage in dynamic meaning negotiation in the classroom, they are practicing a relational approach to teaching (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Mottet & Beebe, 2006). This approach maintains that learning does not happen in a vacuum, but rather naturally emerges as teachers and students exchange information, forge interpersonal connections, and build shared understanding (McCroskey et al., 2004). This transaction-based meaning negotiation is in particular crucial in EMI environments fraught with language barriers. To achieve deep learning objectives and overcome comprehension obstacles, the overall communicative behaviors and attitudes exhibited by the lecturer during the teaching process become the critical prerequisites determining educational success.

In EMI classrooms, lecturers employ diverse pedagogical strategies to overcome students' linguistic barriers and facilitate the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge. Foremost among these is multimodal scaffolding, a prevalent instructional practice. Lecturers integrate visual aids with simplified linguistic definitions, such as utilizing images, slide layouts, blackboard writing, gestures, and eye contact, to elucidate complex disciplinary vocabulary, thereby concretizing abstract academic concepts to enhance comprehension (Lasagabaster, 2022; Wang et al., 2025). Secondly, numerous educators implement translanguaging or code-switching, incorporating students' first language or localized real-world examples. This approach not only effectively mitigates students' cognitive load when processing a foreign language but also clarifies intricate concepts, thereby boosting learning motivation and fostering classroom inclusivity (Lasagabaster, 2022; Ponomarevskyi & Horbačauskienė, 2026; Wang et al., 2025). Finally, regarding interactive pedagogy and questioning techniques, teachers deliberately employ metadiscourse and signaling strategies to guide students in navigating the course structure. By leveraging problem-based learning and tiered questioning techniques, educators dismantle the traditional framework of unidirectional lecturing, ultimately stimulating active classroom participation and higher-order critical thinking among students (Lasagabaster, 2022; Ponomarevskyi & Horbačauskienė, 2026).

A foundational framework within IC that captures this dynamic is the Rhetorical and Relational Goals Theory (RRGT). RRGT posits that effective instructional communication requires lecturers to simultaneously manage two primary goals: rhetorical and relational. Rhetorical goals focus on the effective delivery of the instructional message, ensuring that students comprehend the academic content such as achieved through teacher clarity and content relevance. Relational goals, on the other hand, involve maintaining interpersonal connections and fostering a supportive, psychologically safe learning environment such as achieved through immediacy, confirmation, and rapport-building. In the context of EMI, where language barriers can impede rhetorical message delivery and increase psychological distance, balancing these two dimensions becomes critical. Therefore, RRGT serves as the primary theoretical lens for this study to categorize and understand the communicative strategies employed by EMI lecturers (Mottet & Beebe, 2006).

2.3. IC Strategies and their Relationship with Learning Outcomes

Morreale et al. (2024) mentioned that IC competence encompasses a lecturer's motivation, knowledge, and skills to select, execute, and evaluate effective messages, all while considering student development and two-way feedback. In higher education, a lecturer's communicative behavior is often categorized into three core dimensions: Immediacy, Clarity, and Credibility (Segabutla, 2015). Immediacy refers to the lecturer's ability to reduce physical and psychological distance through eye contact, smiling, or the use of inclusive pronouns. Clarity requires the lecturer to be explicit and well-organized in their verbal expression and content delivery. Credibility pertains to students' evaluations of the lecturer's professional competence, trustworthiness, and genuine care (Segabutla, 2015).

Beyond these three pillars, other specific communication strategies are considered vital to the learning process. Empirical research by Adara and Al Amin (2023) highlights that feedback and IC are among the most salient communicative traits of effective lecturers, with constructive and timely feedback being essential for sustaining student interest. Tuomainen (2023) further suggests that lecturers should cultivate a positive classroom atmosphere through questioning, humor, and enthusiasm. This would not only establish active learning but would also trigger positive emotional contagion. Also, building teacher rapport, establishing

content relevance, and utilizing appropriate self-disclosure are recognized as effective supplementary strategies for reducing learning anxiety and boosting classroom engagement (Myers, 2017).

Moreover, IC is believed to play an indispensable role in stimulating student motivation and engagement. A structural equation modeling study in higher education by Aynalem et al. (2026) confirmed that a lecturer's general pedagogical knowledge must be mediated through IC to translate into student engagement. Viewed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, Adara and Al Amin (2023) found a strong positive correlation between a lecturer's effective IC and students' learning motivation. When lecturers deliver content dynamically and provide meaningful feedback, students are more likely to internalize the value of the learning material, transforming it into something they want to pursue, thereby generating powerful intrinsic motivation.

However, when the instructional context shifts to EMI, IC is expected to face entirely different hurdles. Investigating South African higher education, Segabutla (2015) pointed out that if lecturers or students lack proficiency in the medium of instruction such as English, it directly diminishes the lecturer's clarity and credibility. This can even trigger instructional dissonance, creating severe physical and psychological barriers in the learning process.

To comprehend these limitations and maintain pedagogical efficacy, lecturers should possess a high degree of adaptability. Tuomainen (2023) advises that when facing students from diverse backgrounds across different disciplines, lecturers must adjust their communication methods. This may involve providing multimodal visual aids, employing peer collaborative learning, or utilizing anonymous online question-and-answer platforms to bridge linguistic and psychological divides.

In summary, while past IC research has demonstrated a positive impact on student motivation and engagement, the majority of studies have been confined to first language classroom environments. Qualitative research exploring how lecturers apply, adapt, or innovate IC strategies to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers within EMI contexts, particularly in universities like those in Macao, where the backgrounds of students and faculty are intertwined in a complex multilingual ecology, remains scarce. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the IC practices and strategies of EMI lecturers in Macao's higher education sector.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm and Design

This study is grounded in social constructivism, which posits that meaning is constructed by individuals within specific sociocultural contexts. Guided by this epistemology, the study adopted a qualitative interview approach to explore how EMI lecturers understand and make sense of classroom communication, thereby capturing their subjective experiences in everyday teaching practices. The research setting is a higher education institution in Macao with a well-established history of EMI, encompassing both undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

3.2. Participants

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling via written invitations. The core inclusion criteria required participants to possess EMI teaching experience in higher education, and participate voluntarily. The final sample consisted of 18 lecturers (13 females and 5 males) with teaching experience ranging from 2 to over 15 years. The cohort included 14 Chinese nationals and 4 international lecturers. In terms of academic disciplines, 15 lecturers were from business and management, while 3 were from the humanities (see Table 1). This distribution of disciplines and genders reflects the current demographic structure of the institution's primary EMI faculty. Data saturation was achieved by the 16th interview, at which point no new codes emerged from the data.

Table 1. Participants' information

Participant	Gender	EMI Teaching Experience	Nationality	Subjects
1	M	> 15 years	International	Humanities
2	F	> 15 years	Chinese	Business and Management
3	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
4	M	11-15 years	Chinese (Hong Kong SAR)	Business and Management

Participant	Gender	EMI Teaching Experience	Nationality	Subjects
5	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
6	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
7	M	11-15 years	International	Business and Management
8	F	6-10 years	Chinese	Business and Management
9	F	11-15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
10	F	11-15 years	International	Business and Management
11	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
12	F	1-5 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
13	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
14	F	11-15 years	International	Business and Management
15	M	1-5 years	Chinese	Business and Management
16	M	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Business and Management
17	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Humanities
18	F	> 15 years	Chinese (Macao SAR)	Humanities

3.3. Data Collection

Data collection involved both face-to-face and online interviews, each lasting approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native languages or preferred languages, including Cantonese, Mandarin, or English. The core focus was on the lecturers' IC strategies and practices in EMI courses. For instance, we asked, "What teaching methods and activities do you employ when presenting complex content in English?" Prior to the formal data collection, a pilot study was conducted with two lecturers who were excluded from the final sample to fine-tune the interview guide, such as replacing dense academic jargon with more colloquial phrasing. Upon completion of each interview, participants were offered a small token of appreciation, though some politely declined.

3.4. Data Processing and Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded. Initial transcripts were generated using iFlytek voice recognition software. To rectify potential AI transcription errors, the researchers conducted rigorous manual proofreading. By listening to the recordings multiple times, the AI-generated text was verified and corrected word-by-word, with particular attention paid to academic terminology, colloquial expressions, and instances of code-switching. A secondary review was then performed to ensure the final transcripts captured the participants' original meanings with authenticity and precision.

During the analysis phase, NVivo software was utilized to assist with data management and coding. The analytical framework followed the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This study adopted a hybrid (deductive-inductive) approach to thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Under the deductive phase, the initial coding framework was guided by established IC constructs such as teacher clarity, immediacy, confirmation and the two overarching dimensions of the RRGT. Through inductive analysis, the researchers remained open to new, context-specific codes emerging from the raw data, such as "strategic code-switching" and "localized case studies" which are unique to the Macao EMI context.

In practice, the coding process began with line-by-line reading of the transcripts to generate initial open codes such as "using Chinese terms on slides", "sharing past English struggles". Next, these initial codes were collated and synthesized into broader sub-themes based on their semantic similarities. Finally, these sub-themes were mapped onto the pre-existing theoretical constructs, resulting in the seven final themes such as teacher clarity, self-disclosure. These seven themes were then theoretically categorized under the two overarching RRGT dimensions: rhetorical goals and relational goals. To preserve contextual nuances, non-English interview data were analyzed in their original languages; quotes were only translated into English during the final manuscript preparation. To enhance analytical transparency and academic rigor, a cross-checking mechanism was implemented. The first author conducted the initial coding, which was reviewed and discussed with the second author to establish the final sub-themes and coding frame. Furthermore, an independent third-party researcher, unaware of the participants' identities, cross-checked a portion of the coded transcripts to ensure the objectivity of the coding and further enhance analytical rigor.

3.5. Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, multiple rigorous measures were implemented. First, to establish credibility, the study employed investigator triangulation; the two authors cross-checked the coding and themes to cross-verify the findings, thereby mitigating individual subjective bias. Second, to ensure transferability, thick description was utilized to provide rich contextual details, enabling readers to evaluate the

applicability of the findings to other settings. Third, to maintain dependability, a comprehensive audit trail was established, documenting the entire analytical decision-making process from the raw audio and transcripts to the initial codes and final themes. Finally, to achieve confirmability, the researchers maintained reflexive journals to continuously monitor how their subjective perspectives and potential biases might influence data interpretation, ensuring the findings genuinely stemmed from the participants' viewpoints. The limitations of this study include the non-random nature of qualitative sampling and the potential for social desirability bias inherent in self-reported data. However, the fundamental nature of qualitative research prioritizes an in-depth understanding of phenomena and contextual exploration over statistical generalizability. This characteristic aligns with the core exploratory objectives of the present study (Ahmed, 2024).

4. Findings

Drawing upon the interview data, this study reveals that IC strategies in EMI classrooms primarily fall into two overarching groups in seven themes. The findings indicate that these IC strategies, including teacher clarity, content relevance, self-disclosure, nonverbal immediacy, rapport, teacher confirmation, and instructional humor, function across two dimensions. Within the framework of Rhetorical and Relational Goal theory, these are categorized as the rhetorical and the relational. To illustrate the analytical process and the connection between the raw data and the thematic structure, Table 2 presents the coding framework, operational definitions, initial codes, and representative extracts for each theme.

Table 2. Thematic Structure of IC Strategies in EMI Classrooms

Theme	Operational Definition	Initial Codes	Representative Extract
Teacher Clarity	Behaviors that make instructional content clear, structured, and comprehensible, mitigating language barriers.	Using visual/tangible aids; chunking information; translating key terms on slides; allowing L1 for complex queries.	*"I break down a large, complex problem into several smaller ones… visual videos can provide more color and stimulation."* (P16)
Content Relevance	Connecting academic concepts to students' real-world experiences, local contexts, or future careers.	Using local business cases; relating theories to daily life; avoiding outdated Western textbooks.	*"I select common businesses from everyday life (like Hema, Alibaba) as practical examples, rather than using outdated textbook examples…"* (P8)
Self-Disclosure	Sharing personal experiences, struggles, or authentic traits to reduce power distance and build trust.	Sharing past English learning struggles; admitting non-native status; showing authentic personality.	*"I share with them that I also had times when I couldn't understand… I use this to build their confidence."* (P2)
Nonverbal Immediacy	Nonverbal cues that reduce physical and psychological distance between lecturer and students.	Smiling frequently; stepping off the podium; standing next to students; using expressive gestures.	*"I stand next to them, talk with them, and joke around a lot."* (P7)
Rapport	Building interpersonal connections and demonstrating genuine care for students' holistic well-being.	Small talk before/after class; checking on physical health; discussing hometowns and career plans.	*"I mostly use the waiting time after class to chat, talking about their hometowns, places they've traveled…"* (P11)
Teacher Confirmation	Validating students' efforts and creating a threat-free environment for participation.	Encouraging attempts over accuracy; using anonymous Q&A tools; verbally reassuring anxious students.	*"I encourage everyone to try their best; it doesn't matter if they make mistakes, I will help them."* (P11)
Instructional Humor	Using jokes or lightheartedness to regulate classroom atmosphere and lower affective filters.	Joking during practical sessions; telling jokes when students look tired; using self-deprecating humor.	*"If the students look exhausted in class, I will tell a few jokes."* (P17)

4.1. Teacher Clarity: Multimodal Scaffolding and Strategic Code-Switching

In EMI classrooms, students encounter difficulties stemming from a lack of academic English vocabulary. This study found that rather than relying on verbal repetition in English, EMI lecturers reported employing

multimodal scaffolding and strategic code-switching to ensure the accurate transmission of knowledge.

First, lecturers described utilizing visual and tangible aids to facilitate student comprehension. Participant 12, who teaches applied learning sciences, pointed out that relying solely on spoken English often fails to create concrete mental images for students,

> *"Sometimes I bring samples of [the teaching content] to them... samples, or real objects. Because if I just talk, they might not understand what I mean."*

Participant 12's reflections confirm that in an EMI environment, non-verbal visual and tangible cues are viewed as crucial extensions of teacher clarity. Similarly, Participant 16, who teaches complex management and statistical models, emphasized the perceived necessity of step-by-step breakdowns and visualization. Participant 16 stated,

> *"I break down a large, complex problem into several smaller ones... because face-to-face lecture time is limited, visual videos can provide more color and stimulation."*

This strategy of chunking large blocks of information, supplemented by multimedia, is intended to reduce students' extraneous cognitive load when processing a second language.

Second, at the linguistic level, lecturers refer to a high degree of audience-centered accommodation. Although the institution's macro-policy mandates English-only instruction, in micro-level classroom practices, lecturers engage in strategic code-switching based on student responses. Participant 18, a humanities lecturer, clearly articulated this compromise and flexibility,

> *"I don't speak Chinese verbally. When encountering highly obscure vocabulary, I write the Chinese translation directly on the PPT slides during my lesson preparation."*

Participant 3, who teaches management, adopted a more flexible approach,

> *"For freshmen, I don't mind if they use Chinese to answer vocabulary-related questions; at least they are trying to translate. I have higher expectations for seniors... sometimes I might even speak a short segment directly in Chinese, but the primary instruction is still in English."*

From an IC perspective, this code-switching is not a pedagogical failure but a clarifying tactic. By annotating key Chinese terms on slides or providing brief native-language explanations when students appear collectively confused, lecturers maintain the primary EMI tone while ensuring that core content knowledge is not sacrificed to language barriers. This demonstrates the lecturers' high degree of agency as arbiters of language policy.

However, it is important to note that not all lecturers embrace code-switching. Representing a contrasting perspective, Participant 17, who teaches specialized design courses, maintains a strict English-only boundary. When asked if she would use bilingual explanations or add Chinese characters to her slides, her response was a decisive "No". Instead of relying on Chinese as first language, she compensates by "making the PPT content more detailed" and relying entirely on "videos and hands-on practical activities" to clarify complex concepts. This deviant case highlights that while code-switching is a popular IC strategy, some EMI lecturers still remain committed to full monolingual immersion, preferring to enhance clarity through non-linguistic instructional design.

4.2. Content Relevance: Connecting to the Real World and Localized Lived Experiences

Content relevance is a critical variable in stimulating students' intrinsic learning motivation. When students perceive the learning content as closely related to their personal lives, future careers, or existing experiences, their classroom engagement rises markedly and measurably. In the Eastern context of Macao's EMI classrooms, where language already constitutes a barrier, overly Western-centric or abstract teaching materials can alienate students. As a result, this study found that EMI lecturers in Macao place a strong emphasis on the localization of materials and connections to lived experiences.

Integrating Western teaching materials with Asian or local Macao contexts seems to be a common strategy used by lecturers to establish content relevance. For example, Participant 5 noted that while English textbooks contain ample case studies of large international corporations, she prefers to introduce familiar scenarios,

> *"I design a scenario or case... integrating life-like examples, making it easier for students to absorb."*

Similarly, Participant 8, who teaches business courses, argued that an overreliance on traditional English textbooks leaves students feeling disconnected. He emphasized,

> *"I use case studies and select common businesses from everyday life as practical examples, rather than using outdated textbook examples, to help them better understand the concepts."*

By introducing cases of Chinese or local enterprises familiar to students' daily lives, lecturers want to build a bridge between students' known experiences and unknown disciplinary knowledge.

4.3. Self-Disclosure: Breaking Down Authority to Build Psychological Safety

In EMI classrooms, when facing a large number of students from traditional Chinese Medium Instruction backgrounds, lecturers' moderate self-disclosure could lower students' defensiveness. Several lecturers mentioned engaging in empathetic self-disclosure by sharing their own learning frustrations and authentic experiences, aiming to dismantle the stereotype of the lecturer as a perfect authority on knowledge.

Many Chinese lecturers said they themselves transitioned from a Chinese linguistic context to an all-English academic environment, and they transform this past struggle into a pedagogical resource to encourage students. Participant 2 shared how she uses her past frustrations to soothe students' anxiety,

> *"Some students have low participation because of learning anxiety; they feel they can't learn it no matter what and suspect it's their own problem. I share with them that I also had times when I couldn't understand, and even a phase where I couldn't understand English at all, but I overcame it step by step. I use this to build their confidence."*

Beyond language learning frustrations, revealing authentic personality traits is also a crucial component of self-disclosure. Participant 8, who teaches business analytics, emphasized the importance of showing one's authentic self,

> *"Teaching is not just about imparting knowledge; it also requires personal charisma and humanistic care. I share my true feelings and experiences with students so they feel the lecturer is a real, living person."*

Even expatriate lecturers actively utilize self-disclosure to bridge the distance with students. Participant 1 had a sharp awareness of his status as a non-native English speaker and turned this into an opportunity to connect with students:

> *"I am not completely confident in speaking English myself, so I want to show that my background is not from an English-speaking country... What I want is the students' response [to know] that if they don't understand, that's fine."*

By candidly acknowledging their own linguistic limitations, lecturers want to convey a strong relational message to students: we are all communicating in a non-native language, and imperfection is acceptable. This communicative posture helps enhance their approachability and is intended to cultivate an atmosphere of psychological safety within the classroom.

4.4. Nonverbal Immediacy: Breaking Language Barriers and Bridging the Physical Divide

Immediacy refers to communicative behaviors that reduce the perceived distance between lecturers and students. When language itself acts as a communication barrier in EMI classrooms, nonverbal immediacy serves as a vital conduit for facilitating comprehension and conveying empathy.

Regarding nonverbal behaviors and closing the physical gap, Participant 7 noted that when students struggle with basic subject-specific English terminology, he relies heavily on body language to scaffold his explanations. Furthermore, during 10-hour practical sessions, he chooses to stand right next to the students for extended periods.

> *"I stand next to them, talk with them, and joke around a lot."*

By closing this physical distance and providing rich physical cues, the lecturer not only bridges the language divide but also seeks to mitigate students' sense of alienation in an all-English environment.

Beyond expressive body language, the flexible use of facial expressions and proxemics is another common strategy. For instance, Participants 3 and 10 both highlighted the importance of "maintaining a smile" during class. Participant 10 stated,

> *"I always keep a smile during class. As long as students answer questions, I say thank you to them, creating a friendly atmosphere."*

Also, in terms of proxemics, when noticing students looking bewildered by English explanations, Participant 17 stated that she avoids remaining anchored to the podium:

"If the class size is large, I will walk down and check on them table by table."

4.5. Rapport: Building Trust Capital and Psychological Support

Beyond closing the physical gap, establishing strong teacher rapport is crucial for reducing psychological distance and building trust. In the EMI context, lecturers reported making deliberate use of the transitional moments before and after class to engage in non-academic small talk, demonstrating their genuine care for students as independent individuals.

Participant 17, who teaches specialized subjects, pays close attention to students' physical and psychological well-being, offering prompt check-ins,

> *"During breaks, if I notice academic issues, like a sudden drop from high to low grades, I will try to find out what happened. If I see a student feeling unwell during class, I will show concern; I even pay attention to things like whether they are too hot, too cold, or sneezing."*

Similarly, Participant 11 shared how she builds mutual understanding with her students through pre- and post-class conversations:

> *"I mostly use the waiting time after class to chat, talking about their hometowns, places they've traveled, or asking about their plans for further studies... I usually extend topics based on the experiences and backgrounds students share in class, using this to show interest in their academic goals and their needs for different courses."*

This communication style, treating students as independent adults rather than mere learning machines, serves to build trust capital between lecturers and students in the EMI environment. When students feel genuine care from their lecturers, their resilience in the face of language setbacks strengthens. Consequently, they become more willing to lower their defenses and engage without hesitation in the all-English classroom.

Despite the general tendency to build rapport, the dataset also reveals a contrasting approach where maintaining professional distance is prioritized. Participant 7 avoids personal rapport-building, stating,

> *"I try to learn as little about their personal lives as possible. I keep strict boundaries; they don't have my phone number, WeChat, or WhatsApp. They can only contact me via official email or during office hours."*

This deviant case suggests that for some lecturers, particularly those with extensive industry backgrounds, relational maintenance stays bounded within the academic realm, demonstrating that IC strategies are highly individualized and context-dependent.

4.6. Teacher Confirmation: De-threatening Strategies for Encouraging Participation and Positive Responses

In the field of IC, teacher confirmation refers to the ways lecturers respond to, recognize, and encourage students, making them feel valued within the classroom. In EMI classrooms, students often remain silent out of a fear of making mistakes when speaking English. To alleviate this language anxiety, lecturers actively employ teacher confirmation strategies to validate student participation.

Participant 6's practice exemplifies this approach:

> *"As long as you are willing to answer me and provide a few more examples, I consider that you have participated. I give them what we call participation marks, so they earn the points. Basically, as long as you are willing to answer, I don't demand that it be correct."*

Participant 6 makes intentional shifts in the assessment focus from linguistic accuracy to the willingness to participate. This communication strategy sends a clear signal to the students: in this EMI classroom, the exchange of ideas takes precedence over perfect language or grammar. When students' small attempts consistently receive positive confirmation from the lecturer, their motivation to engage in classroom dialogue over time strengthens.

To further mitigate the face-threatening nature of speaking in public, lecturers demonstrate technological agility, leveraging technological tools to enact teacher confirmation. Recognizing that students were often too intimidated to ask questions face-to-face, Participant 1 introduced a written, anonymous communication channel:

> *"At the end of each class, students can give me feedback, especially when they have suggestions or questions. They can input them into a Google Form and submit it to me... In the next class, I select the students' comments anonymously and share them with the class."*

By collecting anonymous questions via Google Forms, Participant 1 aims to bypass the anxiety students feel about their spoken English and addresses their queries publicly in the following session. This serves not only to clarify course content but also as a strong form of behavioral confirmation, ensuring students feel their voices are genuinely heard and respected.

Furthermore, empathy and verbal reassurance serve as crucial confirmation strategies. When students feel insecure about their English proficiency, Participant 11 chooses to directly acknowledge their unease and provide psychological support:

> *"Many students take the initiative after class to confess that their English is not good... I tell them not to be tense, just take their time to adapt, and I let them know I understand that local or mainland students who previously studied mainly in Chinese all share this struggle. I encourage everyone to try their best; it doesn't matter if they make mistakes, I will help them."*

Through explicit verbal validation of the students' difficulties and a clear promise of assistance, Participant 11 sought to foster an attitude of permission to make mistakes. This confirming stance is intended to transform an otherwise high-pressure EMI setting into a supportive and inclusive learning environment, encouraging students toward ongoing trial and output within a psychologically safe atmosphere.

Despite the widespread adoption of confirmation strategies, the data also captures negative cases where these IC efforts fail to elicit student engagement, leading to lecturer withdrawal. Participant 18 candidly admitted the limits of her relational efforts when facing a class in unbroken silence: "I will first try various methods to change the situation. But if the course is halfway through and the class remains in total silence, I will lower my own level of investment and just do the most basic teaching work." Similarly, Participant 16 noted that "if some students are completely insulated and cannot change, I can only accept it." These negative cases are crucial, as they illustrate that IC in EMI classrooms is a transactional process; without reciprocal student feedback, lecturers' relational maintenance strategies can be exhausted.

4.7. Instructional Humor: Regulating the Atmosphere to Lower Affective Filters

IC scholars widely view teaching humor as an effective tool for reducing classroom tension and enhancing student learning (Azizinezhad & Hashemi, 2011; Wanzer et al., 2010). When navigating high cognitive load EMI disciplinary courses, appropriate humor is perceived as a way to lower students' affective filters.

Participant 17 flexibly switches communication modes when noticing a dip in student energy:

> *"If the students look exhausted in class, I will tell a few jokes."*

Participant 8 also noted that despite being naturally introverted, he makes a conscious effort to engage students by incorporating humor drawn from personal experiences:

> *"I am not very good at telling jokes, but I really hope to become a humorous person, so I usually try to learn and improve my skills in this area."*

These practices demonstrate that in the EMI context, humor is far more than mere entertainment; it is believed to function as a vital relational maintenance strategy. It helps break through the solemnity and pressure often associated with all-English instruction, ultimately cultivating a learning space characterized by greater inclusivity and psychological safety.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore how EMI lecturers in the Macao higher education context utilize IC strategies to help students overcome the dual challenges of language and subject matter. The findings reveal that EMI lecturers' expressed communication strategies can be categorized into two main dimensions: Message Delivery (aligning with rhetorical goals) and Relational Maintenance (aligning with relational goals). These findings not only align with existing IC theories but also strongly resonate with the Rhetorical and Relational Goals Theory (RRGT), which emphasizes the critical balance between achieving instructional (rhetorical) outcomes and fulfilling interpersonal (relational) needs (Mottet & Beebe, 2006). Furthermore, their beliefs demonstrate a high degree of localized adaptability shaped by Macao's distinct multilingual and multicultural ecology. Unlike

EMI contexts in Europe, where students often share cognate languages with English, or purely monolingual regions, Macao represents a unique intersection. Here, Western academic traditions and English-only macro-policies meet a highly diverse student body, comprising Cantonese-speaking local students and a massive influx of Mandarin-speaking students from mainland China. This specific demographic mix necessitates a more nuanced implementation of IC strategies. For instance, the strategic code-switching observed is not merely a simple English-to-L1 translation, but a complex navigation between English, Mandarin, and Cantonese to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds. Similarly, the strong emphasis on localized content relevance directly responds to the significant cultural distance between Western-centric textbooks and the students' lived experiences in the Greater China region. As a result, the Macao context compels EMI lecturers to act not just as subject experts, but as active cultural and linguistic brokers, making these relational and rhetorical strategies far more critical and multifaceted than in more homogenous EMI settings.

In traditional IC research, Teacher Clarity often assumes that lecturers and students share a native language, emphasizing the fluency and logic of oral expression. However, as Segabutla (2015) noted regarding IC competence, when the medium of instruction (such as English) is not the native language of either party, language barriers can easily trigger instructional dissonance, leading to breakdowns in message delivery. This study found that to overcome this dilemma, EMI lecturers in Macao do not hold to a rigid English-only policy. Instead, to enhance teacher clarity, they adopt multimodal scaffolding and strategic code-switching. By using visual aids, physical demonstrations, and even adding Chinese keywords to presentation slides, lecturers strive to reduce the extraneous cognitive load students experience when processing a second language (Roussel et al., 2017). Such flexible translanguaging practices are not a compromise in teaching competence; rather, they reflect the lecturers' professional communication skills as language policy arbiters (Liu & Li, 2025) aiming to maximize instructional clarity.

Furthermore, regarding Content Relevance, facing a diverse student body from mainland China and local Macao, lecturers deliberately integrate Western theories with Asian or local business cases. This strategy is believed to bridge cultural gaps and enable students to engage in higher-order thinking within familiar contexts. It confirms that in an EMI environment, grounding content in students' cultural and lived experiences can be a crucial catalyst for effective message delivery.

One of the core findings of this study is the indispensable role of relational maintenance in EMI classrooms. Past literature on EMI has largely focused on applied linguistics such as vocabulary simplification and slowing down speech rate (Evans & Morrison, 2011), often overlooking how language anxiety can widen the psychological distance between lecturers and students. Consistent with a few studies exploring the intersection of EMI and IC (Alhamami, 2023), effective IC can stimulate positive emotions and enhance academic performance.

The lecturers in this study reported extensive use of self-disclosure, nonverbal immediacy, teacher rapport, and teacher confirmation to break through the culture of silence often found among Chinese students, who may be concerned about saving face and afraid of making mistakes (Xie, 2010). For instance, lecturers proactively shared their own past frustrations with learning English. This kind of vulnerable self-disclosure effectively deconstructs the traditional, authoritative image of the lecturer, building a deep, empathetic connection with students. Concurrently, lecturers shortened physical distance (proxemics) by stepping off the podium, maintained a smiling demeanor, and used anonymous digital tools (like Google Forms) to facilitate threat-free participation checks. These strategies respond to Mottet and Beebe's (2006) Transactional Model, transforming one-way knowledge transmission into two-way meaning negotiation, with the ultimate goal of creating a learning haven with high psychological safety for students.

Notably, the present study categorizes humor under the relational maintenance dimension. In the highly demanding cognitive environment of EMI, humor not only seems to be a simple tool for transmitting subject knowledge; its primary function is to serve as an affective regulator. By using self-deprecation or lighthearted jokes, lecturers seek to instantly lower students' affective filters, alleviate language anxiety, and draw students closer. Humor seems to be a powerful relational tool for maintaining teacher rapport in cross-cultural and bilingual teaching settings.

In terms of theoretical contributions, the present study successfully introduces the IC theoretical framework from communication studies into the Macao higher education EMI research field, addressing the over-reliance on linguistic perspectives in previous literature. Moreover, it brings major enrichment to the theoretical landscape by uncovering a wide array of relational IC practices that have been largely underexplored in previous Macao-based EMI literature. By highlighting these relational dynamics, the study provides a more

holistic understanding of EMI pedagogy beyond mere language proficiency. The study expands the operational definitions of traditional IC variables such as clarity and immediacy in non-native teaching environments. It demonstrates that in multilingual classrooms, IC strategies must be deeply integrated with cross-cultural sensitivity and linguistic scaffolding, laying an empirical foundation for a future EMI-IC Model.

In practical terms, the present study is believed to offer actionable teaching guidelines for higher education institutions undergoing internationalization. By intentionally balancing the rigorous transmission of disciplinary knowledge with interpersonal meaning negotiation and relationship-building, educators can foster a much more inclusive, engaging, and interactive learning environment. Instead of relying solely on linguistic adjustments, lecturers can serve to bridge cognitive and affective gaps through strategic employment of localized case studies, leveraging anonymous tech tools to encourage participation, and reducing student anxiety through appropriate self-disclosure and humor.

While this study provides in-depth qualitative insights, several limitations remain. First, the study employed purposive sampling, limiting the sample to 18 lecturers from a single higher education institution in Macao, primarily within business and humanities disciplines. As a consequence, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Second, data collection heavily relied on lecturer self-report, which not only introduces the potential for social desirability bias, where lecturers might unintentionally embellish their communication behaviors, but also presents a single-sided view of the classroom dynamic.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that future research incorporate the student perspective to investigate whether students actually agree with the IC strategies reported by lecturers, and whether these strategies yield tangible benefits for students' learning motivation and content comprehension. Future studies could adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining student surveys and focus group interviews, or conducting actual classroom observations, such as utilizing video-recorded classroom sessions, for triangulation. This would allow for an objective assessment of the true effectiveness of these communication strategies. Additionally, exploring the differences in EMI communication strategies across various disciplines is another promising avenue for future inquiry.

6. Conclusion

Amid the accelerating wave of internationalization in global higher education, EMI has become an irreversible trend. However, this study profoundly highlights that EMI teaching is by no means a simple translation process of switching the medium of instruction to English; rather, it is a challenging cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communicative transaction. By exploring the lived experiences of EMI lecturers in Macao universities, a two-dimensional framework of IC strategies has been introduced, which aligns with the Rhetorical and Relational Goals Theory. Regarding Message Delivery, effective EMI lecturers act as flexible meaning-makers. Instead of being confined to a single language, they ensure the clarity and relevance of subject knowledge through multimodal scaffolding, strategic code-switching, and localized case studies. In terms of Relational Maintenance, lecturers serve as sensitive emotional supporters. Through empathetic self-disclosure, mobile nonverbal immediacy, building rapport, threat-free teacher confirmation, and well-timed humor, they strive to dismantle the psychological defenses students build up due to language barriers. In doing so, they seek to transform what could be an intimidating all-English classroom into an inclusive learning community characterized by psychological safety. In summary, the immense value of introducing the IC perspective into Macao EMI research cannot be underestimated, especially by shedding light on previously overlooked relational strategies. In a complex, multilingual educational ecosystem, a lecturer's communication competence is just as critical as their subject expertise. By harmonizing academic content delivery with active relationship-building, EMI can overcome linguistic barriers and achieve the ultimate visions of deep learning and educational internationalization.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Poe and Gemini to polish the English language in order to improve readability and language. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Kenton Cheng Tak Chan (Corresponding Author) is pursuing a PhD degree at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. His research interests are intercultural communication, tourism, and education.
Email: kenton@utm.edu.mo; cheng.tak.chan@vub.be

Katja Lochtman is a professor in German as a foreign language, second language acquisition, foreign language pedagogy, and German linguistics. Her academic research and work focus on understanding how learners acquire the German language, applying linguistic theories to develop effective teaching methodologies, and advancing the overall field of language education.
Email: katja.Lochtman@vub.be

Huilin Shen holds a Bachelor's degree in English from the City University of Macau and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at the University of Macau.
Email: mc64206@um.edu.mo

References

Adara, R. A., & Al Amin, J. N. (2023). Investigating the correlation between teachers' instructional communication and students' motivation: A quantitative study. *Informasi, 53*(2), 229-244. https://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v53i2.62164

Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health, 2*, 100051. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051

Airey, J. (2012). "I don't teach language": The linguistic attitudes of physics lecturers in Sweden. *AILA Review, 25*(1), 64-79. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.25.05air

Alhamami, M. (2023). Instructional communication and medium of instruction: Content instructors' perspectives. *SAGE Open, 13*(2), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231172713

Aynalem, W. B., Tolla, T. T., & Abebe, A. S. (2026). The impact of general pedagogical knowledge on student engagement as mediated by instructional communication. *Scientific Reports, 16*, 25114. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-60556-0

Azizinezhad, M., & Hashemi, M. (2011). Humour: A pedagogical tool for language learners. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 30*, 2093-2098. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.407

Beebe, S. A., Beebe, S. J., & Ivy, D. K. (2016). *Communication: Principles for a lifetime*. Pearson.

Botha, W. (2013). English-medium instruction at a university in Macau: Policy and realities. *World Englishes, 32*(4), 461-475. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12053

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Choi, T. H., & Moody, A. J. (2024). English language education and educational policy in Hong Kong and Macau. In A. J. Moody (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Southeast Asian Englishes* (pp. 446-465). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192855282.001.0001

Darling-Hammond, L., Wechsler, M., Levin, S., Leung-Gagné, M., & Tozer, S. (2022). *Developing effective principals: What kind of learning matters?* Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/641.201

Education and Youth Development Bureau. (2025). *Overview of education statistical data 2025*. https://www.dsedj.gov.mo/~webdsej/www/statisti/2024/index.html

Evans, S., & Morrison, B. (2011). The student experience of English-medium higher education in Hong Kong. *Language and Education, 25*(2), 147–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2011.553287

Farris, K. L., Houser, M. L., & Hosek, A. M. (2017). Historical roots and trajectories of instructional communication. In *Handbook of instructional communication* (pp. 1-20). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315189864

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), 80-92. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107

Frymier, A. B., & Houser, M. L. (2000). The teacher-student relationship as an interpersonal relationship. *Communication Education, 49*(3), 207-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520009379209

Goldman, Z. W., & Goodboy, A. K. (2014). Making students feel better: Examining the relationships between teacher confirmation and college students' emotional outcomes. *Communication Education, 63*(3), 259–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2014.920091

Goodboy, A. K., & Kashy, D. A. (2017). Interpersonal communication research in instructional contexts: A dyadic approach. *Communication Education, 66*(1), 113-115. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2016.1221515

Hsu, C. F. (2012). The influence of vocal qualities and confirmation of nonnative English-speaking teachers on student receiver apprehension, affective learning, and cognitive learning. *Communication Education, 61*(1), 4-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2011.615410

Hu, G., & Lei, J. (2014). English-medium instruction in Chinese higher education: A case study. *Higher Education, 67*(5), 551-567. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9661-5

Lasagabaster, D. (2022). Teacher preparedness for English-medium instruction. *Journal of English-Medium Instruction*, 1(1), 48-64. https://doi.org/10.1075/jemi.21011.las

Li, Y., & Liu, X. (2022). A phenomenological psychology study of university teachers' lived experience of being pedagogical in neoliberalism. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 895635. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.895635

Liu, S., & Li, W. (2025). One policy, two implementations: Probing policy specifications in two EMI courses in a Macao university. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *26*(5), 686-705. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2024.2405764

Liu, Y., & Fang, F. (2022). Translanguaging theory and practice: How stakeholders perceive translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *RELC Journal*, *53*(2), 391-399. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220939222

Macaro, E. (2018). *English medium instruction*. Oxford University Press.

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching*, *51*(1), 36-76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350

McCroskey, J. C., Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, L. L. (2002). The scholarship of teaching and learning: Contributions from the discipline of communication. *Communication Education, 51*(4), 383-391. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520216521

McCroskey, J. C., Valencic, K. M., & Richmond, V. P. (2004). Toward a general model of instructional communication. *Communication Quarterly, 52*(3), 197-210. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370409370192

Morreale, S., Lowenthal, P., Thorpe, J., & Olesova, L. (2024). Editorial: Instructional communication competence and instructor social presence: Enhancing teaching and learning in the online environment. *Frontiers in Communication*, *9*, 1397570. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.1397570

Mottet, T. P., & Beebe, S. A. (2006). Foundations of instructional communication. In T. P. Mottet, V. P. Richmond, & J. C. McCroskey (Eds.), Handbook of instructional communication: Rhetorical and relational perspectives (pp. 3–32). Allyn & Bacon.

Myers, S. A. (2017). The instructor-student relationship as an alternative form of superior-subordinate relationship. *Communication Education, 66*(1), 110-112. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2016.1221513

Ponomarevskyi, A., & Horbačauskienė, J. (2026). Educational challenges and solutions for effective learning in EMI higher education: A systematic literature review. *Cogent Education, 13*(1), 2668147. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2026.2668147

Richmond, V. P. (2002). Teacher nonverbal immediacy: Uses and outcomes. In J. L. Chesbro & J. C. McCroskey (Eds.), *Communication for teachers* (pp. 65-82). Allyn & Bacon.

Roussel, S., Joulia, D., Tricot, A., & Sweller, J. (2017). Learning subject content through a foreign language should not ignore human cognitive architecture: A cognitive load theory approach. *Learning and Instruction*, *52*, 69-79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2017.04.007

Segabutla, M. H. (2015). *Exploring perceptions of lecturers' instructional communication as a reflection of instructional competence* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria]. http://hdl.handle.net/2263/45937

Shimauchi, S. (2018). English-medium instruction in the internationalization of higher education in Japan: Rationales and issues. *Educational Studies in Japan, 12*, 77-90. https://doi.org/10.7571/esjkyoiku.12.77

Tuomainen, S. (2023). Instructional communication. In *Supporting students through high-quality teaching* (pp. 109-121). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39844-5_8

Wächter, B., & Maiworm, F. (2014). *English-taught programmes in European higher education. The state of play in 2014*. Lemmens Medien GmbH. https://www.lemmens.de/dateien/medien/buecher-ebooks/aca/2014_english_taught.pdf

Wang, K., Yuan, R., & De Costa, P. I. (2025). A critical review of English medium instruction (EMI) teacher development in higher education: From 2018 to 2022. *Language Teaching*, 58(2), 141-172. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444824000351

Wang, Y., & Yu, S. (2025). Learning through EMI (English-medium instruction) in a Macau university: Students' perspectives and content and language outcomes. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 45*(4), 1195-1211. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2023.2270725

Wang, Y., Yu, S., & Shao, Y. (2018). The experiences of Chinese mainland students with English-medium instruction in a Macau university. *Educational Studies, 44*(3), 357-360. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2017.1373635

Wanzer, M. B., Frymier, A. B., & Irwin, J. (2010). An explanation of the relationship between instructor humor and student learning: Instructional humor processing theory. *Communication Education*, *59*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520903367238

Xie, X. (2010). Why are students quiet? Looking at the Chinese context and beyond. *ELT Journal*, *64*(1), 10-20. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccp060

Yu, S., Wang, Y., Jiang, L., & Wang, B. (2021). Coping with EMI (English as a medium of instruction):

Mainland China students' strategies at a university in Macau. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 58*(4), 462-472. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2020.1784248

Yuan, R., Qiu, X., Wang, C., & Zhang, T. (2025). Students' attitudes toward language learning and use in English-medium instruction (EMI) environments: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 46*(2), 244-261. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2176506

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2026 Chan, Lochtman, and Shen. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution, or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution, or reproduction is permitted that does not comply with these terms.

JLT Journal of Language Teaching

Peer-reviewed | Open Access | Google Scholar | MLA | Crossref | DOI

Call for Papers

Submit via https://jlt.ac/

Areas of Interest:

Language teaching intervention and experiments; Curriculum development; Language teacher education; Bilingual education; New technologies in language teaching; Testing, assessment, and evaluation; Educational psychology, and more.

We accept the following types of submission:

1. Research article: (6,000 to 8,000 words)
2. Review: (3,000 to 8,000 words)
3. Book review: (up to 3,000 words)
4. Features: (3,000 to 8,000 words)

Scan to submit your articles* & read more articles for free.

*Article Processing Charges Apply.

Contact: editor@jlt.ac

Pioneer Publications

ISSN (Online) 2770-4602