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FOSTERING TEACHER-STUDENT COMMUNICATION IN EMI BUSINESS COURSES: PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES FROM LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVES AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: English-medium instruction (EMI) has grown rapidly in Vietnamese higher education, especially in business programs, but concerns remain about limited classroom interaction and uneven student participation. This study examines how eight EMI business lecturers describe their efforts to promote teacher-student communication, how they modify their practices in response to communication barriers, and what beliefs and challenges inform these pedagogical decisions. Using a qualitative case study design, the research draws on semi-structured interviews with eight EMI business lecturers at a university in Southern Vietnam. The findings show that lecturers integrate interaction into structured content-focused lessons through questioning, group discussions, case-based activities, and multimodal scaffolding. Interaction is used primarily as a pedagogical means to support comprehension, manage linguistic and cognitive load, and ease students' anxiety about using English. Their practices reflect a strong sense of pedagogical commitment, but they are still impacted by institutional pressures, assessment expectations, and the emotional labour of teaching through English. The study highlights the importance of pedagogical adaptability and affective sensitivity in generating effective communication in EMI business classrooms. By focusing on lecturers' perspectives, it offers contextually grounded insights and practical implications for strengthening interaction-oriented EMI pedagogy in Vietnamese higher education.

Key words: teacher-student communication; English-medium instruction; EMI business; pedagogical approaches; higher education.

1. Introduction

English-medium instruction (EMI) has become a common strategy in higher education, reflecting the growing role of English and universities' efforts to enhance global competitiveness and graduate employability (Curle et al., 2024; Rose & McKinley, 2018). Within this shift, English is no longer merely a subject of study but the medium through which disciplinary knowledge is constructed, assessed, and legitimized (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018). However, research increasingly cautions that the educational value of EMI is contingent on pedagogical practices, rather than guaranteed by language choice (Gallagher & Hopkyns, 2025).

These concerns are especially visible in Vietnam, where EMI has expanded rapidly since its formal introduction into higher education. Business programs have been at the forefront of this expansion, driven by assumptions linking English proficiency to employability and institutional prestige (Nguyen & Dang, 2024; Phan & Nguyen, 2024). Pedagogical tensions include lecture-dominated instruction, limited interaction, and students' difficulties in engaging with disciplinary content through English (Hoang, 2023; Phan & Nguyen, 2024). Although English dominates instructional time, Vietnamese is often used strategically to scaffold understanding,

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revealing a pragmatically bilingual reality rather than strict English-only practice (Phan & Nguyen, 2024). In addition, students experience persistent challenges in discussion, argumentation, and specialized vocabulary, which can constrain participation and undermine academic self-efficacy (Nguyen & Dang, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024).

In this context, teacher-student communication emerges as a critical yet under-examined dimension of EMI pedagogy. Interaction through questioning, discussions, feedback, and collaborative tasks plays a key role in supporting both disciplinary learning and incidental language development (Almuuawi, 2022; Lai, 2023). Research highlights the importance of dialogic questioning, scaffolding, wait-time, and affective support in enhancing students' willingness to communicate and reducing anxiety in EMI classrooms (Pan et al., 2023; Peng, 2012; Xu & Pan, 2025). However, the literature remains limited in three specific respects. First, most studies describe interactional difficulties from students' perspectives or at policy level, rather than examining how lecturers actively organize communication during content teaching (e.g., Dang & Nguyen, 2024; Hoang, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024; Phan & Nguyen, 2024). Second, although classroom constraints such as linguistic anxiety, disciplinary complexity, and institutional assessment pressures are widely acknowledged (e.g., Byun et al., 2010; Maher & King, 2022; Sah, 2023), little empirical detail is available on how lecturers modify interactional practices in real time to manage these competing demands. Third, within the Vietnamese EMI literature, business education remains underrepresented despite its strong disciplinary reliance on explanation, case analysis, and applied discussion (e.g., Dang & Nguyen, 2024; Hoang, 2023; Nguyen & Dang, 2024; Phan & Nguyen, 2024). As a result, what remains insufficiently understood is how EMI business lecturers translate general pedagogical intentions into concrete communication strategies, how they modify these strategies across different teaching situations, and what beliefs underpin such adjustments.

To fill these gaps, this qualitative case study examines how EMI business lecturers at a university in Southern Vietnam foster teacher-student communication within the constraints of English-medium teaching. The study focuses on two dimensions: the interactional strategies lecturers use to promote communication and the ways they adapt these strategies in response to students' linguistic, affective, and disciplinary learning needs. Additionally, the study interprets teachers' beliefs and challenges as underlying factors shaping pedagogical decisions and classroom adjustments. The study is guided by the primary research question: What pedagogical approaches do EMI business lecturers at a university in Southern Vietnam currently use to promote teacher-student communication in their classrooms? To address this question, two sub-questions are posed:

1. What interactional strategies do lecturers use to initiate and sustain communication in EMI business classrooms?

2. How do lecturers adapt these strategies to respond to students' linguistic, affective, and content-related needs?

2. Literature review

2.1. Global rise of English-Medium Instruction (EMI)

The global expansion of EMI reflects both the dominance of English as an academic lingua franca and universities' drive for internationalization (Rose & McKinley, 2018). English has shifted from being a subject to a medium for disciplinary knowledge, including business education (Curle et al., 2024). Defined as teaching non-English subjects through English in non-Anglophone contexts (Macaro et al., 2018), EMI represents a transformation in how knowledge is legitimized. Yet, its rapid growth in systems with limited English traditions raises policy and pedagogical challenges (Curle et al., 2024). Scholars caution that EMI, or more broadly English-medium education (EME), reshapes institutional cultures but risks reproducing inequalities, privileging students with elite English backgrounds while marginalizing others (Dearden, 2014; Gallagher & Hopkyns, 2025). Business programs often spearhead EMI expansion, justified by employability narratives and institutional prestige (Dearden, 2014). In Vietnam, EMI business curricula symbolize internationalization at home (Nguyen & Dang, 2024), but evidence complicates optimistic assumptions. Students report persistent linguistic and cognitive difficulties, with lower self-efficacy compared to peers in

Vietnamese-medium tracks (Nguyen & Dang, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024). These findings suggest that EMI's promise is not automatically realized and may even exacerbate inequities. Critical scholarship cautions against the unquestioned celebration of EMI. While business education is often framed as a strategically advantageous site for EMI expansion, its actual educational value depends on how teaching and learning are enacted. If institutions neglect sustained investment in teacher-student communication and interaction-oriented pedagogy, EMI would consequently serve as a symbolic marker of internationalization rather than a substantive mechanism for improving learning outcomes and widening educational access.

2.2. EMI in Vietnam

Research on EMI in Vietnam reveals its rapid expansion but persistent pedagogical instability, driven by globalization and policy endorsement (Phan & Nguyen, 2024). Since its formal introduction in 2008, EMI has been promoted as a vehicle for internationalization, yet studies highlight uneven quality assurance, lecturers' reluctance to teach disciplinary content in English, and students' difficulties in following lectures (Phan & Nguyen, 2024). Scholarship remains largely policy-oriented, with limited attention to classroom realities, despite recurring concerns about top-down implementation, resource constraints, and cultural-pedagogical mismatches (Dang & Nguyen, 2024; Hoang, 2023). Empirical research depicts a bilingual reality, as English dominates instruction and assessment, but Vietnamese is strategically used to scaffold comprehension (Phan & Nguyen, 2024). However, teaching remains lecture-driven, reflecting Confucian traditions of teacher-centered pedagogy, with minimal interaction and limited language-focused feedback (Hoang, 2023; Phan & Nguyen, 2024). Students report their difficulties in discussion, argumentation, and specialized vocabulary, often relying on memorization or Vietnamese materials (Nguyen et al., 2024; Phan & Nguyen, 2024). These adaptive strategies signal agency but also structural shortcomings that restrict meaningful participation. Evidence on student outcomes complicates policy optimism. In particular, EMI business programs attract students with promises of employability and English proficiency, yet longitudinal studies show no improvement in self-efficacy compared with Vietnamese-medium tracks (Nguyen & Dang, 2024). Persistent linguistic challenges and stagnant confidence highlight a misalignment between expectations and lived experiences. As a result, the application of EMI tends to be symbolic unless institutions prioritize teacher-student communication and interaction-oriented pedagogy as vital to its educational value.

2.3. Teacher-student communication in EMI classrooms

Teacher-student communication in EMI classrooms typically involves lectures, questioning, discussions, and academic tasks (Kamasak et al., 2021). Interaction often follows the initiation-response-feedback (IRF) pattern, which supports meaning negotiation but could become transmissive if students are not given space for extended contributions (Almuuawi, 2022). Students consistently value opportunities for sustained speaking and corrective feedback to aid both comprehension and English development (Lai, 2023). Practices such as scaffolding, dialogic questioning, and sufficient wait-time enable co-construction of disciplinary concepts and link content learning with incidental language acquisition (Almuuawi, 2022; Utuk & Hu, 2025). Higher willingness to communicate (WTC) has been shown to predict stronger engagement, achievement emotions, and performance in EMI contexts (Peng, 2012; Wang et al., 2025). Nonetheless, interaction is constrained by linguistic and affective barriers. Limited vocabulary, disciplinary discourse, and anxiety often silence students (An & Thomas, 2021; Maher & King, 2022; Sah, 2023). Weak language support exacerbates apprehension (Pun, 2024), while diverse accents and peer talk pose further challenges (Kamasak et al., 2021). These conditions reinforce teacher-dominated lecturing, associated with weaker outcomes (Byun et al., 2010; Yeh, 2014). Recent studies emphasize affective and social dimensions. Specifically, teacher encouragement and constructive feedback reduce anxiety and strengthen self-regulation, thereby boosting WTC (Pan et al., 2023; Xu & Pan, 2025). Meeting students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness also motivates participation (Zhou, 2025). Taken together, effective communication in EMI business classrooms requires more than interactional techniques; it depends on teachers' sensitivity to students' linguistic readiness and

socio-emotional needs, without which EMI risks perpetuating silence and limited engagement.

2.4. Pedagogical approaches to promoting classroom interaction

Pedagogical approaches to fostering interaction in EMI classrooms have been widely studied, as EMI lessons are commonly less interactive than L1-medium classes and often revert to teacher-driven delivery with minimal scaffolding (Lo & Macaro, 2012). This constraint has shifted scholarly attention from simply affirming the value of interaction to examining how pedagogy can deliberately cultivate meaningful communication in linguistically demanding contexts. Learner-centered and interaction-oriented approaches are argued to counter monologic tendencies by enabling students to articulate disciplinary understanding through English and co-construct meaning (Wilkinson, 2013). However, many EMI teachers rely on low-order comprehension questions that generate rapid but superficial exchanges (Sahan et al., 2021), while closed managerial questioning further limits dialogic space (Sun et al., 2023). Research highlights the importance of interactional competence and multi-modality. Referential questioning, negotiation-of-meaning strategies, slower speech rates, and coordinated visual cues can enhance participation and comprehension (Morell, 2020). However, these practices are diversely implemented, with observational studies revealing wide variation across EMI classrooms (Sahan et al., 2021). Crucially, pedagogical training and teaching self-efficacy, rather than English proficiency, most strongly predict interactive teaching (Vander Borght et al., 2025). Overall, enhancing interaction in EMI requires a change in pedagogy rather than conservative reliance on language support. Dialogic and multi-modal practices, backed by strong teacher preparation and confidence, play a key role in engaging students meaningfully. Without institutional commitment to such approaches, EMI runs the danger of being bound to lecture-driven traditions instead of becoming a participatory mode of higher education.

2.5. Conceptual framework

This study adopts a conceptual framework that explains teacher-student communication in EMI business classrooms as pedagogically bounded interaction. In this framework, interaction is not treated as an open-ended classroom dialogue but as a pedagogical resource strategically embedded within content-focused teaching. The framework integrates three connected dimensions. First, interaction as pedagogy refers to lecturers' use of questioning, group discussions, and case-based tasks to monitor understanding and support disciplinary meaning-making. Second, affective scaffolding highlights lecturers' efforts to reduce students' anxiety and encourage participation through wait-time, reassurance, and low-risk speaking opportunities. Third, adaptive EMI pedagogy captures how lecturers adjust speech, simplify language, use multi-modal support, and strategically employ Vietnamese when conceptual clarification is needed. Together, these dimensions explain how communication is sustained under the linguistic, cognitive, and institutional pressures of EMI business education. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

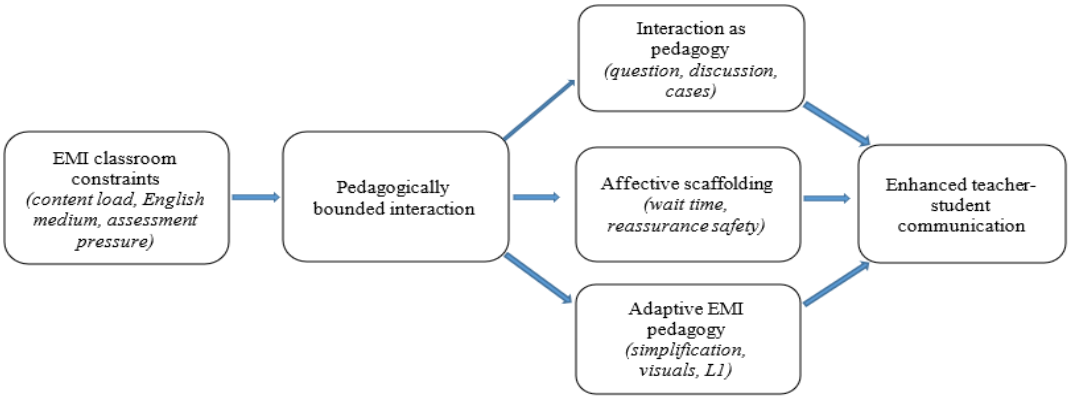


Figure 1. *Conceptual framework of the study*

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to examine how EMI business lecturers foster teacher-student communication within a specific institutional context in Southern Vietnam. A case study is appropriate for investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-world setting, particularly when the boundaries between pedagogical practices and contextual conditions are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). The case is bounded to one university offering undergraduate EMI business programs, enabling a focused but context-sensitive analysis of lecturers' pedagogical approaches. The design is descriptive and interpretive, seeking to understand lecturers' perspectives, beliefs, and rationales rather than to evaluate outcomes. It is suitable for addressing the study's exploratory "how" questions, as case studies allow for detailed examination of processes and meanings in complex educational settings (Yin, 2018). Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary data source, offering both structure and flexibility to capture rich accounts of lecturers' experiences. Through in-depth engagement with a bounded institutional case, the study aims to generate context-sensitive insights that may contribute to theoretical discussions on EMI pedagogy through analytic rather than statistical generalization.

3.2. Research setting and participants

The study was conducted at one university in Southern Vietnam that offers undergraduate business programs taught through English as the medium of instruction. The site was purposefully selected because it has established EMI business programs with at least three years of operation, granted institutional access for research, and had lecturers who met the study's participation criteria. Focusing on a single institution allows for a contextually grounded understanding of EMI pedagogical practices while remaining feasible for a small-scale qualitative case study. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling, which involves the intentional selection of information-rich individuals who are well positioned to address the research questions (Tajik et al., 2024). The inclusion criteria required participants to be Vietnamese lecturers currently teaching EMI business subjects, to have at least two semesters of EMI teaching experience, and to be willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. These criteria ensured that participants had sufficient experience to reflect on both their classroom practices and the rationales underlying them. Eight lecturers were recruited to provide diverse perspectives across business disciplines and teaching backgrounds, enabling in-depth thematic analysis rather than broad coverage. Recruitment began through university administrators and department heads, followed by individual email invitations. Snowball sampling was used to identify additional eligible participants through professional networks (Parker et al., 2019). Participant details, including pseudonyms, years of English-medium teaching experience, and disciplinary backgrounds, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participant backgrounds*

Pseudonyms	English-medium teaching experience	Disciplinary background
Interviewee 1	5 years	Principles of management; Organizational behaviour
Interviewee 2	3 years	Introduction to marketing; Consumer behaviour
Interviewee 3	7 years	Corporate finance; Financial management
Interviewee 4	4 years	International business; Global trade
Interviewee 5	2 years	Financial accounting; Introduction to managerial accounting
Interviewee 6	8 years	Strategic management; business policy
Interviewee 7	3.5 years	Entrepreneurship; Small business management
Interviewee 8	6 years	business communication; Professional English for business

3.3. Research instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used as the major tool for understanding EMI business lecturers' classroom practices and the beliefs that shape them. This approach is compatible with qualitative research because it combines a clear structure with enough flexibility for participants to describe their experiences in their own way, while still allowing the researcher to follow up on unexpected but meaningful points (Adams, 2015). It was particularly appropriate in this study, as it created space for lecturers to share how they manage classroom communication in EMI, but ensured that core issues linked to the research questions were consistently explored. The interview protocol was developed directly from the study's aims and organized into seven thematic areas. These covered lecturers' professional backgrounds and teaching contexts, their current interactional practices, the strategies they use to support communication, how they respond to students' linguistic needs, their pedagogical beliefs and rationales, the challenges they encounter, and the kinds of professional support they find useful. Together, these areas provided a balanced view of both what lecturers do in EMI classrooms and why they make particular instructional choices. To ensure clarity and cultural relevance, the guide was piloted with one EMI lecturer outside the main sample. Feedback from this pilot informed small adjustments to wording and sequencing, helping refine the flow and ensuring the interview was accessible and context-appropriate. The interview domains and questions are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. *Semi-structured interview guide.*

Domains	Questions
Background and context	How long have you been teaching EMI business courses? What subjects do you currently teach?
Current practices	Can you describe a typical session in your EMI classroom? What do you do to encourage students to speak or ask questions?
Specific strategies	What specific techniques do you use to promote interaction? How do you handle situations when students are reluctant to respond?
Adaptations and adjustments	How do you adapt your communication when students seem not to understand? Can you give an example of a time you changed your approach based on student needs?
Beliefs and rationales	Why do you think teacher-student interaction is important (or not) in EMI classrooms? What influences your choice of teaching strategies?
Challenges and solutions	What challenges do you face in getting students to communicate? How do you navigate these challenges?
Support and development	What kind of support would help you enhance interaction in your EMI classroom?

3.4. Data collection and analysis

Data collection was conducted in three main phases. In the preparation phase, institutional ethics approval was obtained, formal permission was secured from the participating university, and eligible lecturers were recruited. All participants were provided with clear information about the study and gave informed consent prior to data collection. The main phase involved one in-depth semi-structured interview with each participant, lasting approximately 90 minutes. The interviews aimed to build rapport, explore lecturers' experiences in detail, and clarify emerging ideas without placing excessive demands on participants. They were held in quiet meeting rooms selected by the participants to ensure privacy and comfort, and conducted in Vietnamese to enable nuanced expression of pedagogical beliefs and practices. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken during and

immediately after each session to capture contextual details and preliminary reflections. In the follow-up phase, interview transcripts were returned to participants for verification, and a brief summary of initial interpretations was shared to invite feedback, thereby enhancing accuracy and credibility.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase framework. Analysis began with familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and listening to recordings to gain an overall sense of the data. The process adopted an inductive orientation, with codes generated from recurring meanings in participants' accounts. While the guide suggested broad areas, coding remained open to capture unexpected emphases and pedagogical concerns. Most coding was semantic, focusing on explicit classroom practices and rationales, with occasional latent interpretation of underlying beliefs or institutional pressures. Line-by-line coding produced units such as questioning techniques, silence, language adjustment, and pedagogical concerns, which were compared across transcripts and clustered into broader themes. Categories were merged when reflecting the same process (e.g., interactional strategies) and split when conceptually distinct (e.g., adaptive practices versus beliefs about interaction). The researcher interpreted extracts across participants, attended to negative cases, and retained divergent statements to highlight internal variation, ensuring that final themes emerged from patterned meanings in the data. Related codes were then grouped into potential themes, reviewed and refined against both coded extracts and the full data set, and clearly defined and named before integration into the final report. A combination of descriptive, process, values, and pattern coding was employed to capture practices, actions, beliefs, and recurring patterns across participants. Member checking was incorporated to strengthen the study's trustworthiness, supported by a clear audit trail of analytic decisions and sufficiently detailed descriptions to enable readers to judge the transferability of the findings. Table 3 presents the coding framework applied in the thematic analysis.

Table 3. *Coding framework used in thematic analysis*

Initial meaning unit	Initial code	Candidate category	Final theme
"I pause every 10-15 minutes to ask questions"	segmented questioning	structured interaction	Structured content delivery with deliberately embedded interaction
"Students discuss first, then one group answers"	pair/group rehearsal before reporting	interaction sequencing	Low-risk interaction as the main route to sustaining student participation
"I ask why this formula is used"	referential questioning	cognitively guided questioning	Low-risk interaction as the main route to sustaining student participation
"I slow down and repeat key ideas"	speech modification	linguistic adjustment	Linguistic simplification and bilingual scaffolding
"I use Vietnamese when concepts become difficult"	strategic L1 scaffolding	bilingual support	Linguistic simplification and bilingual scaffolding
"Interaction helps me detect misunderstanding early"	diagnostic role of interaction	pedagogical rationale	Interaction as a means of monitoring understanding
"Students are afraid of making mistakes"	language anxiety	affective barrier	Communication under affective and institutional constraints
"EMI requires more emotional energy"	emotional labour	institutional-pedagogical tension	Communication under affective and institutional constraints

3.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the study to safeguard participants' rights, comfort, and well-being. Before data collection, participants received clear and accessible information about the study's purpose, procedures, benefits, and any potential risks. Then, each of them provided written informed consent with the assurance that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms for the participants, and all identifying details were removed from transcripts and reports. Data were stored securely on password-protected university cloud storage, and the limits of confidentiality were explained transparently. Care was taken to minimize any sense of evaluation or discomfort during interviews. Questions focused on pedagogical practices rather than teaching quality, and participants were free to skip questions or pause the interview whenever needed. Attention to power dynamics was maintained by clarifying the researcher's role as a learner rather than an assessor and by avoiding any recruitment practices that might feel coercive. Non-identifiable data will be used in publications and retained only for the period required by institutional policy before being securely deleted.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Main findings

4.1.1. Structured content delivery with deliberately embedded interaction

According to the participants, EMI business teaching was oriented by structured delivery combined with deliberately embedded interaction. Across the interviews, the lecturers consistently described a patterned rhythm in which mini-lectures were segmented by interactional episodes. Interviewee 1 explained that a typical session began with a recap of key terms before moving into a short lecture, but she *"tried not to speak continuously for too long"*, usually paused *"every 10-15 minutes to ask questions, show a short case, or ask students to discuss in pairs"*. She elaborated:

"Usually I begin with a short review because if students do not recall the previous concepts, it becomes difficult for them to follow the new topic in English. After that, I explain one section, but I cannot speak continuously for too long because after around ten minutes I can already see some students becoming passive. So I stop and ask something simple first, sometimes just ask them to discuss with the person next to them before answering. If I wait until the end, they lose the connection between the concept and the example."

Similarly, finance sessions were characterized by a structured format, beginning with formula review, followed by group-based problem solving, and concluding with collective discussion of solutions. Interviewee 3 further explained:

"In finance, if students do not understand one step, they cannot follow the next one, especially in English. So I have to explain in small parts, and after each part I check immediately. Sometimes I ask them to solve a short problem in pairs, then we go through it together. It is not really discussion in the full sense, but it helps me see whether they are following or not."

Meanwhile, according to interviewee 5, accounting classes remained largely *"teacher-led"*, though short exercises were inserted after each conceptual segment to sustain engagement. Furthermore, most lecturers organized sessions around cases, scenarios, or simulations. Interviewee 4 began classes with *"a real-world issue, such as a trade dispute"*, asking students to express opinions before introducing theoretical frameworks. She noted:

"If I start directly with theory, students tend to be very quiet because they are still trying to process the English terms. But when I give them a situation first, even if their language is not perfect, they can say something. Then I connect their ideas back to the theory, so the interaction becomes part of understanding, not something separate."

Interviewee 6 structured lessons around *"a central strategic question"*, with students analyzing the issue from different perspectives in groups. Interviewee 7 built entrepreneurship sessions around start-up stories and pitching activities, while Interviewee 8 combined *"short input with role-plays, simulations, and reflection"*. Despite these variations, content sequencing remained tightly organized, particularly in technically dense subjects such as finance and accounting. Interviewee 3 acknowledged that covering technical content in English required additional time, and therefore interaction was

integrated directly into explanation rather than added as a separate component. Overall, within this institutional context, EMI business classrooms were described as structured, content-driven environments where interaction was inserted but bounded by syllabus and assessment requirements.

4.1.2. Low-risk interaction as the main route to sustaining student participation

Lecturers reported using a range of intentional strategies to initiate and sustain teacher-student communication, with group-based interaction emerging as the most consistent practice. All eight participants reported incorporating pair or group discussion before inviting whole-class responses. Particularly, marketing lessons incorporated group nomination strategies, which reduced pressure on students with lower English confidence and encouraged broader participation. Interviewee 2 explained:

"If I call one student directly, they often hesitate or say very little because they are afraid of making mistakes in English. But when they discuss in groups first, they feel more prepared and more confident. Even if the answer is not perfect, they are more willing to share because it is not only their responsibility, it is the group's idea."

Interviewee 3 similarly allowed students to *"discuss in pairs first and then ask one representative to share"*, particularly when solving finance problems that involved both conceptual and linguistic complexity. He stated:

"Sometimes when I ask a question directly, the class becomes very quiet, not because they do not know, but because they are unsure how to say it in English. But when they talk in pairs first, I can hear that they actually understand the concept. So the pair discussion gives them time to organize both the idea and the language before speaking in front of the class."

This sequencing of small-group discussion followed by public reporting was described as reducing anxiety while maintaining accountability.

Questioning techniques also differed across lecturers. Most participants reported using referential or guided questions rather than closed comprehension checks. Interviewee 3 explained that instead of asking *"Do you understand?"*, he asked students *"why a particular formula is appropriate in a given situation"*, requiring explanation rather than confirmation. Interviewee 6 described using *"Socratic questioning"* and encouraging students to *"challenge the teacher's viewpoints"*, which he stated changed the classroom power dynamic. By contrast, Interviewee 5 reported relying more frequently on yes-no or short-answer questions because *"students seem more comfortable with those"*, particularly in early EMI semesters. He reflected:

"In the beginning, if I ask open questions, students just keep silent because they are not confident. So I start with very simple questions, like yes or no, or short answers. When they feel more comfortable, then I slowly increase the difficulty. Otherwise, they may lose confidence and stop participating."

Role-play and simulation were reported by several lecturers. Interviewee 4 noted that assigning students roles such as managers or policymakers helped them *"focus on meaning instead of language accuracy"*. She further added:

"When they speak as a manager or a decision-maker, they are not thinking too much about grammar. They focus on solving the problem or expressing an opinion. I think this makes them less afraid because they are speaking in a role, not as themselves being evaluated."

Interviewee 7 observed that students spoke more confidently when positioned as *"founders, not as students"*. From all interviews, silence was treated as a pedagogical signal rather than ignored. Interviewee 1 stated that she waited longer and avoided answering her own question immediately. Interviewee 6 stated that his strategic management teaching treated silence diagnostically, with follow-up questioning used to distinguish between linguistic, confidence-related, or conceptual difficulties. The participants did not abandon interaction when initial attempts failed, but they adjusted questioning, grouping, or phrasing.

4.1.3. Linguistic simplification and bilingual scaffolding as responsive teaching moves

All eight lecturers reported adapting their communication practices in response to students' comprehension difficulties, with linguistic modification

and strategic use of Vietnamese emerging as consistent patterns. Seven lecturers explicitly described slowing down speech, simplifying vocabulary, or repeating key ideas. Interviewee 1 stated that she *"slowed down the speech, repeated key ideas, and used more examples"* when observing confusion. She elaborated:

"When I see that students look confused, I can't continue at the same pace. I have to slow down, repeat the key points, and sometimes give more examples, even very simple ones. If not, they will miss the main idea, and then the rest of the lesson becomes even more difficult for them."

Interviewee 5 explained that she repeated explanations *"using simpler sentences and more Vietnamese accounting terms"*, particularly when students appeared overwhelmed. He remembered:

"Sometimes the problem is not the concept, but the language used to explain it. So I try to say the same thing in a simpler way, or I use some Vietnamese terms that they are already familiar with. This helps them connect what they know in Vietnamese with the English terminology."

The use of Vietnamese was reported by all participants, although to varying degrees. Interviewee 5 described an initial attempt to maintain English-only instruction but later revised this stance: *"At first, I avoided using Vietnamese at all. However, students were clearly struggling, so I started allowing brief Vietnamese explanations"*. He also explained:

"I realized that if I insisted on English only, some students just stopped following the lesson. When I used a small amount of Vietnamese to clarify difficult points, they immediately became more engaged. So now I try to balance, not overuse it, but use it when it is really needed."

Interviewee 4 encouraged students to summarize discussions in Vietnamese before returning to English, while Interviewee 3 mixed English and Vietnamese financial terminology when conceptual precision was necessary.

Multi-modal scaffolding was also common. Interviewee 7 relied *"heavily on visuals, sketches, and real objects"*, especially in entrepreneurship classes. Interviewee 8 provided *"sentence frames and vocabulary lists"* before role-play activities and modeled interactions explicitly. He said:

"Before asking students to speak, I usually give them some sentence structures or key vocabulary. If not, they may have ideas but cannot express them. When they have this support, they are more confident to participate, and the interaction becomes smoother."

Several lecturers described adjusting expectations over time. Interviewee 3 initially required independent textbook reading but later provided annotated slides and strategic reading guidance after recognizing comprehension problems. Interviewee 7 moved from English-only pitching to bilingual brainstorming, reporting that this *"significantly improved the quality of interaction"*. These adaptations were made to meet observed student needs instead of predetermined design features.

4.1.4. Interaction as pedagogical monitoring and professional rationale

Among the eight interviewees, similar rationales emerged for promoting interaction in EMI classrooms. Six lecturers described interaction primarily as a mechanism for monitoring comprehension. Interviewee 3 stated that in finance, *"misunderstanding one concept can affect everything that follows"*, and interaction allowed him to *"detect problems early"*. He explained:

"In finance, the concepts are very connected. If students misunderstand one part, the next part becomes even more difficult, especially in English. So I can't just continue lecturing. I need to ask questions or let them try a short task to check whether they really understand, otherwise the gap becomes bigger and harder to fix later."

Interviewee 1 explained that EMI added *"extra cognitive load"*, making passive listening insufficient for understanding both content and language simultaneously. She admitted:

"Students are not only learning the subject, they are also processing the language at the same time. So if they just listen passively, it is very easy to get lost. Interaction helps them stay engaged and also helps me see whether they are following or not."

Some lecturers regarded interaction as essential to disciplinary practice and professional development.

Interviewee 7 argued that *"EMI without interaction is unrealistic for entrepreneurship"*, because students needed to practise persuading and negotiating. She stated:

"In entrepreneurship, students need to present ideas, convince others, and respond to questions. If they only listen, they can't develop these skills. So interaction is not only for understanding the content, but also for practising how to communicate in real business situations."

Interviewee 6 stated that without interaction, EMI risked becoming *"a filtering mechanism that advantages students who are already proficient"*. Interviewee 8 described interaction as *"both the means and the goal in EMI"*, particularly in business communication courses. Strategic choices were also shaped by contextual constraints. Interviewee 3 emphasized that assessment requirements influenced his interaction design, as students needed to perform in exams. He noted:

"Sometimes I want to spend more time on discussion, but I also have to make sure students are prepared for the exam. So I try to design interaction in a way that still supports exam performance, not just general communication."

Interviewee 2 cited institutional expectations and time limitations, while Interviewee 5 acknowledged that her own confidence in English and pressure to cover the syllabus affected her willingness to extend discussion. In the participants' view, interaction was necessary, but its scope and depth were mediated by workload, class size, and assessment alignment.

4.1.5. Communication under affective and institutional constraints

All lecturers reported challenges in preserving interaction, with linguistic anxiety as the most frequently cited barrier. Most participants identified students' fear of making mistakes in English as a major obstacle. Interviewee 1 described this as *"the biggest challenge"*, while Interviewee 7 observed that students *"focus too much on language accuracy"*. Interviewee 1 explained:

"Many students are afraid of speaking because they think too much about making mistakes. Even when they understand the content, they hesitate because they are not confident in their English. Sometimes I know they have the answer, but they still remain silent because they do not want to say something incorrect in front of others."

Interviewee 8 treated silence as a sign of *"affective difficulty rather than lack of ability"*, requiring reassurance and incremental challenge. He clarified:

"When students are silent, it doesn't mean that they don't understand. Sometimes they just feel nervous or uncertain how to express their ideas in English. So I try to encourage them step by step, maybe asking simpler questions first or giving them more time, so they feel more comfortable to speak."

Time pressure and content coverage were also significant concerns. Interviewee 3 stated that *"covering technical content in English takes longer"*, and therefore interaction sometimes competed with syllabus completion. He reflected:

"In subjects like finance, explaining concepts in English already takes more time. If I add too much discussion, I may not finish the syllabus. So sometimes I have to limit interaction, even though I know it is important for students' understanding."

Interviewee 6 reported institutional inconsistency, noting that EMI was promoted but *"class sizes and assessment structures remain unchanged"*. Interviewee 4 emphasized the *"additional preparation and emotional energy"* required for EMI compared to Vietnamese-medium teaching. She acknowledged:

"Teaching in EMI requires much more preparation because I have to think about both the content and how to make it understandable in English. It is also more tiring because I need to constantly monitor students' reactions and adjust my teaching during the lesson."

Some lecturers explicitly described emotional labour as part of EMI practice. Interviewee 8 stated that encouraging students required *"constant sensitivity"*, while Interviewee 5 expressed uncertainty in distinguishing whether silence stemmed from linguistic or conceptual difficulty. For these lecturers, fostering communication required ongoing adjustment, reassurance, and negotiation of institutional constraints.

4.2. Discussion

This study examines to understand how EMI business lecturers foster teacher-student communication within the constraints of English-medium teaching. First, the findings confirm that interaction in EMI business classrooms is not positioned as a replacement for content delivery but is embedded within it. The structured sequencing of mini-lectures followed by short interactional episodes closely resembles patterns reported in prior EMI studies, where disciplinary density limits sustained dialogic teaching (Sahan et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2023). As reported by Lo and Macaro (2012) and Hoang (2023), the classrooms in this study remain largely teacher-driven, with interaction serving a supportive rather than transformative role. However, the current data add specificity by showing how lecturers deliberately segment content into smaller units to maintain both conceptual continuity and student attention. In this way, interaction is not incidental but pedagogically timed.

Second, the study consolidates the role of interaction as a tool for monitoring understanding, a function widely acknowledged in EMI research (Almuuawi, 2022; Lai, 2023). A notable finding is the consistency across participants in treating interaction as a form of real-time diagnosis. This result aligns with the idea that EMI intensifies the need for ongoing comprehension checks due to the dual processing demands of language and content (Macaro et al., 2018). The use of pair or group discussion prior to whole-class responses also reflects strategies documented in the literature to mitigate linguistic anxiety (Maher & King, 2022; Sah, 2023). Rather than introducing new forms of interaction, lecturers in this case appear to adapt established techniques to fit EMI-specific constraints.

Third, the adaptive communication practices observed (e.g., slowed speech, simplified language, multi-modal support, and selective use of Vietnamese) are consistent with descriptions of EMI as a pragmatically bilingual environment in Vietnam (Phan & Nguyen, 2024). The findings support Macaro et al.'s (2018) argument that limited L1 use can facilitate comprehension without undermining EMI goals. In addition, the emphasis on visuals, modelling, and sentence frames echoes Morell's (2020) discussion of multi-modality in EMI classrooms. These parallels suggest that the lecturers' practices are not idiosyncratic but reflect typical pedagogical tendencies in similar contexts.

Finally, the constraints identified, particularly linguistic anxiety, time pressure, and emotional labour, mirror challenges widely reported in EMI literature (An & Thomas, 2021; Dang & Nguyen, 2024). The data do not indicate that these constraints are unique to this setting; rather, they illustrate how such pressures are experienced and managed at the classroom level. The lecturers' accounts of balancing interaction with syllabus coverage and assessment demands are consistent with previous critiques of misalignment between EMI policy and classroom conditions (Phan & Nguyen, 2024). In this study, these constraints do not eliminate interaction but shape its scope and form.

To synthesize these relationships, Figure 2 illustrates how interaction is pedagogically positioned within this case.

Overall, the findings from this case suggest that effective teacher-student communication in EMI business classrooms depends on pedagogical adaptability, affective sensitivity, and institutional support. At the pedagogical level, the study indicates that structured interaction, guided questioning, and multi-modal scaffolding were perceived by these lecturers as feasible strategies within their EMI classrooms. At the institutional level, the findings highlight the potential value of professional development that foregrounds interactional competence and pedagogical design, without focusing narrowly on English proficiency (Vander Borght et al., 2025). In relation to EMI policy in Vietnam, this case may reflect a possible gap between the aspirational goals of EMI and the realities of classroom practice in this context. To realize EMI's objectives of fostering learning and equity, pedagogical interaction must be prioritized. This requires supportive structural conditions, such as manageable class sizes and coherence between teaching and assessment, to enable lecturers to sustain effective communicative practices.

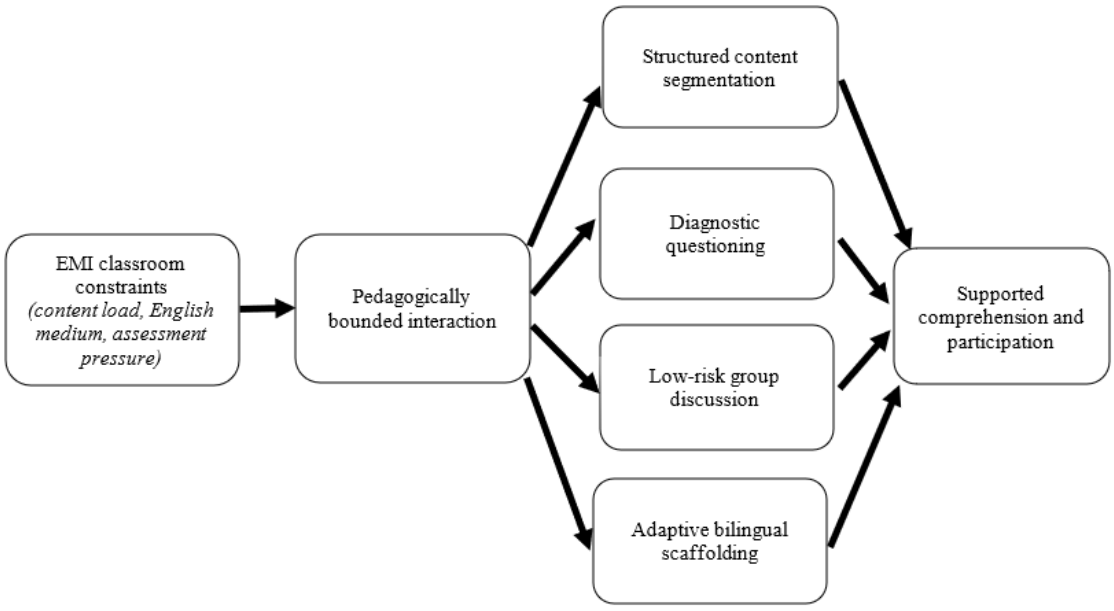


Figure 2. *Pedagogically bounded interaction in EMI business classrooms*

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore how EMI business lecturers at a Vietnamese university foster teacher-student communication, how they adjust their practices in response to linguistic and pedagogical constraints, and what beliefs and challenges shape these decisions. The findings from this case suggest that interaction in EMI business classrooms is not spontaneous, nor fully dialogic, but intentionally woven into structured and content-focused lessons. Lecturers draw on questioning, group work, case-based tasks, and multi-modal scaffolding as practical ways to support comprehension, ease cognitive load, and reduce students' anxiety about speaking English. Their choices appear to reflect a strong sense of pedagogical responsibility, as they work to balance disciplinary expectations with care for students' linguistic readiness and emotional comfort. Moreover, the study highlights how interaction is shaped, and sometimes limited by institutional conditions, assessment demands, and the emotional labour of teaching through English. These constraints show that effective communication in EMI depends not only on language proficiency, but also on lecturers' adaptability and the broader support structures around them. By foregrounding lecturers' agency and context-sensitive decision-making in one institutional case, the study contributes modestly to EMI scholarship in business education and offers case-specific insights into how communication is enacted in this Vietnamese higher education setting.

However, the study is limited by its small scale and reliance on interview data from eight lecturers at one institution. The findings are therefore context-specific and cannot be representative of EMI business teaching across Vietnamese higher education. Because the analysis is based on self-reported accounts only, without classroom observation or document analysis, reported practices may not fully reflect actual classroom interaction. Future studies could utilize multiple data sources, including observations, documents, student perspectives, or longitudinal approaches to trace how interactional practices develop over time. More broadly, the findings indicate that acknowledging interaction as fundamental to EMI quality, while tackling structural factors shaping classroom practice, represents a key priority for policymakers and institutions.

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THÚC ĐẨY GIAO TIẾP GIỮA THẦY VÀ TRÒ TRONG CÁC HỌC PHẦN KINH DOANH DẠY BẰNG TIẾNG ANH: CÁC PHƯƠNG PHÁP SƯ PHẠM TỪ GÓC NHÌN CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC VIỆT NAM

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Tóm tắt: Việc giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh (English-medium instruction - EMI) đang phát triển nhanh trong giáo dục đại học Việt Nam, đặc biệt ở các ngành học kinh tế, nhưng vẫn còn nhiều vấn đề liên quan đến sự tương tác hạn chế trên lớp và mức độ tham gia không đồng đều của sinh viên. Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu cách tám giảng viên EMI ngành kinh doanh mô tả những nỗ lực trong việc thúc đẩy giao tiếp giữa người dạy và người học, cách họ điều chỉnh phương pháp giảng dạy khi gặp rào cản giao tiếp, và các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến quyết định sư phạm trên lớp. Áp dụng thiết kế nghiên cứu trường hợp định tính, nghiên cứu sử dụng phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc với tám giảng viên EMI ngành kinh doanh tại một trường đại học ở miền Nam Việt Nam. Kết quả cho thấy các giảng viên lồng ghép hoạt động tương tác vào những bài giảng và tập trung vào nội dung thông qua hệ thống câu hỏi, thảo luận nhóm, hoạt động dựa trên tình huống và các hình thức hỗ trợ đa phương thức. Hoạt động tương tác được sử dụng chủ yếu như một công cụ sư phạm nhằm hỗ trợ sinh viên hiểu bài, và giúp sinh viên giảm bớt áp lực về ngôn ngữ khi sử dụng tiếng Anh. Trên thực tế, hoạt động giảng dạy của giảng viên còn chịu tác động từ áp lực nhà trường, kỳ vọng đánh giá và những căng thẳng gắn với việc dạy bằng tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh vai trò của khả năng thích ứng sư phạm và sự đồng cảm trong việc tạo dựng giao tiếp hiệu quả ở các lớp học EMI ngành kinh doanh. Xuất phát từ góc nhìn của giảng viên, nghiên cứu đưa ra những hiểu biết có tính bối cảnh và các hàm ý thực tiễn nhằm thúc đẩy việc áp dụng các phương pháp sư phạm chú trọng tương tác trong bối cảnh giáo dục đại học Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: giao tiếp thầy trò; giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh; EMI ngành kinh doanh; phương pháp giảng dạy; giáo dục đại học.