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“Teacher Talk”: An Empowering Resource for EMI Teachers Across Disciplines

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Abstract

The increasing demand for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in universities faces significant challenges, particularly with instructors' limited English proficiency impacting speech intelligibility. This study has the goal of exploring the role of “teacher talk” as a resource to empower 49 Thai EMI university instructors across seven disciplines. Instruments employed included “teacher talk” as core training materials for the Thai EMI teachers, a pretest and posttest associated with “teacher talk” for assessing word stress perception and production, a satisfaction survey to evaluate participants' feedback on the training, and a focus group discussion to gather qualitative insights on their experiences. The methodology involved a documentary investigation identifying 20 essential “teacher talk” functions, from which 80 key multisyllabic words were extracted. These words formed the basis for pretest and posttest assessments administered at the training's start and end. The training emphasized explicit instruction on accurately producing these key words and sentences related to the 20 functions. Following the training, the participants completed the posttest, a production task involving “teacher talk” utterances, a satisfaction survey, and a focus group discussion. Results revealed a significant increase in test scores, demonstrating the training's effectiveness in enhancing the participants' word stress knowledge. A team competition-based production task further validated their ability to apply these skills practically. Additionally, a mean perception score of 4.62 and positive feedback from the participants provided strong evidence of the training's success. The study underscores the value of “teacher talk” as a training resource, highlighting its potential to empower EMI educators across various disciplines for successful classroom instruction.

Keywords: English-medium instruction, explicit instruction, higher education, word stress.

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1. INTRODUCTION

EMI or English-medium instruction refers to the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in educational contexts where English is not the primary language of the students or the community (Macaro et al., 2018). That is, EMI programs aim to use English as the main medium of communication while teaching academic subjects, such as science, mathematics, and social studies. As remarked by scholars, this teaching approach has been widely adopted, especially in Southeast Asia (Bolton, Bacon-Shone et al., 2023; Galloway & Sahan, 2021).

Several compelling factors drive the global implementation of EMI. One of the most prominent factors is internationalization. English, as an international language, plays a pivotal role in professional and academic communication. English education fostered by EMI programs thereby catalyzes national development and ultimately leading to international recognition (Bolton, Hill et al., 2023; Helm, 2020; Rahmanova & Ekşi, 2023; Sahan & Şahan, 2024; Simbolon, 2021). The adoption of EMI in education is also motivated by the urgent need to enhance higher education (henceforth HE) institutions' standing internationally and institutional rankings (Barnawi, 2023; Lin et al., 2023). A HE institution's global competitiveness can be improved by leveraging the global outlook that comes with enrolling international students (Iwaniec & Wang, 2023; Xiong et al., 2024), not to mention the increase of university revenue collected from international students. EMI can also provide international education that enhances future employment options and assess the employability prospects of learners. Finally, because EMI offers an opportunity to learn subject knowledge and simultaneously develop English proficiency, a large number of students decide to join EMI programs.

Although numerous studies have supported the benefits and advantages of EMI, be they internationalization, university rankings, employment opportunities, or the facilitation of international education as presented above, its implementation has faced numerous obstacles (e.g., Dang et al., 2023; Galloway & Sahan, 2021; Rahmanova & Ekşi, 2023). To summarize, these studies collectively highlight key challenges associated with EMI: 1) pedagogical challenges, 2) inadequate preparation and resources, 3) cultural and contextual factors, 4) student motivation and engagement, and 5) language proficiency issues. First, pedagogically speaking, EMI classrooms often lean toward lecture-based formats, reducing interaction and engagement. This shift frequently results in diminished student engagement (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). Additionally, many teachers resort to scripted lessons due to language limitations, compromising both instructional depth and quality (Rahmanova & Ekşi, 2023). Second, institutions frequently lack the necessary resources and training programs for EMI, leaving both students and teachers underprepared (Dang et al., 2023). Third, culturally and contextually, the varying backgrounds of local and international students introduce complexities into EMI settings. Teachers often struggle to address the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of their students, further complicating the learning process (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). Fourth, in terms of motivation, students' reasons for participating in EMI courses can vary widely. Some express feelings of demoralization due to language barriers, significantly impacting their overall learning experience (Rahmanova & Ekşi, 2023). Finally, EMI implementation has revealed substantial challenges related to language proficiency for both students and teachers. Students frequently encounter significant language-related difficulties—such as limited vocabulary and inadequate comprehension of complex subject matter—which hinder effective interaction during lessons (Dang et al., 2023). Many struggle to understand their instructors' English fully, which impedes their ability to engage with course content and participate in discussions (Galloway & Sahan, 2021). The lack of relevant preparatory language training exacerbates these issues, leaving students ill-equipped for the demands of EMI courses (Rahmanova & Ekşi, 2023). Teachers also face their own challenges; varying levels of English proficiency can affect their teaching effectiveness and students' learning experiences. Many instructors express concerns about their ability to deliver content clearly and engagingly (Dang et al., 2023). In short, while EMI aims to enhance educational outcomes by improving English proficiency alongside subject knowledge, both students and teachers frequently grapple with the linguistic demands placed upon them.

Among these challenges outlined above, language-related difficulties are frequently cited as the most prevalent. EMI students' difficulties in language competency are frequently at the forefront of discussions about EMI (Alhamami & Almelhi, 2021; Jinghui, 2023; Shepard & Rose, 2023). Alhamami and Almelhi (2021) looked at EMI students at the university level, particularly in the fields of business and engineering, and showed how they needed help with the English language requirements in technical courses. Their research showed that vocabulary and understanding issues were common among students, which had a direct effect on their academic achievement. Language-related problems in EMI situations were examined by Jinghui (2023), who concentrated on a number of academic fields at Chinese universities. This study highlighted how students' limited English ability prevented them from grasping the course material. Students' experiences in EMI programs across a variety of fields were investigated by Shepard and Rose (2023), who found important obstacles such reduced contact and interest because of language difficulties.

Although these studies offered insightful information on the viewpoints of students, they also failed to recognize the crucial part that teachers' language skills play in establishing the classroom atmosphere. These studies thus highlight a critical gap in research that EMI teachers' language proficiency has received relatively scant attention, given the significance of teachers' linguistic abilities that may impact their instruction delivery, teaching effectiveness, and student learning outcomes in EMI settings. They also suggest that more research is needed to determine how prepared or ready EMI teachers are in terms of their linguistic capabilities, as well as the need for strategic planning, continuous support for language development, and strong institutional policies to facilitate successful EMI integration while maintaining educational quality across diverse student populations.

At this juncture, in EMI classes, the proficiency of teachers in English, particularly regarding their pronunciation, is critical for facilitating student comprehension and ensuring effective communication. Intelligibility is paramount; without it, EMI instruction risks becoming disorganized and ineffective. Research indicates that EMI teachers' limited English proficiency, especially in terms of pronunciation, can adversely affect speech intelligibility and hinder student understanding (Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Archibald, 2024; Pun et al., 2024). Among the various components of pronunciation, word stress emerges as a crucial determinant of intelligibility. Studies have demonstrated that appropriate word stress significantly influences the listener's ability to discern meaning in spoken discourse (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Furthermore, when teachers employ correct stress patterns in their speech, they not only enhance their clarity but also provide students with a model of effective pronunciation, thereby promoting improved learning outcomes (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Consequently, to ensure the efficacy of EMI instruction, it is essential that EMI teachers possess a robust understanding of English pronunciation and word stress. This knowledge is vital not only for facilitating clear communication but also for fostering an academic environment conducive to student success.

As an attempt to improve EMI teachers' English, this study was contextualized in a medium-sized public university in central Thailand. This university will offer EMI programs to prospective Chinese and Cambodian students for different EMI programs in the near future. To this end, the university thus recommends an EMI training session be organized to initially prepare and facilitate potential EMI teachers for the EMI program launching, with a focus on English communication skills in the classrooms. Based on the university's mission and the intention to address the language-related challenges encountered by EMI implementation, the purpose of this study is to improve Thai university teachers' English language proficiency so that they can provide efficient EMI in a variety of academic fields. The training's emphasis was on improving general English language proficiency rather than subject-specific language because the participating content instructors covered a wide range of disciplines. Specifically, this study aims to demonstrate how "teacher talk" can be linguistically harnessed to serve as a resource for pronunciation instruction, leading to the promotion of prospective EMI teachers' perception and production skills. In a nutshell, "teacher talk" is highlighted as a rich and powerful resource, a vital catalyst to empower EMI teachers embarking on an EMI journey, and a professional

development endeavor that sheds light on how to linguistically prepare content teachers for this education approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores three critical notions pertinent to EMI. First, it examines the implementation of EMI in Thailand, highlighting key challenges and opportunities in policy and practice. Second, it discusses the intricate relationship between intelligibility and English word stress, emphasizing its role in facilitating effective communication in EMI settings. Finally, it considers the significance of "teacher talk" as a pedagogical resource, focusing on how instructors' language choices can support student comprehension and engagement. Together, these notions offer a comprehensive perspective on essential aspects of EMI in the Thai context

2.1 EMI Programs in Thailand

Thailand's national policies aim to enhance English proficiency and global competitiveness through English education. Specifically, The Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) ([National Economic and Social Development Board \[NESDB\], 2022](#)) and the Thailand 4.0 initiative emphasize English as crucial for economic growth ([Tipprachaban, 2022](#)). This has led to a rapid expansion of EMI in Thai HE institutions.

EMI implementation in Thailand is nuanced, varying based on institutional contexts, resources, and stakeholder dynamics. Institutions may adopt fully English-taught international programs or bilingual approaches integrating Thai and English. Some programs feature courses delivered entirely in English alongside others in Thai, while collaborative teaching by bilingual lecturers is also observed ([Galloway & Sahan, 2021](#)). Moreover, the "international program" label, although not always involving foreign partnerships, signifies full English delivery, further diversifying the EMI landscape of Thailand.

While Thailand's embrace of EMI represents a significant stride towards global educational standards, persistent challenges particularly concerning language proficiency pose formidable barriers for both students and educators. Students often struggle with English instruction, necessitating stringent English language entry requirements like TOEIC or IELTS scores. Additionally, upon admission to EMI programs, students receive varying levels of language support including in-house training, self-access resources, and specialized courses like English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). However, linguistic difficulties persist ([Pomat et al., 2022](#); [Wilang & Nupong, 2022](#)) as student English proficiency continues to hinder their academic performance and integration into EMI environments.

In contrast to the relatively extensive support for students, Thai EMI teachers' English proficiency remains a critical issue. Research studies focusing on Thai EMI teachers underscore deficiencies in their language skills, impacting their content delivery in English (e.g., [Choomthong, 2014](#); [Xu & Chuaychoowong, 2017](#)). For example, [Xu and Chuaychoowong \(2017\)](#) examined Mae Fah Luang University's Thai EMI teachers' attitudes and behaviors in EMI settings and found that although some teachers are proficient in English, many find it difficult to successfully incorporate language skills into their lesson plans. Another research study on Thai EFL learners discovered that because teachers' English competence varies, students frequently have trouble comprehending them ([Choomthong, 2014](#)). Moreover, professional development opportunities for Thai EMI teachers focus more on pedagogy than language enhancement ([Choomthong, 2014](#); [Galloway & Rose, 2021](#); [Macaro et al., 2018](#)). As remarked by these scholars, EMI educators often perceive their role as primarily content delivery, overlooking the pivotal role of English proficiency in EMI instruction. Thus, effective EMI requires targeted interventions to improve teachers' English skills, facilitating better student adaptation and optimizing EMI outcomes.

2.2 Word Stress and Intelligibility

Proficiency in English communication is essential in EMI where educators and students hail from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Effective communication hinges not only on the traditional language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—but also on pronunciation, a facet often marginalized despite its pivotal role in intelligibility (Rahbar et al., 2020; Saito, 2021). As far as EMI education is concerned, non-native English teachers frequently encounter challenges in accurate pronunciation, impacting both their ability to convey information effectively and their EMI students' comprehension. Therefore, EMI teachers' limited English proficiency, particularly issues with pronunciation, could negatively impact speech intelligibility and student comprehension (Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Archibald, 2024; Pun et al., 2024).

Pronunciation encompasses two main elements: segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features, which include stress and intonation. Correct pronunciation in English entails accurately articulating consonant and vowel sounds, correctly emphasizing syllables, and employing appropriate intonation patterns (Yenkimaleki & van Heuven, 2021). Focusing on pronunciation, Gómez-Lacabex and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2021) found that Spanish university students in EMI programs interestingly underscored the prioritization of intelligibility over native-like accents, mirroring findings by Galloway and Sahan (2021). Interestingly, if intelligibility needs to be prioritized, a pertinent question in pronunciation instruction is which aspects of pronunciation should be emphasized to enhance intelligibility and comprehensibility.

Word stress in English was advocated to significantly enhance speech intelligibility and comprehensibility (Galante & Piccardo, 2022; Ghosh & Levis, 2021; Kanoksilapatham & Pariwatnanont, 2024). Misplaced word stress or shifted stress disrupts speech and rhythm, severely hindering comprehension and potentially rendering speech unintelligible. In short, accurate word stress plays a pivotal role in determining how easily listeners grasp spoken English and the overall intelligibility of oral communication.

The challenge of English word stress persists within the Thai educational context, as evidenced by Kanoksilapatham's (2014) study involving Thai primary school English teachers. Their inadequate performance on stress placement test in words taken from classroom texts raises concerns about the preparedness of EMI instructors to provide intelligible and comprehensible input to students. Thai EMI teachers who are content teachers, not language teachers, are thus more likely to struggle with word stress, affecting their ability to provide comprehensible input, impairing their ability to engage meaningfully and jeopardizing the efficacy of EMI programs. This challenge highlights the need for improved pronunciation training to ensure effective classroom communication and meet student learning needs.

Given the critical role of word stress in effective communication, particularly in an EMI context, it is essential for teachers to integrate this aspect into their instructional practices. Meanwhile, “teacher talk”—the language and strategies educators use—greatly influences student comprehension and engagement. By mastering word stress, Thai EMI teachers can enhance their clarity and expressiveness, speak with greater confidence, and model proper pronunciation for their students. Thus, focusing on teaching word stress within “teacher talk” can significantly benefit both teachers and learners, fostering a more effective learning environment.

2.3 “Teacher Talk”

“Teacher talk” refers to the language utilized by educators during classroom instruction, constituting the linguistic backbone of classroom instruction. It encompasses a diverse array or spectrum of communicative functions essential for effective teaching and learning, such as explaining concepts, giving instructions, asking questions, providing feedback, and managing classroom interactions (Darong, 2022; Spratt et al., 2011). These “teacher talk” functions are integral to fostering comprehension, engagement, and educational outcomes (Mercer, 2018). In turn, each function demands specific linguistic and pedagogical skills to facilitate smooth transitions between activities and maintain an effective learning environment. Therefore, the challenge for EMI instructors is significant, requiring mastery of not only the content knowledge

in English but also the diverse functions of "teacher talk" and their corresponding appropriate language use

"Teacher talk", if used effectively, is crucial for several reasons (Dweck, 2006; Mercer, 2018). First, it enhances comprehension and clarity of instructions, allowing learners to better understand complex concepts. Moreover, adept "teacher talk" promotes student participation and communication while encouraging critical thinking and collaborative learning experiences. Furthermore, "teacher talk" supports students' language development by exposing them to authentic language use, offering linguistic input and providing opportunities for practice. Last, positive "teacher talk" can inspire and motivate students, by cultivating a supportive classroom environment that boosts their confidence and abilities. As described, "teacher talk" plays a crucial role in supporting instruction, allowing educators to create a stimulating learning environment that fosters comprehension, development, engagement, and motivation.

In Thailand's growing EMI context, mastering "teacher talk" functions is thus imperative. This study emphasizes the necessity for linguistic scaffolding for Thai EMI teachers, an aspect often overlooked as the sole responsibility of the educators themselves. The study focuses on providing language training to prospective EMI instructors at a HE institution, using "teacher talk" as a pivotal resource for successful EMI implementation. Additionally, given the significant impact of word stress on intelligibility, particularly in EMI settings, the study investigates EMI teachers' proficiency in predicting and producing word stress in English words associated with "teacher talk" functions. Ultimately, the study evaluates EMI teachers' satisfaction with, and attitudes toward, the devised training, aiming to inform future in-house teacher training initiatives to optimally benefit stakeholders in EMI programs.

At this juncture, a scrutiny into studies or reports on the topic of "teacher talk" is quite elucidating. One notable and most recent study is a systematic review by Zou et al. (2024), which examines the role of "teacher talk" in English language learning, by synthesizing 25 research articles on "teacher talk" from 2018 to 2023 to explore its characteristics and connection to learners' achievements in English classrooms. The review not only highlights its importance in classroom management and lesson delivery but also emphasizes how "teacher talk" influences students' comprehension and language development. Similarly, Alkhazraji (2019) investigates the specific impact of "teacher talk" on English grammar acquisition, illustrating how teachers' verbal interactions support students' grammatical understanding and facilitate language learning. Finally, Shamsipour and Allami (2012) underscore the significance of "teacher talk" in EFL classrooms, focusing on its role in providing comprehensible input and enhancing learner engagement. This particular study highlights how "teacher talk" creates meaningful learning opportunities and promotes active involvement in the language acquisition process. Despite this growing body of research, no studies have yet explored the application of "teacher talk" in EMI teacher training. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the role of "teacher talk" and its associated word stress in the context of EMI Thai teacher training, offering new insights into effective teaching strategies in EMI.

3. METHODS

This study adopts a mixed-method research design to provide a comprehensive understanding of Thai EMI teachers' performance as far as word stress and "teacher talk" are concerned. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, we aim to capture a multifaceted perspective on this critical aspect of EMI teacher preparation. The mixed-method approach enhances the robustness of our findings and allows us to draw more nuanced conclusions that can inform future professional development initiatives for Thai EMI teachers.

The following subsections outline the methodological procedures of this study, focusing on the EMI education context and the prospective EMI teachers to formulate the study's goal and objectives. It also details the research procedures, including developing instruments, delivering training, and administering tests and activities.

3.1 Context of the Study

This study was conducted at a medium-sized public university in central Thailand, embracing a mission to enhance internationalization and creating a global academic environment. To achieve its objective, the university aims to attract international students, specifically targeting candidates from China and Cambodia, for enrollment in various degree programs in the upcoming academic years. To accommodate these prospective international students and their linguistic needs, the university has identified EMI programs as a strategic approach.

To implement EMI programs, the university surveyed among its ten faculties to assess interest and readiness. Seven faculties expressed enthusiasm and commitment to launching EMI programs. In preparation for the rollout of these programs, the university's Language Center was tasked with organizing a one-day in-house training session for faculty members associated with these seven faculties, lasting seven hours, with the goal of fostering a comprehensive understanding of the EMI approach and enhancing English language proficiency.

3.2 Participants

The participants in the EMI training program, 49 in total, were nominated by their deans based on perceived potential. They are from seven disciplines: Education (7), Health Sciences (11), Humanities and Social Sciences (11), Science and Technology (5), Management Science (5), Industrial Technology (9), and Agricultural Technology (1). This multidisciplinary group reflects the university's diverse academic programs and the varied expertise brought to the EMI training initiative. No warranty of the participants' English proficiency was provided.

Regarding teaching experience, the participants' tenure at the university ranged across distinct service intervals: 0-1 year (5 participants), 1-5 years (11 participants), 5-10 years (20 participants), and over 10 years (13 participants). This spectrum of experience levels presents an opportunity to cater to both novice educators and seasoned educators in adapting to EMI pedagogy. Henceforth, the term "content teachers" was aptly used in this study to describe these 49 prospective EMI teachers, distinguishing them from their colleagues in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) who are affiliated with the university's Language Center. This distinction highlights the training's focus on equipping subject-matter experts with the linguistic skills necessary to deliver their disciplines effectively in English, enhancing the university's internationalization efforts.

3.3 Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the EMI training was to enhance the English language competence of Thai university teachers, enabling them to deliver effective EMI across diverse academic disciplines. Given the broad spectrum of the subjects taught by the participating content teachers, the focus of the training was on developing general English language skills rather than subject-specialized language.

Central to this training initiative was the concept of "teacher talk", recognized as pivotal for facilitating clear lesson delivery and fostering effective communication in the classroom. In association with "teacher talk", the objectives of this study are threefold: 1) to examine the participants' perception skills of word stress before and after the training, 2) to assess their production skills in executing "teacher talk" functions, and 3) to gauge their satisfaction with, and attitudes toward, the training.

3.4 Instruments

To support the EMI training initiative, several instruments associated with "teacher talk" were developed. These tools aimed to equip content teachers with the necessary linguistic skills for clear and effective communication in English-medium classrooms. In addition to enhancing instructional delivery, the instruments were also designed to assess teachers' potential for

fostering student understanding and engagement through strategic language use. This dual purpose reflects the central role of “teacher talk” in ensuring the success of EMI implementation

3.4.1 Training materials

The development of training materials commenced with a comprehensive review of documentary data, encompassing both printed and online sources in order to compile a cohesive set of common communicative functions encapsulated within “teacher talk”. A list of 20 core functions was identified, and a list of 80 multisyllabic key words associated with the 20 functions was curated on specific criteria. First, these words must be multisyllabic to properly assess the participants’ word stress knowledge. Second, the base form of verbs (e.g., “investigate” vs. “investigated”) and the singular form of countable nouns (e.g., “instance” vs. “instances”) were preferred to avoid creating an additional syllable due to suffixes, which could potentially confuse the participants. Third, words sharing the same root or base were excluded to avoid redundancy. For example, between the competing words: “demonstrate” and “demonstration”, only one word (“demonstrate”) was selected. Fourth, in case where a word can function in more than one grammatical category, its grammatical function was specified (e.g., “progress (n)”). Finally, the selected words were capped at a maximum CEFR level of B2 to maintain accessibility. To exemplify, under the function of “giving instructions”, core words such as “instruction”, “listen”, “complete”, and “assignment” were highlighted, illustrating their relevance and utility within the instructional context. The 80 selected words ranged from 2 to 4 syllables.

To validate the relevance of each key word to its corresponding “teacher talk” function, an index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was conducted. Two EAP teachers independently matched the word sets to their functions, ensuring alignment and appropriateness. They were also encouraged to report any words that might be too challenging for the participants. During this process, some words were found to potentially serve multiple functions without context. For example, the word “finish” could belong to both managing time and giving instructions functions. However, based on the context provided by co-occurring words such as “schedule”, “effective”, and “management”, it was determined that “finish” primarily served the function of managing time rather than giving instructions. The IOC task was completed in 10 minutes, achieving 100% agreement, affirming the suitability of the selected key words for their targeted functions. This high congruence rate suggests that the selected words were valid and clearly associated with their respective “teacher talk” functions.

During the validation, the level of the word “collaborate” (C1) for the function of “promoting collaboration” was brought to our attention. However, after a discussion between the researcher and both EAP teachers, considering Thailand’s education framework emphasizing 21st-century skills or 4Cs (“communication”, “collaboration”, “critical thinking”, and “creativity”), we unanimously agreed that “collaborate” should justifiably be included on the list. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the 80 selected core words mapped across the 20 distinct functions of “teacher talk,” showcasing their applicability and direct alignment with the training objectives.

Table 1. “Teacher talk” functions and corresponding key words.

No.	Function	Key word list
1.	Giving instructions	instruction, listen, complete, assignment
2.	Setting objectives	objective, definition, target, intention
3.	Giving directions for activities	passage, discuss, compare, guidelines
4.	Checking understanding	understand, explain, comprehend, activity
5.	Asking questions	question, investigate, different, issue
6.	Giving examples	example, instance, consider, demonstrate
7.	Using visual aids	figure, image, diagram, illustration
8.	Clarifying concepts	clarify, concept, interpret, specific
9.	Providing feedback	feedback, opinion, comment, review (v)
10.	Transitioning between activities	transition, progress (n), transfer (v), modify
11.	Encouraging participation	encourage, involve, participate, contribute
12.	Encouraging peer interaction	partner, together, interact, communicate

Table 1 continued...

13.	Encouraging Critical Thinking	analyze, evaluate, argument, evidence
14.	Encouraging self-assessment	assess, reflect, performance, weakness
15.	Promoting collaboration	assist, combine, collaborate, teamwork
16.	Promoting language development	language, improve, develop, fluency
17.	Building rapport	connection, relationship, associate, attitude
18.	Managing time	finish, schedule, effective, management
19.	Summarizing	summarize, recap, conclude, integrate
20.	Celebrating achievements	congratulate, appreciate, celebrate, achievement

Following the compilation of the 80-word list and the identification of 20 distinct functions of “teacher talk”, the next step involved creating practical instances to illustrate each function within the context of EMI. The following exemplar demonstrates how the “teacher talk” function of giving instructions and its associated four core words—“instruction”, “listen”, “complete”, and “assignment”—are integrated into practical classroom scenarios. These instances serve to emphasize the critical role of precise language use in conveying instructions effectively in an EMI setting.

Giving Instructions (instruction, listen, complete, assignment)

- Please follow the **instructions** on the worksheet carefully.
- It’s important to **listen** carefully during the lesson.
- Please **complete** all the questions before the end of the class.
- Your **assignment** for tonight is to read the next chapter.

3.4.2 Pretest and posttest

Based on the set of validated 80 core words, an identical pretest and posttest was generated to assess the participant’s competence in English word stress. The 80 items were alphabetically re-sequenced. To facilitate syllable counting, which might hinder the content teachers’ test performance, each word was annotated with the correct syllable count in parentheses. Table 2 illustrates the first five words on the test along with their correct answers.

Table 2. First five questions on the word stress test.

Word	1 st syllable	2 nd syllable	3 rd syllable	4 th syllable
1. Achievement (3)		x		
2. Activity (4)		x		
3. Analyze (3)	x			
4. Appreciate (4)		x		
5. Argument (3)	x			

3.4.3 Satisfaction survey

The Google Form survey was developed to elicit quantitatively the participants’ satisfaction with the EMI training. It consists of four Likert scale items, including their better understanding of word stress, appreciation of “teacher talk” sentences and functions, confidence in using English, and finally general satisfaction.

3.4.4 Focus group discussion question

One focus group discussion question was developed to triangulate the findings. The central inquiry aimed to gather qualitative insights: “What do they think of the training, on reflection?” It was anticipated that the discussion would provide deeper perspectives on the participants’ attitudes toward the training and its perceived effectiveness.

All in all, these instruments were collectively designed to gather comprehensive data on the participants’ word stress perception skills both before and after the training, as well as their satisfaction and attitudes toward the training. The teaching materials, the pretest and posttest, and

the satisfaction survey were digitized for streamlined administration and data collection in subsequent study stages.

3.5 Methodological Procedures

The training session was structured to equip Thai university teachers with essential English language competence. This training was intended to improve the effectiveness of EMI implementation in diverse academic disciplines. Spanning seven hours, the session comprised four phases detailed below.

3.5.1 Introduction and pretest (hours 1-2)

In the initial two hours, the participants were introduced to the concept of EMI in HE contexts, purposes, and benefits. The introduction highlights common language-related challenges in university settings and strategies to overcome them. Emphasis was placed on word stress, demonstrating its critical role in enhancing spoken English intelligibility and comprehensibility in EMI environments.

After the introduction, the participants were briefed on the aim of the pretest via Google Forms: to assess their baseline pronunciation competence by identifying stressed syllables in multisyllabic words. Instructions on completing the test were provided. They had 20 minutes to complete the test, earning one point for each correct response, totaling up to 80 points.

3.5.2 Teacher talk training (hours 3-6)

The training covered a total of 3 hours, splitting equally into two major activities: "teacher talk" training and group activities. Upon the completion of the pretest, the 90-minute "teacher talk" training session was run by the researcher, emphasizing the functions and significance of "teacher talk" in EMI contexts. Special attention was given to word stress, known to enhance the intelligibility and comprehensibility of "teacher talk" key words. Explicit instruction on pronunciation was utilized. That is, the participants were presented with the corresponding 80 key words. They were invited to express any difficulties in understanding the meanings of these words, but none were reported. Then, they were instructed how word stress in these key words operated and was enunciated, aiming to refine their pronunciation accuracy. Five University Language Center faculty members, or EAP teachers, were present in this training session as on-lookers.

To optimize training effectiveness, after 90 minutes of explicit instruction by the researcher, the participants were randomly divided into nine smaller groups, each consisting of five or six members from different faculties. The five EAP teacher helpers from the university's Language Center were invited to help coach these groups. Throughout this 90-minute session, the participants actively engaged in various activities designed to reinforce their comprehension and accurate production skills of the key words. Activities including pronunciation imitation, shadow reading exercises, and interactive language games facilitated by the EAP teachers were strategically designed to bolster the participants' confidence in producing these words with accurate stress patterns during EMI sessions.

3.5.3 Posttest administration and actual performance assessment (hour 7)

Before the end of the training session, the participants completed the posttest administered via Google Forms. The posttest aimed to gauge improvements in the participants' pronunciation abilities and their grasp of word stress following the intensive training session. Within a shortened timeframe of 15 minutes, the formal assessment phase was concluded.

The posttest administered was followed by a production task (a team-based performance assessment activity) during the final 45 minutes. To facilitate the production task, each team was tasked with producing relevant instances of "teacher talk" integrating the designated key words

pronounced intelligibly. Each team had five seconds to produce an instance aligned with the assigned “teacher talk” function once it was digitally specified by the Wheel of Names, a digital app known for its user-friendly interface and customizability. The participants signaled readiness by raising their hands and verbalizing their responses. Exact replication of handout examples was not required.

Three judges, comprising the researcher and two EAP teachers from the university’s Language Center, evaluated the participants’ responses based solely on intelligibility. That is, the assessment focused on whether a response produced by a team member was understandable. If the response was deemed intelligible, the judges signaled with an “OK” gesture, indicating that the team earned a point. Conversely, if the response was not intelligible, a judge made a gesture of “disapproval”, resulting in no points being awarded. It is important to note that grammatical accuracy was not considered in this evaluation process.

To earn a point, a team needed to receive an “OK” from at least two of the three judges. If they failed to achieve this threshold, they forfeited their turn to the opposing team. Additionally, if a team did not produce any response within five seconds, they also forfeited their turn. The design of this actual performance assessment is to ensure that teams remained engaged and responsive throughout the evaluation.

Multiple rounds of evaluation were conducted until a team accumulated five “OK” gestures, which designated them as the round winner. The losing team was then given the opportunity to challenge a new team in subsequent rounds, thereby promoting broad participation among all teams involved in the study. This integration maintains the flow of information while clearly stating that no records of points were kept due to the fast-paced nature of the assessment.

3.5.4 Satisfaction survey and focus group discussion on attitudes

The link to the Google Form survey was made available to the participants toward the end of the training for period of one week. In addition, after the completion of the training, three participants were randomly selected to participate in an informal focus group discussion conducted in Thai and lasting approximately 20 minutes. The discussion aimed to capture deeper insights into the participants’ attitudes and experiences related to various aspects of the training. The qualitative accounts collected from the discussion complemented the quantitative findings from the survey. This dual-method approach ensured a comprehensive evaluation of the training’s effectiveness from both objective and subjective perspectives.

In conclusion, by integrating multiple data approaches as described above, this study sought to provide insights into the effectiveness of “teacher talk” as a pedagogical tool in EMI contexts and to assess the impact of targeted language training on the readiness of content teachers to deliver academic content in English. Ultimately, the aim was to equip the participants with the necessary linguistic skills to enhance their teaching effectiveness and support the university’s goals of internationalization and academic excellence.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study used quantitative and qualitative data. The data were analyzed through a structured approach encompassing quantitative analysis for the test results and satisfaction data, and qualitative analysis for the attitude data from the focus group discussion. The following section presents the details of the data analysis procedures.

Quantitative analysis of the test scores was to evaluate the participants’ word stress knowledge before and after the training. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participants’ test scores, providing insights into their baseline understanding and any changes observed after the training. Subsequently, a paired t-test was conducted to statistically compare the pretest and posttest mean scores, determining the significance of any observed improvements in word stress knowledge due to the training.

The Likert scale survey responses provided quantitative data regarding the participants’ satisfaction with the training. Descriptive statistics was employed. The mean rating offered an

overall assessment of satisfaction levels, ranging from “very unsatisfactory” (1.01-1.80), “quite unsatisfactory” (1.81-2.60), “neutral” (2.61-3.40), “quite satisfactory” (3.41-4.20), to “very satisfactory” (4.21-5.00). This quantitative analysis provided insights into the perceived effectiveness of the training, highlighting strengths and areas for potential improvement as perceived by the participants.

Qualitative analysis of the focus group discussion data employed thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights from the participants’ qualitative responses. This approach involved systematically coding the responses to uncover common attitudes, opinions, and reflections on aspects such as training content, delivery methods, and overall learning experiences. Taken together, by integrating both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques, this study achieved a robust evaluation and a comprehensive understanding of the EMI training’s impact.

4. RESULTS

The following sections present the results from the analysis of the pretest and posttest scores, the satisfaction survey, and the focus group discussion on participants’ attitudes toward the training. These findings offer insights into the effectiveness of the EMI training program, both in terms of measurable learning outcomes and participants’ perceptions and experiences. The results are organized based on the source of data.

4.1 Pretest and Posttest Analysis

The effectiveness of the training session aimed at enhancing the participants’ English word stress knowledge through “teacher talk” functions is demonstrated by the analysis of pretest and posttest scores from 49 participants. These scores provide quantitative insights into the impact of the intervention on the participants’ proficiency in English pronunciation, particularly in the context of educational instruction. Table 3 summarizes the key findings from the pretest and posttest analysis.

Table 3. Summary of pretest and posttest scores.

Measure	Pretest	Posttest	Mean difference	t-value	df	p-value
N=49	42.31	62.82	20.51	-10.366	48	0.00

Prior to the training, the pretest mean score was 42.31, indicating the average baseline performance among the participants, against which improvements following the training could be measured. Following the training, the posttest mean score increased to 62.82, signifying a substantial improvement of the participants’ ability to identify and apply correct word stress in English words relevant to “teacher talk.”

The effectiveness of the “teacher talk” training in improving the participants’ word stress knowledge was evaluated through a paired samples t-test conducted on the participants’ pretest and posttest scores. Upon comparing the pretest and posttest scores, a notable mean difference of 20.51 points was observed. This mean difference signifies that, on average, the participants scored 20.51 points higher on the posttest compared to the pretest.

The paired samples t-test yielded a noteworthy t-value of -10.366, with 48 degrees of freedom (df). The associated p-value was calculated to be 0.00. A p-value of 0.00 indicates that the probability of obtaining a difference as large as observed, or larger, purely by chance is extremely low—less than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the difference in scores between the pretest and posttest is considered statistically significant, indicating the compelling impact of the “teacher talk” training intervention, which significantly enhanced the participants’ word stress knowledge. The findings also underscore the potential benefits of integrating targeted language instruction, such as “teacher talk”, into educational curricula to support educators in delivering content effectively in English.

4.2 Actual Performance Assessment

In the team competition segment, it should be noted that while a formal assessment was not conducted, substantial insights were gained from the observations made. About an hour dedicated to this fast-paced group activity allowed each team to actively demonstrate their production abilities related to “teacher talk” knowledge. This engagement is vital as it reflects not only the participants’ understanding of language concepts but also their ability to apply these concepts in a collaborative setting. The “OK” gesture provided by the three judges indicated that teams effectively articulated their responses and passed the informal assessment criteria based on intelligibility. This positive feedback gesture serves as an important indicator of their performance, suggesting that they were able to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

Furthermore, in this team competition, the participants demonstrated significant progress beyond their understanding of word stress, as measured by the pretest and posttest. Their ability to articulate target words intelligibly within context is a promising sign of their readiness for EMI environments, where clear communication is essential.

While it is recognized that formal metrics can provide concrete evidence, it is important to highlight that the observations made during this activity are meaningful in understanding the students’ language proficiency and readiness for real-world applications. The combination of positive judge feedback and active participant engagement indicates a strong foundation for students as they prepare for future challenges in their language learning journey. In summary, although no formal records were kept, the evidence gathered from the judges’ positive gesture evaluations during the team competition provides compelling support for our interpretation of participants’ progress and capabilities in articulating their knowledge effectively.

4.3 Satisfaction Survey

A total of 37 survey responses were received, providing insights into four key areas relevant to the training, as shown in Table 3. These responses offer valuable feedback on participants’ experiences and help evaluate the overall effectiveness and impact of the EMI training initiative.

Table 4. Satisfaction survey results.

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Average
1. Better understanding of word stress	29	7	1	-	-	4.67
2. Essential “teacher talk” sentences & functions	24	12	1	-	-	4.62
3. Confidence in using English	22	11	4	-	-	4.49
4. General satisfaction	27	9	1	-	-	4.70
Average						4.62

In general, high average ratings, ranging from 4.49 to 4.70, indicate a strong satisfaction across all evaluated aspects of the training program. To highlight, the participants’ general satisfaction received the most commendable average score of 4.70. In conclusion, the survey results affirm the effectiveness of the EMI instruction training program in meeting the participants’ expectations and enhancing their readiness for teaching in EMI environments. The high satisfaction levels reflect its success in bolstering the participants’ confidence, understanding, and satisfaction.

4.4 Focus Group Discussion

The study involved three focus group participants. These participants are all males from the Science and Technology discipline, and they are identified here by their initials (ST, BP, and WK). The discussion accounts in response to the question posed “What do they think of the training, on reflection?” could be categorized into three aspects: “teacher talk” as the training theme, the trainer (researcher), and the EAP teachers.

ST, substantiated by BP and WK, admitted that he had never experienced such training before. He expressed initial skepticism but finally acknowledged the training's transformative impact on his perception of teaching EMI programs. Excerpt (1) represents ST's original verbatim in Thai, translated into English. Meanwhile, in Excerpt (2), BP reinforced ST's view, emphasizing that the training had also reshaped his own understanding of effective communication in EMI contexts. He noted that it highlighted the crucial role of "teacher talk" in ensuring the success of EMI instruction.

- (1) I've never experienced anything quite like this training before. Honestly, when I heard I was nominated to attend, I didn't expect much. I've attended several English workshops, focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. But this was different. When introduced to the concept of "teacher talk" training, it was like a light bulb went off in my head. I realized how crucial this would be for me as a prospective EMI educator.
- (2) It's not just about teaching English. It's about how you communicate it, engage your students, and captivate their attention. "Teacher talk" is the magic ingredient that turns a good lesson into an unforgettable experience. I now understand how important accurate pronunciation and word stress are. I'm impressed with the whole experience, both the content and the trainer.

WK focused on the trainer's knowledge, teaching techniques, and ability to engage participants with diverse English proficiency levels. He understood the significance of teacher talk for his teaching transformation. Thus, he appreciated the clarity of instructions and the trainer's inclusive approach, as indicated in Excerpt (3).

- (3) English training has always been daunting for me, but this time around, it's like she's opened up a whole new world. Her techniques, strategies, activities are engaging and interactive. What stands out is how clear and transparent her instructions are. She handles our diverse English backgrounds seamlessly. She's made this experience not just educational but enjoyable too.

In addition to the "teacher talk" theme and the researcher's expertise, all participants expressed positive views about the word stress training. As shown in Excerpts (4) and (5), both ST and BP shared personal reflections that underscored the training's impact on their awareness of pronunciation. ST admitted that pronunciation had always been the one skill he tended to overlook, but the training served as a wake-up call, prompting him to recognize its importance for both student comprehension and his own professional growth. BP echoed this sentiment, describing how the pretest revealed gaps in his pronunciation of seemingly simple words like "analyze", "demonstrate", and "activity". Through the training, he gradually understood the rules behind word stress and felt more confident in addressing such challenges in the future.

- (4) For someone like me, pronunciation has always been that one skill overlooked. Today I realized how important pronunciation truly is. It's like a wake-up call. I never realized the negative impact mispronunciation. But now, I'm now determined to improve for my students and professional development.
- (5) Taking that pretest was an eye-opener. Words like "analyze", "demonstrate", and "activity" seemed simple, but pronouncing them was challenging. I realized how little I knew about pronunciation. As the training progressed, I started to understand the rules. Now, I feel equipped to tackle those tricky pronunciations.

Additionally, as shown in Excerpt (6), BP provided constructive feedback about the role of the EAP teachers in the training. First, he appreciated their overall support given in the training. Furthermore, he expressed a desire for a more proactive and individualized approach to pronunciation instruction.

- (6) In the future, if possible, I really hope to see our EAP teachers taking a more hands-on approach when it comes to helping us with our pronunciation issues. Don't get me wrong, they've been great, but I wish they would be more proactive and really cater to each individual's pronunciation struggles.

Overall, the focus group discussion revealed positive reactions to the "teacher talk" theme and the word stress content, the trainer's expertise, and the help from EAP teachers. The participants appreciated the comprehensive approach of the training and its potential impact on

preparing them for EMI instruction. They expressed enthusiasm regarding their learning experiences. In short, based on the focus group discussion data collected, there are five key benefits of the training.

The first benefit (enhanced understanding of “teacher talk”) is that they gained a newfound appreciation for “teacher talk” as essential for effective EMI instruction, recognizing that mastering it improves teaching delivery and student engagement. For the second benefit (increased awareness of pronunciation importance), the training highlighted the importance of pronunciation for effective communication in EMI contexts, leading the participants to commit to enhancing their pronunciation skills. The third benefit (empowerment through training) is that they felt empowered by the insights gained into word stress rules, equipping them with practical tools for their classrooms. The fourth benefit (desire for continued support) is that, while satisfied with the training, they expressed a desire for ongoing support from EAP teachers to address specific pronunciation challenges. Finally, the last benefit (readiness to implement skills) is that the participants conveyed readiness to apply their new skills in upcoming EMI programs, acknowledging that these skills would enhance both their teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

In summary, this focus group discussion underscored not only the positive reception of “teacher talk” and word stress training but also highlighted participants’ eagerness to implement what they learned in their future teaching endeavors. This elaboration provides more depth regarding the findings from the focus group discussion while maintaining clarity about the participants’ experiences and insights gained from the training program.

5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to enhance the English proficiency of prospective Thai EMI instructors through targeted training focused on “teacher talk”. The results indicated a significant increase in the participants’ posttest scores, demonstrating the effectiveness of the training program in improving their understanding and production of word stress. The participants not only reported high satisfaction levels but also showed a marked improvement in their ability to articulate key words within context, which is critical for effective communication in EMI settings.

Many aspects of the training program are responsible for the observed rise in posttest scores. The first aspect was explicit teaching on word stress, which emphasized how crucial it is to speech intelligibility. Proper word stress dramatically improves spoken English understanding and intelligibility, according to research (Galante & Piccardo, 2022; Ghosh & Levis, 2021; Zhang & Yuan, 2020). By emphasizing this aspect, the training addressed a typical issue that non-native speakers encounter, especially in an EMI situation where students’ comprehension depends on clear communication (Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Archibald, 2024).

Additionally, by incorporating team challenges and practical activities, participants were able to apply what they had learned in real-time circumstances, strengthening their skills via practice. This supports the results of earlier research showing how beneficial interactive and participatory learning strategies are for language acquisition (Dweck, 2006; Mercer, 2018). The participants’ confidence increased and a deeper comprehension of how to use “teacher talk” in their future classrooms was made possible by the combination of theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Along with these training aspects, one significant component of adult learning theory is reflected in the participants’ positive comments about how satisfied they were with the program. Knowles et al. (2015) assert that adult learners are driven by internal motivations and look for real-world applications for their education. This desire was probably influenced by the training’s emphasis on pertinent “teacher talk” functions, which allowed the participants to make clear links between their education and their prospective teaching positions. Maintaining engagement and guaranteeing long-term skill retention depend on this relationship.

Furthermore, the study’s conclusions are consistent with a larger body of research on the difficulties in implementing EMI. Although students’ language abilities have received a lot of

attention (Alhamami & Almelhi, 2021; Jinghui, 2023), this study emphasizes how important it is to improve EMI teachers' English proficiency as well. Effective instruction can be severely hampered by teachers' insufficient language competency, as shown by Galloway and Sahan (2021). Institutions can better prepare EMI teachers for the demands of EMI contexts by addressing these issues through focused training programs like this one.

In conclusion, findings highlight the importance of "teacher talk" as a teaching tool and a focus point for EMI teachers' language instruction. The notable increases in posttest scores and participant satisfaction suggest that teachers' communication skills can be effectively improved by providing them with opportunities for real-world application along with specific education on word stress. Implementing comparable training programs could be essential to removing language barriers and promoting good educational results as colleges continue to broaden their EMI offerings.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the pivotal role of "teacher talk" as a fundamental component of effective EMI, providing educators with essential tools for language development, classroom engagement, and professional growth. The findings underscore the transformative impact of "teacher talk" in empowering educators at the outset of their EMI journeys, emphasizing its critical role in fostering confidence, competence, and credibility within EMI contexts. The dynamic nature of "teacher talk" enables it to adapt and evolve to meet the diverse needs of EMI classrooms. By effectively utilizing key terms and specific instances associated with each "teacher talk" function, educators can significantly enhance language instruction and improve student engagement.

Despite the positive outcomes of this study, certain considerations require further attention. These include the duration of training and variations in teachers' English proficiency levels. Nevertheless, a solid introduction to EMI, coupled with a clear rationale for pedagogical approaches, equips educators to articulate their needs and aspirations more effectively, paving the way for ongoing professional development. Furthermore, acquiring knowledge about word stress signifies intellectual growth and contributes to personal development and enhanced pedagogical effectiveness. Armed with this linguistic proficiency, educators can become catalysts for transformative learning experiences, embodying ideals of knowledge, resourcefulness, and professionalism in their classrooms.

Future research and training initiatives should consider several important aspects. First, examining participant backgrounds—including varying levels of English proficiency—will be crucial for understanding equitable learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies could assess knowledge retention post-training, providing valuable insights into sustained professional development. Additionally, expanding the scope to include diverse pronunciation facets such as intonation and rhythm would enrich comprehensive language instruction within EMI settings.

In essence, "teacher talk" transcends mere language instruction; it represents a significant shift in educational practice. Teachers serve as agents of inspiration and empowerment, playing a pivotal role in fostering lifelong learning. As we navigate the complexities of EMI instruction, it is imperative to embrace the transformative potential of "teacher talk" and cultivate a culture of excellence, innovation, and collaboration in EMI classrooms worldwide—especially within competitive, research-focused educational environments.

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