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Preparing EMI Content Teachers for Global Englishes in Tunisia: Implications for Global South Higher Education

Marii Abdeljaoued^{a,*}^a *University of Carthage, Tunisia; University of Sfax, Tunisia*

ABSTRACT

The internationalization of higher education has fueled the spread of English-medium instruction (EMI) across the Global South. This expansion has raised the pedagogical demands placed on content teachers, who are often expected to teach disciplinary subjects through English with little or no preparation for multilingual classrooms. In Tunisia, EMI is now increasingly established in scientific, technical, and postgraduate programs, yet its implementation remains largely ad hoc. Teaching takes place in a multilingual environment shaped by Tunisian Arabic, French, and English, while institutional expectations often rest on monolingual and native-speaker-oriented assumptions. This disconnect raises questions about how EMI teacher education can respond to the realities of multilingual higher education. This paper sets out to develop the Global Englishes-informed Multilingual (GEM) Framework as a conceptual model for EMI teacher education. Based on a theory-driven qualitative synthesis of research on EMI, Global Englishes, multilingual pedagogy, and disciplinary communication, the framework addresses recurring challenges in teaching, classroom interaction, and assessment. It is made up of five interconnected dimensions. The first is disciplinary communication and the second intelligibility-oriented communication, followed by multilingual pedagogy, critical language awareness, and assessment reorientation. The framework offers a coherent basis for content teacher development and brings the communicative demands of disciplinary teaching into dialogue with Global Englishes and multilingual pedagogy. Multilingualism is treated as an integral feature of EMI, with intelligibility and inclusion at the center. Although the framework was developed with Tunisia in mind, it can be relevant to other Global South contexts where multilingualism is embedded in education and where English operates alongside other languages in academic life.

Keywords: global Englishes; English-medium instruction (EMI); multilingual pedagogy; global south; higher education

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* Corresponding author: Higher Institute of Languages of Nabeul, University of Carthage Nabeul, and Laboratory of Approaches to Discourse, University of Sfax, Sfax, Tunisia

Email address: abdeljaouedmari@isln.ucar.tn

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Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that accelerating internationalization has made EMI a defining feature of higher education. Universities worldwide have expanded English-medium programs mainly to raise their international visibility and attract students and research partners (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018). The expansion has been especially marked in the Global South, where English increasingly serves academic communication and institutional engagement. Yet such growth has often run ahead of pedagogical support. EMI teachers are left to fend for themselves and teach through English without preparation for the linguistic, communicative, and pedagogical demands involved. The problem is arguably most acute in multilingual Global South contexts such as Tunisia, where no established approach to EMI teacher education exists. In Tunisia, to my knowledge, there is no formal preparation at all. Content teachers are usually assigned EMI courses on the informal impression that they are 'good at English', and little attention is paid to what disciplinary teaching in multilingual environments actually involves. Therefore, these teachers need a more joined-up form of preparation that starts from the classrooms they actually teach in.

Tunisia's language landscape has long been marked by long-standing rivalry among Arabic, French, and English. In higher education, the contest is mainly between two foreign languages, French and English (Abdeljaoued, 2023). EMI has spread across scientific, technical, and postgraduate programs, driven largely by internationalization policies and hopes for graduate mobility and employability. Yet amid this state of flux, Tunisia still has no national EMI policy. Nor is there a legislative or ministerial mandate that establishes English as a medium of instruction, and provision is still limited to a small number of institutions (Troudi, 2022). Even so, the case is instructive, and much of what makes it so lies in its history. After independence from French rule in 1956, Tunisian education was pulled in two directions. Arabization was promised, yet French stayed on as the de facto medium of scientific and technical instruction. The two languages made uneasy bedfellows. Arabization was pursued inconsistently, while French, a legacy of the protectorate, proved hard to displace (Battenberg, 1997). From the 1970s, much of humanities teaching moved toward Arabic, but STEM programs stayed largely French-medium. English has more recently entered postgraduate and research contexts, adding a third medium to an already stratified system. Many content teachers today were trained in French, teach students who interact across Tunisian Arabic, French, and English, and are now expected by their institutions to deliver courses in English. The details of this mismatch are Tunisian, but the mismatch seems to be common across the Global South (Curle et al., 2024; Sah, 2022).

It is worth pausing on the role Tunisia plays in this paper. The country serves as an illustrative case, one Global South context whose language history and institutions give the framework concrete detail. The conceptual claims themselves draw on the wider international literature on EMI, Global Englishes (GE), multilingual pedagogy, and disciplinary communication. The framework is meant to travel to other multilingual Global South settings where post-colonial language hierarchies persist and EMI has grown faster than teacher preparation. In many of these settings, classrooms are multilingual while institutional policy still treats them as monolingual (Dang et al., 2023; Sah, 2022). Teachers there, like many in Tunisia, often learned their discipline in another language, so subject expertise alone is probably not enough. They must explain difficult concepts in a language that was not the main medium of their own academic socialization, nor that of their students.

Inside the EMI classroom, this layered history shows up in everyday talk. Interaction commonly moves across languages, and translation, code-switching, and translanguaging help with explanation and participation. Content teachers in Tunisia combine Arabic (Tunisian Arabic), French, and English as they work through disciplinary content with students (Abdeljaoued, 2023). The picture is further clouded by institutional policy and professional development, where these practices remain marginal and the focus is still on language proficiency or generic pedagogical skills, with far

less attention to disciplinary discourse and language ideologies (Lasagabaster & Fernández-Costales, 2025; Sah, 2022). Content teachers are thus often left to find their way through personal experience. It is my contention in this paper that existing approaches fall short precisely because they treat language proficiency, generic pedagogy, and disciplinary content separately.

GE, in my view, offers a useful way back into these debates. It treats English as a diverse, situated resource, shaped by the communities that use it and the places where it circulates. Seen this way, intelligibility, communicative effectiveness, and linguistic plurality count for more than conformity to any single standard (Galloway, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Most GE research, however, has dealt with ideology and identity and has had relatively little to say about how teachers should be prepared (Rose et al., 2022; Sah, 2022). Before going further, two terms need defining. In this paper, “multilingual pedagogy” is understood as the umbrella term for legitimizing and using students’ full linguistic repertoires in disciplinary learning. “Translanguaging pedagogy”, on the other hand, is narrower and refers to the planned, teacher-initiated use of several languages to scaffold meaning-making and disciplinary access (Liao, Fang & Zhang, 2025; Neufeld et al., 2025).

In this paper, EMI is treated as a process through which disciplinary knowledge is communicated, interpreted, and negotiated across linguistic resources. Such a view calls for a richer account of teacher preparation than the field has so far offered. My argument develops in three steps. I first examine how EMI research has framed classroom challenges, with particular attention to the Global South and Tunisia. I then draw on GE and multilingual pedagogy to reframe these challenges conceptually. Finally, I combine the strands in a framework grounded in disciplinary communication, intelligibility, and context-responsive practice. This paper is guided by two questions. The first asks what forms of preparation genuinely equip EMI content teachers for the communicative, disciplinary, and multilingual demands of higher education in contexts such as Tunisia. The second asks how insights from Global Englishes, multilingual pedagogy, and ESP/EAP scholarship, productive but still largely disconnected, might be brought into a coherent framework for content teacher training.

Literature Review

For a long time, the difficulties of EMI classrooms were put down mainly to content teachers’ limited English. Although this explanation has some merit, it warrants closer scrutiny. What content teachers actually do is primarily disciplinary. They coordinate explanation and conceptual mediation under cognitively demanding conditions (Kim et al., 2017; Richards & Pun, 2022). They translate disciplinary knowledge into accessible discourse (Ismailov, 2024) and handle the epistemic complexity of teaching a subject in an additional language (Wu & Richards, 2026). Despite the demands of this work, existing preparation remains fragmented and seems to fall short. Provision tends to consist of discrete workshops that do not integrate language, pedagogy, and disciplinary communication (Chen & Peng, 2019; Deroey, 2023). In addition, it reproduces a standardized view of English that lacks the flexibility disciplinary variation requires.

EMI also raises questions of professional identity and language ideology that bear directly on teacher preparation. Teaching through English affects content teachers’ sense of authority and how they are positioned in classroom interaction (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; Henry, 2017). These experiences are measured against ideological assumptions that still tie legitimacy to native-speaker standards (De Costa et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2025). Importantly, these assumptions lack empirical support, yet they remain pervasive in institutions. In practice, EMI classrooms already contest monolingual norms, since teachers and students routinely draw on diverse linguistic resources for explanation, participation, and comprehension (García & Wei, 2014; Li, 2018). It must be

remembered, of course, that language can never be ideologically neutral, and these ideological dimensions have direct consequences for teaching. Where native-speaker norms act as the implicit yardstick for teachers and students, content teachers whose English departs from these norms may feel their authority diminished, and students who use multilingual resources may be seen as deficient when they are in fact resourceful. Critical language awareness (CLA) addresses this dynamic. It helps teachers notice the ideological assumptions built into language use and policy, and question them where they shape assessment (Fairclough, 1992; Hawkins & Norton, 2009). In EMI, this means seeing how dominant ideologies decide what counts as legitimate English and who is heard as a competent speaker. Such judgments, in turn, affect who participates and how much students learn. Without this awareness, content teachers are poorly placed to question monolingual norms, especially where linguistic hierarchies have real consequences for access and belonging. For this reason, CLA must be part of any framework for EMI content teacher education that takes the interplay of language, power, and disciplinary learning seriously.

Similar reasoning applies to assessment. If dominant language ideologies privilege standardized English, assessment becomes one of the most consequential sites where these hierarchies are reproduced. Research on EMI evaluation consistently shows that assessment criteria often conflate linguistic accuracy with disciplinary understanding, which disadvantages students who command the content but do not follow native-speaker-oriented conventions (Dafouz & Smit, 2020; Wen & Fang, 2026). The problem is well documented, yet teacher education frameworks have done little to theorize it, and content teachers are seldom prepared to design or apply criteria that separate linguistic form from disciplinary meaning. This gap provides the rationale for assessment reorientation as the fifth dimension of the framework. Once CLA shows that existing evaluation practices rest on ideological assumptions about language legitimacy, the principled response is to redesign them around intelligibility and disciplinary understanding. Assessment reorientation can thus be seen as the institutional counterpart of the reflexive awareness that CLA develops.

GE changes what counts as competent English use. Diversity, intelligibility, and communicative effectiveness matter more here than any single standard (Galloway, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2019). For EMI this is no small point, since teachers' authority has often been judged, quietly, against native-speaker norms that neither they nor their students live by. In recent years GE has also moved closer to work on English as a lingua franca (ELF) and on translanguaging, and each brings something of its own. ELF research looks at how multilingual speakers negotiate meaning in fluid, context-bound ways, while translanguaging scholarship is interested in the whole repertoire speakers draw on in interaction (Baker, Fang, & Gimenez, 2026). Yet these ideas have rarely found their way into the design of content teacher preparation, which is surprising given how closely they match what happens in multilingual classrooms.

The state of EMI teacher education has been mapped in two recent reviews, which also help to position the framework proposed here. In their systematic review of EMI language teacher education, Lasagabaster and Fernández-Costales (2025) identify persistent fragmentation, with programs typically addressing language proficiency, generic pedagogy, or disciplinary content separately and rarely combining the three coherently. Wang, Yuan, and De Costa (2025), who reviewed EMI teacher development between 2018 and 2022, likewise found that self-driven, agentic practice was the most neglected pathway in research, attracting markedly less attention than formal training or teacher collaboration. Both reviews suggest that the field still lacks an integrated, theoretically grounded model linking the communicative demands of disciplinary teaching with the multilingual realities of EMI classrooms.

Methodology

This study uses a theory-driven qualitative synthesis to develop a conceptual framework for EMI content teacher training in multilingual higher education. Tunisia serves as one illustrative Global South case among several referred to throughout. The aim is a selective, systematic reorganization of strands of scholarship into a structure that can support pedagogical thinking and design. The approach follows the configurative logic of interpretive reviews (Gough, Thomas, & Oliver, 2012; Snyder, 2019). In such reviews, developing concepts and clarifying the relationships between them matter more than aggregating evidence or synthesizing it statistically. The sources reviewed are therefore treated as conceptual resources to be reassembled, and each strand is read for what it reveals in relation to the others. The corpus draws on three related areas of research. These include EMI studies of classroom practice and institutional implementation, Global Englishes research on linguistic variation and communicative norms, and ESP/EAP studies of disciplinary discourse and knowledge construction (Hyland, 2009). Although analytically distinct, the strands were read relationally to trace how disciplinary communication is shaped in multilingual educational environments. Sources were selected purposively and iteratively on the basis of conceptual relevance. Priority went to studies examining classroom interaction, content teacher experience, multilingual practice, and language ideology, particularly work situated in Global South contexts and, where available, in Tunisia. Selection proceeded through iterative comparison, so that recurring points of convergence could emerge gradually from the material. Table 1 below summarizes the search and selection process.

Table 1
Literature Search and Selection Procedures

Component	Description
Databases searched	Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar
Search period	January–March 2026
Core search terms	"English-medium instruction", "EMI teacher education", "EMI lecturer/ content teacher development", "Global Englishes", "English as a Lingua Franca", "World Englishes", "multilingual pedagogy", "translanguaging", "ESP", "EAP", "disciplinary discourse", "higher education", and "Global South"
Additional search strategy	Backward and forward citation tracking of influential publications
Inclusion criteria	Higher education focus; relevance to EMI, Global Englishes, multilingual pedagogy, ESP/EAP, disciplinary communication, teacher development, assessment, or language ideology; studies on translanguaging pedagogy and pedagogical translanguaging in EMI contexts were explicitly included given the centrality of this concept to the framework
Exclusion criteria	Primary/secondary education studies; studies unrelated to EMI or disciplinary communication; publications lacking conceptual relevance to framework development
Publication types	Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, edited volumes, book chapters, and influential policy reports
Publication period	Primarily 2005–2025, supplemented by seminal earlier works
Initial records identified	214
Records retained for full analysis	68
Basis for retention	Conceptual relevance, theoretical contribution, and explanatory value

The analysis moved through four interpretive stages. Each stage refines dispersed work toward a coherent pedagogical structure. In practice, the stages were recursive and the corpus was often revisited as emerging interpretations took shape and needed revision. Table 2 maps the stages and their analytical logic. Movement from Stage 1 to Stage 4 was driven by conceptual mapping. The recurring tensions identified in EMI research were mapped onto theoretical constructs from GE and multilingual pedagogy and then translated, through ESP/EAP perspectives, into pedagogically actionable dimensions. The five dimensions of the framework emerged from cross-textual

comparison. They were not set in advance; this process is consistent with the configurative logic of interpretive synthesis (Gough, Thomas, & Oliver, 2012).

Table 2
Analytical Stages in Conceptual Synthesis and Model Development

Stage	Analytical focus	Key concepts	Outcome
Stage 1. Problem Identification	Identifying recurring challenges in EMI implementation	Pedagogical misalignment; linguistic constraints; language ideology	Thematic categorization of EMI challenges
Stage 2. Conceptual Mapping	Mapping EMI challenges onto Global Englishes and multilingual pedagogy	Intelligibility; variability; translanguaging; multilingual repertoires	Reframing EMI as multilingual disciplinary communication
Stage 3. Pedagogical Translation	Translating conceptual insights through ESP/EAP perspectives	Genre; disciplinary discourse; knowledge mediation	Operationalization into discipline-sensitive teaching practices
Stage 4. Model Construction	Synthesizing across EMI, GE, and ESP/EAP domains	content teacher competencies; training components; assessment reorientation	Development of an integrated EMI teacher education framework

Table 3 shows which literature strands produced which dimensions, what each contributed analytically, and how this connects to training practice. In simpler terms, while Table 2 maps the process, Table 3 maps the product. The iterative comparison in Stage 4 drew on constant comparative logic by reading across sources to identify points of theoretical convergence and tension. Finally, the systematic reviews of translanguaging pedagogy in EMI (Liao et al., 2025; Neufeld et al., 2025) offered methodological guidance on how translanguaging scholarship has been assembled and evaluated in this field.

Table 3
From Literature Strands to Framework Dimensions

Literature strand	Representative sources	Key analytical insight	Framework dimension(s) generated	Training implication
EMI classroom practice and institutional implementation	Deroey (2023); Richards & Pun (2022); Chen & Peng (2019); Lasagabaster & Fernández-Costales (2025); Wang et al. (2025)	The primary challenge is disciplinary and communicative, not linguistic. Existing preparation is fragmented: language, pedagogy, and disciplinary knowledge are addressed in isolation. Teacher identity is shaped by ideological assumptions that deficit-frame non-native-speaker teachers.	Disciplinary Communication; Critical Language Awareness	Genre-based and discipline-specific training; workshops on language ideology in EMI
Global Englishes and ELF scholarship	Galloway (2013); Rose & Galloway (2019); Baker, Fang & Gimenez (2026); Sah (2022); Rose et al. (2022)	English is a variable communicative resource; communicative success is measured by intelligibility, not native-speaker conformity. GE, ELF, and translanguaging are complementary orientations that challenge monolingual norms and foreground meaning-making across diverse repertoires.	Intelligibility-Oriented Communication (overarching theoretical lens informing all five dimensions)	ELF-informed pedagogical strategies; exposure to diverse English varieties; reformulation tasks

Multilingual pedagogy and translanguaging pedagogy	García & Wei (2014); Li (2018); Liao, Fang & Zhang (2025); Neufeld et al. (2025); Wen & Fang (2026)	Multilingual repertoires are constitutive of disciplinary meaning-making. Translanguaging pedagogy (the planned, teacher-initiated orchestration of several languages) can support comprehension, participation, and disciplinary access in ways monolingual delivery cannot.	Multilingual Pedagogy (incl. Translanguaging Pedagogy)	Bilingual task design; L1-supported discussion activities; cross-linguistic scaffolding
Language ideology, identity, and critical language awareness	Fairclough (1992); De Costa et al. (2016); Wang et al. (2025); Hawkins & Norton (2009); Doiz & Lasagabaster (2018)	Ideological assumptions about legitimate English shape authority, participation, and evaluation in EMI classrooms. Teachers can hardly respond to these conditions unless they are able to recognize them. CLA is thus a professional necessity.	Critical Language Awareness	Critical reflection on language norms; analysis of institutional language policy; discussion of classroom power dynamics
ESP/EAP: disciplinary discourse, genre, and assessment	Hyland (2009); Airey (2016); Dafouz & Smit (2020); Costa & Mastellotto (2022); Jiang & Zhang (2019)	Academic knowledge is organized through field-specific genres, argumentation structures, and discourse conventions. Teaching through English means rendering these visible and pedagogically accessible. Assessment that privileges linguistic accuracy over disciplinary understanding reproduces the same ideological hierarchies that CLA challenges.	Disciplinary Communication; Assessment Reorientation	Genre analysis and text modeling; intelligibility-focused rubric design; feedback workshops; discipline-specific assessment criteria

Toward a GE-Informed Training Framework

EMI teaching requires more than explaining subject content in English; it also involves negotiating disciplinary expectations, linguistic diversity, and the language norms that shape classroom interaction. A content teacher's daily classroom decisions reflect the close relationship between language, knowledge, and power. Yet these three are rarely theorized in relation to one another. Disciplinary communication, multilingual practice, and language ideology are therefore treated as interdependent conditions that shape one another in every lesson. At its core, EMI is understood as disciplinary communication, that is, engagement with the genres, reasoning structures, and epistemic conventions through which knowledge is produced and organized in specific fields (Hyland, 2009). Hence, the main pedagogical challenge is to make disciplinary meaning genuinely accessible across diverse repertoires.

Viewed through the prism of GE, English is a variable communicative resource (Galloway, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Therefore, communicative effectiveness in EMI classrooms depends on intelligibility and on the capacity to adapt language to context, with meaning emerging through interaction. Multilingualism, in this view, is simply a given and no longer a problem to be managed. Research on translanguaging shows that content teachers and students routinely mobilize multiple linguistic resources to construct understanding and sustain participation (García & Wei, 2014; Li,

2018), and these practices are integral to disciplinary learning. I therefore propose the Global Englishes-informed Multilingual (GEM) Framework. It identifies five interconnected dimensions that inform content teacher development, classroom practice, and assessment design, and Table 4 presents them as an integrated model.

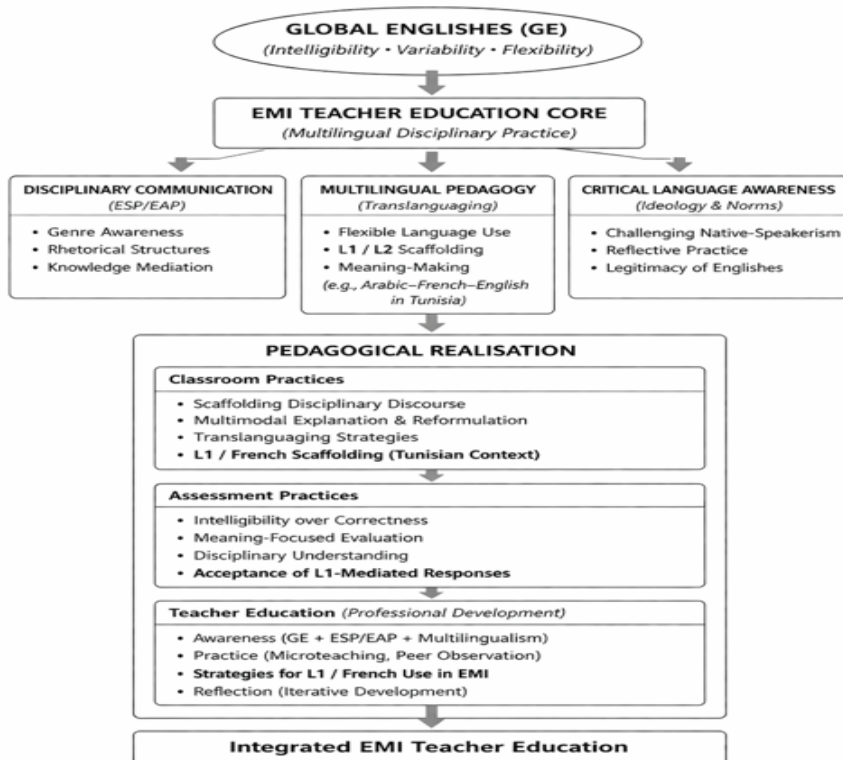
Table 4
The Five-Dimension GEM Framework

Dimension	Focus	Content teacher competencies	Pedagogical practices	Training components
Disciplinary Communication (ESP/EAP)	Disciplinary discourse	Genre awareness; discourse competence	Scaffolding; terminology explanation; modeling academic reasoning	Genre-based and discipline-specific training
Intelligibility-Oriented Communication	Intelligibility and communicative effectiveness	Adaptability; audience awareness	Reformulation; multimodal explanation; negotiation of meaning	ELF-informed pedagogical strategies
Multilingual Pedagogy (incl. Translanguaging Pedagogy)	Linguistic repertoire use	Strategic deployment of multilingual resources	Translanguaging practices; bilingual scaffolding; cross-linguistic mediation	Translanguaging-informed instruction
Critical Language Awareness	Language ideology and norms	Reflexive awareness of linguistic hierarchies	Critical reflection; flexible language practices	Workshops on language ideology in EMI contexts
Assessment Reorientation	Meaning-focused evaluation	Evaluation of content understanding and communicative clarity	Intelligibility-oriented assessment; content-driven assessment	Redesign of assessment criteria and rubrics

Although the five dimensions are analytically distinct, their full significance only becomes clear when we consider how they interact. Disciplinary communication gives the framework its structure, since knowledge in any field is organized through particular genres and ways of reasoning. GE then sets shared understanding as the measure of success. To reach it, teachers and students can draw on every language they share, which is where multilingual pedagogy comes in, while critical language awareness keeps the ideological stakes in view. Assessment comes last, because evaluation is where all of these commitments are either honored or quietly undone. Figure 1 represents this configuration, with multilingual disciplinary communication as the organizing axis through which the dimensions are enacted. One point should be stated explicitly. Global Englishes works as the overarching disposition that gives the whole framework its coherence. Because English is understood as a variable, contextually shaped resource, disciplinary communication has to be scaffolded for intelligibility, and multilingual repertoires have pedagogical legitimacy in their own right. Likewise, critical language awareness becomes a professional necessity, and assessment must be redirected toward disciplinary meaning. Each dimension, in short, expresses the same GE-informed commitment in a different domain of classroom life.

Figure 1

GEM Framework Configuration



Reframing Content Teacher Competence

In the framework, content teacher competence is defined as the capacity to support disciplinary learning across heterogeneous linguistic repertoires. This involves more than communicating content to students with varying levels of English. It means doing so in ways that remain intelligible and inclusive and that are epistemically honest about how meaning is made in a field. From a GE perspective, this calls for communicative adaptability and a willingness to treat successful communication as the governing criterion (Seidhofer, 2011). In practice, content teachers constantly adjust their discourse, reformulating explanations and approaching key concepts from different angles. These moves are arguably the core work of effective EMI teaching.

ESP and EAP pedagogy also shows that this mediation is shaped by disciplinary conventions. Academic knowledge is communicated through field-specific patterns of argumentation, evidence use, and conceptual organization, and these patterns influence how content teachers anticipate difficulties and support learning (Wu & Richards, 2026). Hence, teaching through English involves more than explaining content. It also means making visible and accessible the genre conventions, discourse structures, and epistemic practices through which knowledge in a given field is constructed, validated, and communicated. In multilingual classrooms, In multilingual classrooms,

this calls for flexibility. Teachers use whatever helps students follow, whether a gesture, a diagram, or a word in French. The framework regards these practices as constitutive of EMI pedagogy. Competence, in this sense, means bringing subject expertise and communicative flexibility to bear on the same moment of teaching.

Multilingual Pedagogy and Assessment

In many higher education settings, multilingualism is a routine feature of EMI classrooms. In Tunisia, French, English, and, to a lesser extent, Tunisian Arabic coexist in the same EMI environment, and classroom interaction frequently moves across these resources. Students and content teachers switch languages to explain a concept or clear up a misunderstanding, and often simply to keep the discussion going. These practices matter most when disciplinary content is abstract, conceptually dense, or technically demanding. A brief explanation in Arabic or French may help students grasp an unfamiliar concept and prepare them for the English-medium discussion that follows (see Abdeljaoued, 2023). Group discussion often follows a similar pattern, as ideas are first explored in shared languages and then reformulated and refined in English. Understanding thus develops through interaction across linguistic resources, with each language contributing to explanation, interpretation, and participation. In short, classroom communication is shaped by the repertoire that students and content teachers mobilize in response to particular learning needs and pedagogical aims.

It is in assessment that these classroom realities collide most visibly with institutional expectations. In many EMI contexts, evaluation still privileges standardized forms of English and so reproduces the very native-speaker norm that GE and multilingual pedagogy challenge elsewhere (Dafouz & Smit, 2020). Students who command the disciplinary content but not standardized linguistic conventions are penalized for something the assessment is not supposed to measure. Shifting evaluation toward what actually matters (conceptual understanding, quality of argumentation, and the ability to communicate disciplinary knowledge intelligibly) requires deliberate redesign. Linguistic accuracy still counts, entering the rubric as one contributor to intelligibility.

Putting these principles into practice means changing how assessment tasks and rubrics are designed. A rubric informed by this framework would organize criteria around three dimensions. Disciplinary understanding is evaluated by the accuracy of conceptual explanation. Communicative intelligibility is judged by whether meaning is recoverable and clearly conveyed. Argumentation quality concerns how effectively evidence is marshaled, whatever linguistic forms are used. Such a rubric separates disciplinary competence from linguistic conformity. Importantly, this reorientation keeps the standard high and redirects it toward what disciplinary communication actually requires. Institutional constraints, including standardized testing and accreditation frameworks, certainly complicate such redesign, and negotiating them can itself become a productive focus for professional development. Table 5 gives the idea concrete form with a sample rubric for an oral or written disciplinary task, whose three criteria can be adapted across disciplines and task types.

Table 5
Sample Assessment Rubric

Criterion	Excellent (4)	Adequate (3)	Developing (2)	Framework dimension
Disciplinary Understanding	Concepts are explained accurately and completely; key relationships within the field are correctly identified and integrated	Core concepts are present and mostly accurate; some gaps or imprecision in disciplinary reasoning	Conceptual understanding is partial or contains significant errors; disciplinary relationships are unclear or missing	Disciplinary Communication (ESP/EAP)
Communicative Intelligibility	Intended meaning is consistently recoverable; audience uptake is not impeded by linguistic form; communication is effective across diverse interlocutors	Most meaning is recoverable; occasional lapses in clarity that require inference but do not obstruct overall comprehension	Meaning is frequently unclear or ambiguous; significant inferential effort required; communication impedes disciplinary understanding	Intelligibility-Oriented Communication
Argumentation Quality	Evidence is well marshaled and reasoning is clearly structured; claims and evidence are explicitly connected; field-appropriate conventions are followed	Argument is present but inconsistently developed; connections between evidence and claims are sometimes implicit or underdeveloped	Little evidence of structured argument; reasoning is unclear, absent, or unsupported by relevant disciplinary evidence	Assessment Reorientation

Illustrative Classroom Vignette

The vignette below is constructed, as no original classroom data were collected for this study. Its details draw on documented patterns of multilingual practice in Tunisian EMI classrooms, in particular the fluid movement across Arabic, French, and English in disciplinary explanation and peer negotiation (Abdeljaoued, 2023), and on broader EMI findings from comparable Global South contexts discussed in the preceding sections. The episode takes place in a second-year undergraduate computer engineering class. The students are Arabic–French bilinguals with intermediate English, and their task is to identify software bugs and write structured bug reports. The content teacher begins by projecting a short program containing deliberate errors and framing the task in English. When the first technical terms cause hesitation, she gives a brief clarification in French, reformulates key concepts in simplified English, and uses visual diagrams to anchor interpretation. Students then work in small groups. Their discussion unfolds across Tunisian Arabic, French, and English as they test interpretations and work toward solutions, while the content teacher circulates, rephrasing in English where needed and intervening mainly on conceptual grounds.

In the reporting phase, each group presents its findings in English. The linguistic forms vary a good deal, but the explanations consistently arrive at an accurate identification of the underlying errors and their consequences. The content teacher consolidates key points, affirms valid reasoning whatever its linguistic form, and briefly models how these observations could be organized into a formal bug report. Table 6 traces this sequence of moves.

Table 6
EMI Lesson Sequence

Step	Pedagogical focus	Teacher talk	Framework dimension
Step 1 Task framing	Introducing disciplinary genre bug report	"Today we learn how to report a bug. A bug report has three parts: problem, steps, expected result."	ESP / EAP Disciplinary genre awareness
Step 2 Genre modeling	Structuring technical explanation	"Problem: login button does not work. Steps: click login, enter password, nothing happens. Result: user should access account."	Disciplinary comm. Genre modeling
Step 3 Bug identification	Code-based reasoning	"What is the problem here? We used one equal sign. That is wrong. We need two."	Disciplinary comm. Code reasoning
Step 4 Reformulation	Clarity and intelligibility	"So the bug is in the condition. The condition is not correct."	Global Englishes Intelligibility orientation
Step 5 Translanguaging	Multilingual explanation for comprehension	في عوض =المشكل في الشرط استعملنا == Le problème est dans la condition, on a mis = au lieu de == "The problem is in the condition. We used one equals instead of two."	Multilingual pedagogy Translanguaging
Step 6 Guided production	Structured student output	"Write a bug report: problem, steps, expected result."	ESP / EAP Scaffolding disciplinary production
Step 7 Feedback	Meaning-focused evaluation	"Your idea is clear. Small mistakes are okay if we understand."	Assessment reorientation Intelligibility over correctness

Table 6 captures a dynamic configuration in which disciplinary reasoning is gradually assembled as explanation, peer negotiation, and guided clarification overlap and fold back on one another. Within this dynamic, movement across Arabic, French, and English is part of the cognitive work of problem-solving itself. This challenges deficit framings of multilingual practice and suggests that translanguaging is epistemically functional. Assessment, too, is visible in the teacher's final move (Step 7). It emerges within the interaction itself and gives priority to the coherence of technical reasoning.

What the vignette shows, and what Table 6 flattens into a sequence, is that the five dimensions (disciplinary genre scaffolding, intelligibility-oriented communication, multilingual pedagogy, critical awareness of linguistic norms, and evaluative judgment) do not come into play one after another. All five are present in every move the teacher makes, and each modulates the others. A table cannot fully capture this live, recursive quality of teaching. A single student utterance may require the teacher to recalibrate genre scaffolding, adjust her intelligibility strategy, and take a considered evaluative stance all at once. Conceptual familiarity with the five dimensions is therefore only a starting point. Content teachers also need structured opportunities to practice working with them under conditions close to those of real EMI classrooms, where comprehension can shift mid-explanation and a reasoning error calls for both disciplinary correction and pedagogical care. The framework maps the terrain that such fluency must cover, but it cannot by itself build that fluency.

Implications for Content Teacher Training

The vignette reflects a wider pattern. In many Global South EMI settings, content teachers manage classroom complexity largely through personal experience, accumulated over years of teaching without preparation for these conditions (Chen & Peng, 2019). This knowledge is uneven and lacks a coherent pedagogical architecture. EMI teaching is demanding precisely because these dimensions

are always in play at the same time, and professional development that treats them separately will inevitably leave gaps for practitioners to fill alone. Table 7 outlines how the five dimensions might be organized into training modules adapted to institutional and disciplinary contexts.

Table 7
Content Teacher Training Modules (Illustrative Structure)

Training area	Focus	Core content	Illustrative activities
Intelligibility in EMI Global Englishes	Communication beyond native-speaker norms	Global Englishes perspectives on variation and intelligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformulation tasks • Exposure to diverse English varieties
Multilingual Pedagogy Translanguaging	Use of linguistic repertoires	Translanguaging; scaffolding strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual task design • L1-supported discussion activities
Disciplinary Communication ESP / EAP	Academic subject discourse	Genre structures; field-specific conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text analysis • Disciplinary modeling exercises
Critical Language Awareness Language Ideology	Recognizing and challenging linguistic hierarchies in EMI classrooms	Language ideology; native-speaker norms; linguistic legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reflection tasks • Case analysis of language ideology in practice
Assessment Reorientation Evaluation	Evaluation of learning in EMI	Meaning-focused assessment; intelligibility-oriented criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubric development • Feedback design workshops

Table 7 gives shape to a framework that deliberately departs from correction-centered instruction and treats disciplinary meaning-making as its organizing purpose. Intelligibility serves as a practical standard for participation. Multilingual resources, likewise, enter instructional design as principled pedagogical tools. Attention to disciplinary discourse keeps the whole enterprise anchored in what distinguishes one field from another, namely its epistemic conventions, genres, and standards of evidence. Generic language instruction, which too often passes for EMI teacher preparation, cannot do this. Although developed with Tunisia in mind, the framework is meant to be adapted to settings that share its structural conditions. Its claim is one of principled transferability.

Discussion

EMI, I would suggest, is best understood as situated pedagogical work. Disciplinary communication unfolds through multilingual interaction, under conditions shaped by language ideology, institutional expectations, and the practical demands of making knowledge accessible to students with diverse educational and linguistic histories. This accords with recent calls to move beyond descriptive accounts of EMI in Global South higher education toward analyses of how knowledge is produced, negotiated, and evaluated in multilingual disciplinary settings (Sah, 2022; Curle et al., 2024). It is precisely this communicative and epistemic work that the proposed framework aims to support.

One major strand of EMI research sees classroom difficulties as a product of teachers' limited English proficiency. The demands examined in this paper suggest a different picture. They vary across disciplines, from procedural reasoning in engineering to argument development in the social sciences and technical precision in the natural sciences, and they bear only a loose relationship to what conventional proficiency measures capture. Seen through GE, the central question is whether disciplinary ideas are communicated clearly enough to be understood, discussed, and extended (Galloway, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2019).

Translanguaging research shows that multilingual repertoires support work on conceptually demanding material (García & Wei, 2014; Li, 2018), and yet many institutions still prescribe English-only instruction. The framework does not dissolve this tension, and one of its own dimensions arguably sharpens it. Students who explore a concept in Arabic or French still have to show their understanding in English when they are assessed, often in written genres with strict conventions. A teacher who welcomes translanguaging during the lesson must therefore also decide when, and how, students move toward English-medium disciplinary production. In the vignette, this move happens at Step 6, where the bug report is written in English. I would argue that this decision about timing is where multilingual pedagogy, disciplinary communication, and assessment meet most directly, and it is also where teachers receive the least guidance.

Within the framework, GE and translanguaging-informed pedagogy complement each other. GE challenges the authority of native-speaker norms and foregrounds the legitimacy of diverse English practices. Translanguaging-informed pedagogy, for its part, foregrounds the strategic use of multilingual repertoires to support disciplinary understanding and participation. GE thus provides the overarching theoretical orientation, and translanguaging pedagogy is best seen as one of its concrete instructional expressions. If English is a variable, contextually shaped resource, then fluid movement between English and other languages in disciplinary interaction can arguably be seen as a fuller realization of EMI practice.

In Tunisia, these tensions are, indeed, an integral part of everyday teaching experience. In local EMI contexts, Tunisian Arabic, French, and English intersect across educational trajectories shaped by a long history of inconsistent language policy. Content teachers move between these languages as they teach. French is often used for instructions and explanations, and Tunisian Arabic is the fallback when students struggle with a difficult concept, as well as a way to check understanding. English is usually needed for documentation and disciplinary terminology. The result is a clear case of translanguaging. These choices reflect the linguistic resources available to teachers and the demands placed on them. Tunisia shows, in concentrated form, conditions found in higher education across much of the Global South. Language use in Tunisian classrooms has been documented (Abdeljaoued, 2023), but little is known about how movement between languages shapes the teaching and understanding of disciplinary knowledge. EMI research has given this question little attention, and Tunisia is a good place to begin, since teachers and students rely on multilingual practices while institutions increasingly aim to teach through English.

It is worthwhile to stress that training programs that divide language, pedagogy, and disciplinary communication into separate domains (Dang et al., 2023; Deroey, 2023) sit uneasily with this reality. In the classroom, decisions about which language to use, how to explain a concept, and how to evaluate understanding are made in the same moment. Competence in EMI teaching may therefore depend largely on judgment in such moments, that is, on knowing which consideration should take priority for a given student, task, and discipline. Training could reflect this by working with recorded classroom episodes in which teachers discuss what they would do and why. Fragmentation has also shaped how content teacher expertise is understood, too often through a deficit lens focused on what teachers lack. Critical language awareness deserves particular attention in this respect. It is probably the least visible dimension in conventional EMI teacher development programs, yet it may well be the most consequential for how the other four are enacted. CLA concerns the capacity to see how language ideologies, that is, assumptions about which varieties of English carry authority and how linguistic legitimacy is distributed, shape classroom life in ways teachers often do not perceive as ideological, because they are embedded within institutional logics and so appear natural. Content teachers who develop this capacity are better placed to notice how linguistic hierarchies operate in their classrooms and to respond through deliberate choices, for example by validating translanguaging practices.

Pedagogical development alone cannot resolve the broader structural conditions that shape EMI. Institutional policy, internationalization agendas, and language hierarchies continue to shape how EMI is implemented and experienced (Curle et al., 2024), and teacher education can do little to change them. What a pedagogical framework can offer is a way of interpreting and navigating these conditions while staying attentive to the communicative and disciplinary demands of classroom practice. The framework, as presented here, is conceptual. It offers an interpretive structure for thinking about EMI teacher education and has not yet been validated in practice. Future research will need to examine how the five dimensions operate when teachers actually work with them. It should ask whether and under what conditions they cohere as intended, which institutional or disciplinary pressures reshape them, and whether they illuminate content teachers' and students' experiences as the framework predicts. The most pressing empirical questions concern Tunisia, the illustrative case discussed throughout this paper. How do content teachers in Tunisian EMI classrooms take up or contest GE-informed principles? In which disciplines does translanguaging pedagogy most visibly support students' access to disciplinary knowledge? And what would it mean, institutionally and practically, to implement the kind of assessment reorientation proposed here? These questions mark the boundary between what the present study can claim and what still needs to be established through classroom research, teacher education programs, and sustained engagement with the institutional conditions that will either enable or constrain such work.

Conclusion

It is perhaps fair to conclude that the expansion of English-medium instruction across the Global South has placed new and additional demands on content teachers who are trained as disciplinary specialists. Yet, they find themselves in a situation where they are increasingly expected to teach through English in multilingual environments for which they have received no preparation. EMI now occupies a prominent place in institutional strategies; the expectations placed on content teachers continue to outpace the support provided through teacher education. The GEM Framework proposed here responds to that gap by bringing language, pedagogy, and disciplinary communication together as interdependent dimensions of the same pedagogical reality. From this perspective, learning in EMI is a process through which disciplinary knowledge is explained, negotiated, and made accessible across multilingual resources. Content teachers are now required to exercise informed pedagogical judgment under conditions of communicative complexity.

More importantly, the suggested model's implications for professional development follow directly. Language, pedagogy, and disciplinary communication should go hand and hand; they cannot realistically be addressed as separate concerns when teachers have to deal with all three in the same classroom. What is needed instead is a principled framework that holds these dimensions together while drawing attention to the institutional conditions that shape what counts as competent EMI teaching. These include the language ideologies embedded in assessment practices, the monolingual assumptions underpinning institutional policies, and the persistent mismatch between what content teachers are expected to accomplish and the preparation they receive.

Tunisia gives the GEM Framework its concrete detail. Content teachers here were trained in French and are now expected to teach in English, in a country where language choices have long carried historical weight. Yet the framework is designed for transfer, and Tunisia is only one of the Global South contexts it speaks to. The structural conditions Tunisia embodies, multilingual educational ecologies, post-colonial language hierarchies, and the rapid expansion of EMI without commensurate investment in teacher preparation, are documented across sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and Latin America (Sah, 2022).

Global Englishes remains the theoretical commitment behind all five dimensions, which make one argument across different areas of classroom life. The framework offers a way of bringing EMI teacher education closer to the multilingual reality of higher education, a reality that institutional policy has often underestimated. Its main contribution is to place the communicative work of disciplinary teaching at the heart of teacher preparation. Too often this work is considered only after questions of language proficiency have been settled, as if explaining a concept to a multilingual class were a matter of English alone. Teachers in Tunisia and elsewhere already know otherwise, and they deserve preparation that starts from what they actually do. The GEM Framework is offered as a step in that direction, and its value will ultimately depend on how it is tested and adapted in practice.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, I used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to improve the English of parts of the text. The ideas, the GEM Framework, the analysis, and the arguments presented are my own. I reviewed and edited all AI-assisted text and I take full responsibility for the content of this article.

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Marii Abdeljaoued, PhD, is Assistant Professor of English Linguistics at the Higher Institute of Languages of Nabeul, University of Carthage, Tunisia, and is affiliated with the Laboratory of Approaches to Discourse, University of Sfax. His research explores the global dynamics of English in the MENA region, with interests in language policy, rhetoric, English-medium instruction, and the evolution of academic discourse. His work has appeared in journals such as *World Englishes*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, and *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*.