Words to Explain Words: How Teachers Explain Second Language Vocabulary

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Abstract
Vocabulary plays one of the most crucial roles in language competence and learning, and has gained considerable attention in second language acquisition research and education. However, the largely learner-centered research has focused directly on learner thoughts, behaviors and development, paying little attention to the role of teachers' vocabulary explanations and their effects on learner outcome.
In this case study of two English Medium Instruction (EMI) professors at a Japanese university, teacher explanations and elaborations of vocabulary were investigated. Three consecutive lectures and interviews with each professor were recorded and transcribed for analysis. This study described the what, when, why, and how of teacher vocabulary explanations. The primary focus of the EMI classes was teaching content through English, making vocabulary explanations doubly important, as they potentially played two roles: clarifying word meaning and teaching content.
The results seemed to indicate a tight relationship between various contextual factors (i.e., student proficiencies and experiences, course aims, course content, teaching style) and approaches to vocabulary explanation. The EMI format in particular seemed to influence the explanatory behaviors, both linguistically and typologically. Vocabulary was most often explained in definitions or paraphrases in the second language English and treated as concepts directly related to the course content. The findings suggested the need for more research on teacher lexical explanation sensitive to teaching and learning contexts. The reflections presented in the interviews and the variety shown in teacher behavior supported the need for attention to vocabulary explanation in teacher training and curriculum-building.

Keywords: EMI, teaching, vocabulary, EFL, case study, explanations, elaborations

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Introduction

Globalization and language education. In response to globalization, educators have been grappling with the issue of how to efficiently induce or enhance language acquisition on a large scale. Fueled largely by the needs of second language (L2) education, research in second language acquisition (SLA) and applied linguistics has grown greatly as an academic discipline and an informant for policy-makers, teachers, and teacher trainers. Following trends in the research and in the socio-political needs of language learners, L2 education has undergone much development throughout the years. More recently, there has been a push for more focus on communicative skills to facilitate communication in heterogeneous first language (L1) situations (e.g., business, politics, travel) where English is used as a *lingua franca* (Nunan, 2003). This and other issues in language education, including time constraints and utility outside of the classroom, have led to a rise in teaching approaches such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English Medium Instruction (EMI), which take the main pedagogical focus away from technical language instruction and instead aim to develop language through studies in other subjects.

Meanwhile, within SLA, there has been a surge in research on vocabulary as a core element of language competence, performance, and development (Cook, 2016; Nation, 2013; Richards, 2015; Schmitt, 2014). However, despite the abundance of research on lexical acquisition, development, and instruction; vocabulary learning challenges, strategies, and compensation; and lexis itself, very little has been said about teachers' vocabulary explanations. This study explored L2 English-speaking teachers' explanations of unfamiliar or unknown English vocabulary to developing English language users in an EMI context.

A brief description of EMI. EMI has been defined rather vaguely in the research, and while the issue of defining it goes beyond the scope of this paper, it is nonetheless an integral part of this research. For the purposes of the present study, EMI will be defined as a pedagogical approach wherein students are taught a subject other than English language, using English as the primary language of instruction in a context where English is not the majority language (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018; Walkinshaw, Fenton-Smith, & Humphreys, 2017). In other words, developing English speakers are taught an academic subject (other than the English language itself), such as engineering or mathematics, using English as the language of instruction.

Thus far, as Kirkpatrick (2017) reported, EMI has been widely implemented across Asia without much consideration for the implications it may have on education. It has been widely accepted by policy-makers (Kirkpatrick, 2017), but there is some skepticism amongst students and teachers about its effectiveness and implementation (Dearden, 2015; Morizumi, 2015). Linguistic issues seem to be at the forefront of both teachers' and students' worries. Both have shown concern about how problems with language (e.g., a mismatch in English proficiency between teachers and students) could adversely affect content learning (Jensen, Denver, Mees, & Werther, 2013). Furthermore, many teachers are not trained to teach in English and have limited knowledge surrounding language learning and development (Dearden, 2015; Jensen et al., 2013; Werther, Denver, Jensen, & Mees, 2014). For teachers who specialize in subjects other than language, it is difficult to gauge the types of challenges students

may face linguistically when being taught through the medium of English. They oftentimes do not feel responsible for students' language development and thus tend to hold students responsible for coping with any linguistic barriers that they may encounter during the EMI courses (Lasagabaster, 2017).

Vocabulary's role in EMI. There is now a consensus within SLA that vocabulary is a key part of language. Wilkins (1972) noted that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, [but] without vocabulary *nothing* can be conveyed" (p. 111, emphasis in original). Indeed, grammar is important for speakers of any language at any level, but it is often observed that speakers who lack the grammatical systems in a language still manage to communicate to some extent with only vocabulary, even if it is strung together ungrammatically (Ellis, 1995, 1997). Especially recently, with English being used as the medium of communication between non-native English-speakers, much communication is being established without so-called perfect grammatical precision.

In SLA research and in language classrooms, vocabulary is thus being paid increasingly more attention. In the past few decades, vocabulary has been researched widely, but the majority of the research has focused on the learner. With the trend towards learner-centered approaches to teaching and research, the teachers' role in learners' vocabulary acquisition has been paid very little attention. In spite of it being such a natural part of teacher talk (Chaudron, 1982; Flowerdew, 1992) and in any form of interaction (Varonis & Gass, 1985), only a handful of studies have systematically attempted to address how, when, why, and what vocabulary was being explained by teachers.

With regard to EMI research, there is a great danger that teacher vocabulary explanations and vocabulary in general will be overlooked. With many EMI teachers making a conscious decision not to focus on language in their teaching, it is possible that vocabulary explanation will be intentionally avoided as part of an attempt not to "teach language." Meanwhile, vocabulary may be a great hurdle for many EMI students who, in theory, not only lack the content knowledge, but also the vocabulary needed to comprehend, describe, and convey that content; they can potentially encounter difficulties in understanding what is being said in the classroom. Thus, clarifying vocabulary's role in EMI and how it is currently being approached by EMI teachers can provide much-needed information for policy-makers and teachers to define the competences needed to teach through EMI.

The present research attempts to address the gap in the vocabulary literature within the context of current English language learning through observations of EMI teachers in Japan. The specific aim was to draw attention to this much-needed area of SLA research and provide a descriptive reference that could inform future research.

Methods

The research questions (RQs) explored in this case study were threefold:
1.   What types of vocabulary are explained?
2.   What types of vocabulary explanations are given?
3.   How often does codeswitching occur in vocabulary explanations?
In addition to the three RQs, the data was analyzed for other qualitative trends as well.

Participants. Two professors at a Japanese university volunteered to participate in this study. They will henceforth be referred to as Prof. T and Prof. M. Both were Japanese-English bilinguals with Doctorate degrees, extensive experience teaching at universities, and experience studying in higher education in an English-speaking country (the US and UK, respectively). Both also had backgrounds in Applied Linguistics and thus taught courses in this field. Prof. T taught a course on Second Language Acquisition and Prof. M taught a course on Teaching EFL to Young Learners.

Procedure. The main procedure for this study was observation of the professors' lectures for explanations of lexis. To supplement the data collected from the observations, a short interview was conducted to get a better sense of what decisions in vocabulary explanation were conscious and how the professors conceptualized their role in student vocabulary development.

Recorded Observations. During the month of May 2017, three consecutive lessons were observed for each professor. Each was 90 minutes long and took place once a week at the same time on two different weekdays. A video recording was taken for each class in order to be able to capture both verbal and non-verbal explanations and elaborations. The portions of the recordings that contained vocabulary explanations were later transcribed and coded for data analysis.

Interviews. A short semi-structured interview was conducted with each professor to give further insight into the data collected from the lectures. The interview questions were first written in English and later translated into Japanese to offer the professors a language option. As the aim of the interview was to gain as much insight into the professors' conscious ideas on the topic, it was deemed appropriate to offer them the option to choose which language in which to conduct the interview. Although the researcher was bound to whichever language the professors chose, the professors were permitted to codeswitch during the interview so as to allow them the freedom to articulate their thoughts in the most precise way possible. Especially given that the topic being discussed was the professors' EMI classes and English vocabulary, allowing codeswitching proved to be both useful and convenient for both the interviewer and interviewees.

To reduce bias, the questions were intentionally designed to be broad. The professors were encouraged to expand on their answers and respond in as much detail as possible. Furthermore, analysis of the classroom data was left to after the interviews so as not to introduce bias in the researcher's questioning or reactions. Each interview lasted roughly 20 to 40 minutes and was later transcribed for analysis.

Analyses. Descriptive analyses for the observation data were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics v.24. Coding schemes applied to the data were developed prior to data collection to answer each RQ. Several additional coding schemes were also devised post-data collection and transcription based on initial informal observations of the dataset. The data was coded both by the researcher and one other rater who was a speaker of English and Japanese. The following sections outline each set of coding schemes in order of RQ.

RQ 1: Word type. The types of words explained were divided into *technical*, *academic*, and *general* terms. *General* terms were classified as any words that did not classify as either *technical* or *academic*. *Academic* terms were so classified based on the Coxhead (2000) Academic Word List (AWL). *Technical* terms were further subdivided into *strict*, *loose*, and *intention* categories. The *strict technical* vocabulary was identified as words for which an exact match could be found in the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). The dictionary used as a reference for this coding was chosen based on accessibility, reviews, and the breadth of vocabulary featured in the dictionary. *Loosely technical* words were those for which an exact match could not be found, but a similar form with the same meaning was found. *Technical (intention)* words were those that were not featured in Richards and Schmidt's (2010) dictionary, but which were clearly explained as a key part of the content being taught (e.g., "chant" explained by Prof. M as a type of activity that could be used to teach young learners differences in phonology).

RQ 2: Explanation type & purpose. Explanation types were divided into *L2 equivalent*, *L2 definition or paraphrase*, *L2 contextualization*, *L1 equivalent*, *L1 definition or paraphrase*, *L1 contextualization*, *gestures*, and *other*. The first six were inspired by Macaro and Tian's (2015) classifications of teacher explanations from their study of English language professors in China. The *definition* and *paraphrase* categories which were separate in Macaro and Tian's study were combined in this research because the two were difficult to distinguish in the data. Additionally, gestures were added to investigate non-verbal explanatory behavior from teachers.

During data analysis, it became apparent that how and which words were explained was dependent partly on the purpose of explaining the word. In response to this observation, a coding scheme was devised to categorize the reasons for which the professors appeared to be offering each explanation. This was determined by the researcher and one more coder's own interpretations of the teachers' intentions.

Explanation purpose was divided into *word, concept, word and concept, word for example*, and *unclear or inapplicable*. The main distinction was between those words that were explained as words in the traditional sense because it was deemed unlikely that the students were familiar with the term (e.g., "implement"), and those that were explained specifically as a concept in the context of the content being taught (e.g., Prof. T explained the word, "word" during a lecture on vocabulary learning). Words that were explained both because they were likely unfamiliar and because they were part of the content being conveyed were coded as *word and concept* (e.g., mental lexicon). The *word for example* category comprised words that were explained as words, but only because they were used in an example that was given as part of the lecture content (e.g., Prof. M explained the unfamiliar word, "lark," as part of an example to illustrate cross-cultural differences in symbolism).

RQ 3: Codeswitching. Codeswitching was counted in terms of the number of explanation episodes that included any L1 Japanese. Instances of codeswitching that were clearly unrelated to the vocabulary explanation (i.e., "せーの ((*JAPANESE CUE TO SPEAK IN UNISON*))," "あ、ごめん ((*OH, SORRY*)), sorry," "Why do you say 「へー」 ((*OHH/AHH*))?" and "…some kids go to the 塾 ((*CRAM SCHOOl*)) or English conversation class…") were removed from the count.

Results

The observations and interviews indicated that vocabulary in the two EMI classrooms was most often explained using L2 descriptions or paraphrases and were for the purpose of clarifying or elaborating on a concept relevant to the subject-matter being taught. The L1 was rarely used in vocabulary explanations and words were never explained using an L1 description or paraphrase. The following sections will explain the results for each RQ, along with the additional qualitative findings that arose during data analysis. Translations from Japanese have been included in uppercase italics.

RQ1: What types of vocabulary are explained? By far, the most common type of vocabulary explained was technical vocabulary. Broken down, *technical (strict)* vocabulary, for which an exact entry match could be found in the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards & Schmidt, 2010), was most often explained by both teachers, followed by *technical (loose)* and *technical (intention)* vocabulary, which comprised words that had similar entries in the dictionary or were clearly intended to be part of the course content. Combined, the three types of technical vocabulary constituted 72.52% of the total explained words. Table 1 gives a breakdown of each explanation type by teacher and totaled.

Word Type	Total	Prof. T	Prof. M
Technical (strict)	37 (40.66%)	32 (43.24%)	5 (29.41%)
Only technical	*34 (37.36%)*	*29 (39.19%)*	*5 (29.41%)*
Technical (loose)	14 (15.38%)	14 (18.92%)	0 (0.00%)
Only technical	*12 (13.19%)*	*12 (16.22%)*	*0 (0.00%)*
Technical (intention)	15 (16.48%)	11 (14.86%)	4 (23.53%)
Only technical	*14 (15.38%)*	*10 (13.51%)*	*4 (23.53%)*
Academic	11 (12.08%)	8 (10.81%)	3 (17.65%)
Only academic	*5 (5.49%)*	*2 (2.70%)*	*3 (17.65%)*
Technical (all) & Academic	6 (6.59%)	6 (8.11%)	0 (0.00%)
General	20 (21.98%)	15 (20.27%)	5 (29.41%)
Total	91 (100%)	74 (100%)	17 (100%)

Table 1. *Word Types Observed*

Academic vocabulary was the least explained by either teacher, which was consistent with several of the unprompted comments offered in the interviews. Both professors seemed to identify a focus on content over language as one defining aspect of EMI. The words "content" and "content-based" arose numerous times and, especially with regards to how they chose which vocabulary to explain, both professors indicated that their vocabulary explanations were for the purpose of helping students understand the lecture content, not the words themselves.

RQ2: What types of vocabulary explanations are given? The most prevalent type of vocabulary explanation was *L2 definition or paraphrase*, followed by *L2 contextualization*. As shown in Table 2, this was the same across the two professors. Overall, L1 explanations were used sparingly, constituting only 5.47% of the total explanations offered. *Gestures* were the only type of explanation that could be given simultaneously to another type of explanation. Although they were not used often as

the main explanatory input, they were nonetheless relatively salient and often supplemented the oral explanations.

Explanation Type	Total	Prof. T	Prof. M
L2 equivalent (e.g., synonym)	28 (13.93%)	25 (14.62%)	3 (10.00%)
L2 definition or paraphrase	75 (37.31%)	64 (37.43%)	11 (36.67%)
L2 contextualization	55 (27.36%)	47 (27.49%)	8 (26.67%)
L1 equivalent (e.g., direct translation)	7 (3.48%)	6 (3.51%)	1 (3.33%)
L1 definition or paraphrase	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
L1 contextualization	4 (1.99%)	3 (1.75%)	1 (3.33%)
Gestures	22 (10.95%)	18 (10.53%)	4 (13.33%)
Other	10 (4.98%)	8 (4.68%)	2 (6.67%)
Total (without undecided)	201 (100%)	171 (100%)	30 (100%)
Undecided	*12*	*10*	*2*

Table 2. *Explanation Types Observed*

In the interviews, it was clear that the professors were aware of their use of mainly L2 explanations and the fact that they were mostly either defining, paraphrasing, or contextualizing. This decision was again driven largely by the content-focused nature of the courses. Neither professor addressed gestures in the interviews.

Explanations seemed mainly to be either to explain a familiar or unfamiliar word in the context of the course material. Table 3 shows the numbers and percentages of explanations given as *words*, *words for examples*, *concepts*, and *word and concepts*. Of the four main categories for explanation purpose, only the *word* category was completely irrelevant to the course content and accounted for only 15% of the total explanations, indicating that most of the explanations were somehow related to teaching the course content. This was consistent with the professors' heightened awareness of their positions as EMI teachers of applied linguistics.

Purpose	Total	Prof. T	Prof. M
Word	17 (15.04%)	13 (13.54%)	4 (23.53%)
Word for example	15 (13.27%)	13 (13.54%)	2 (11.76%)
Concept	52 (46.02%)	44 (45.83%)	8 (47.06%)
Word & Concept	27 (23.89%)	26 (27.08%)	1 (5.88%)
Unclear or Inapplicable	2 (1.77%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (11.76%)
Total	113 (100%)	96 (100%)	17 (100%)

Table 3. *Purposes of Explanation*

RQ3: How often does codeswitching occur in vocabulary explanations? The only observed cases of codeswitching in the vocabulary explanations were the use of L1 equivalents and the use of an L1 word or concept as an example to illustrate a concept. L1 slips (e.g., "*OH, SORRY*") that were irrelevant to the explanation of the words were eliminated from the data. Overall, codeswitching was not prevalent in the teachers' vocabulary explanations and it was never used to explain vocabulary in full-sentence definitions or paraphrases. As expressed by Prof. M in the interview (Extract 1), despite the obvious option to codeswitch given the homogenous Japanese-English

context, factors such as the EMI label and consideration for what the students would appreciate more led the teachers to avoid codeswitching altogether.

> Extract 1
> Prof. M: …*IN THEIR CASE, THE STUDENTS HAVE STUDIED ABROAD AND HAVE A LOT OF EXPERIENCE WITH ENGLISH, SO I FEEL THEY DON'T GET CAUGHT OUT TOO OFTEN EVEN WHEN I'M USING EMI. ALSO, WITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENGLISH [THE COURSE], THERE ARE SOME DIFFICULT TECHNICAL TERMS, BUT NOT VERY MANY, AND SURPRISINGLY THEY [THE STUDENTS] UNDERSTAND MOST ACADEMIC TERMS. EVEN IF THEY CAN'T GO SO FAR AS TO USE THEM, IT SEEMS LIKE THEY CAN COMPREHEND THEM, SO, UM, THEY SEEM TO BE OKAY EVEN IF I USE SOME SLIGHTLY DIFFICULT WORDS…*

As is evidenced in the extract, the topic of the course also may affect codeswitching behavior. Prof. M's course on Teaching EFL to Young Learners was specifically concerned with teaching the English classes that have been implemented in Japanese elementary schools to give young children exposure to the English language prior to the formal language learning, which commences in junior high school (MEXT, 2013). In this case, the students in Prof. M's class play a dual role of language learner and potential teacher. They are taught about how to teach and acquire language (concepts in Applied Linguistics) and meanwhile are honing their own language skills through the EMI course. On a spectrum of relatedness to English and language, this course was relatively more related than other subjects taught using EMI, such as mathematics, engineering, and other hard sciences. As Macaro (2018) pointed out, Applied Linguistics holds a special position within EMI because of the context in which it is typically taught. It is highly likely in most cases that students studying subjects such as language acquisition or language teaching will have a stronger English language learning background than their counterparts in less language-related subjects.

Qualitative. The most prominent point that could be observed from the data was that the number of explanations differed greatly between professors. In terms of raw counts, Prof. T gave over 5 times the number of explanations for over 4 times the number of words Prof. M had explained. As a result, the patterns found in the data were much clearer in Prof. T's data than Prof. M's. Interestingly, however, the general trends in the proportions of word and explanation types were similar across the two professors in spite of the difference in sheer number.

The interviews and inspection of factors that differed between the two classes shed some light on what may have brought about these differences. The level of technicality of the subject being taught, class size, and teacher preference seemed to play a role in the number of explanations given. The more technical the topic of focus, the more likely that it would include a greater number of key vocabulary that was unfamiliar to the students. Also, with smaller classes, students could assist each other with vocabulary during small group discussions and the teacher was better able to monitor such activities amongst students. Despite both professors' preference for small group interaction, Prof. T was forced to give more lecture-style classes and thus needed to conduct more one-way checks of vocabulary comprehension. Although

causation cannot be claimed at this point, the relationships between these areas and vocabulary explanation may warrant further investigation.

Discussion

While the observational data alone heeded sufficient information to answer the research questions, the interviews shed some light on the possible sources of the professors' behaviors. In particular, the EMI context seemed to be a highly influential factor. As a case study, the results are not generalizable and even between the two professors, there was considerable variation, especially in number of explanations offered. Nonetheless, the interviews provided some insight into what may be behind the trends that were observed. The factors which seemed to affect the teacher vocabulary explanations could largely be divided into three types: environmental, teacher, and student aspects.

Environmental aspects. Some environmental factors identified during data analysis were the university context (university policies, course status as either an elective or requirement), the EMI context, the course subject, and the Japanese context. In spite of being conducted completely separately with little to no contact between the two professors regarding this research, both professors emphasized the EMI status of their courses throughout the interviews. Prof. T distinguished the observed course with another language course that she taught, for which she claimed that she focused much more on vocabulary and gave more formal definitions and explanations. Extract 2 illustrates the teachers' conceptualization of vocabulary's role in their respective classes.

> Extract 2
> Question: Is vocabulary important in your class?
> Prof. T: Because it's a content-based class, basically, students are exposed to new concepts and new ideas and then all technical terms. So, with that- that respect, making them learn new technical words is important…But not necessarily making them learn those basic words. But probably um my focus is on making them understand what I- I'm delivering.
> Prof. M: *IN ORDER TO HAVE STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE COURSE CONTENT, I THINK IT [VOCABULARY] IS VERY IMPORTANT.*

Regarding the gap in frequency of explanations between professors, it is possible that the level of technicality of each course influenced how much was explained. In concurrence with Prof. T's comment in Extract 2, vocabulary is explained only when necessary for understanding the course content. Thus, it would be reasonable to presume that the more technical the vocabulary, the less that would be comprehensible and the more it would require elaboration. Indeed, Prof. T's lectures involved many technical words whereas Prof. M's classes were more discussion-based and used many more conversational English words. For example, while Prof. T was explaining the acquisition of vocabulary in a first and second language, Prof. M was discussing what types of activities could help young learners get accustomed to English phonology.

Teacher aspects. In the interviews, the teachers expressed a great deal of personal background influences that shaped their teaching, such as previous studies, research background, and English proficiency. Another possible teacher factor that may influence EMI teaching is teachers' study abroad experiences.

Even amongst two professors with Applied Linguistics backgrounds who were familiar with language development and language learning and had experience studying through the medium of English, there were considerable differences in their classes. Although the characteristics that were shared seemed to stem from these similarities in background, it is important to note that within EMI, teachers can potentially come from myriad backgrounds. Not all teachers have experience with teaching or learning through English and most who specialize in non-language-related subjects are likely to be unfamiliar with language development from an empirical perspective. Simply having the ability to speak the language and the ability to teach a subject do not automatically guarantee quality teaching of that subject through EMI. This issue has been raised both on the ground and in this study and should be addressed with further research and consideration during EMI implementation.

Student aspects. Although teachers were the focus of this study, students seemed to play a critical role in teacher vocabulary explanations. In the professors' comments, it was noted several times that the specific group of students being taught were mostly third-year language majors who had just arrived back from one-year study abroad experiences. This context was influential in that several things were assumed about the students.

First, the students had just spent one year studying in English-speaking environments and were thus accustomed to English being the only language being spoken. Prof. M explained that the EMI courses were offered partly out of demand because students wanted to continue taking courses in English. She said that one reason for her lack of codeswitching in general and especially in vocabulary explanations was her desire to give the students what they wanted: an all-English course. Second, after having studied English in their major programs for several years, it was assumed that their proficiency level and competence in English were relatively high. Finally, being an EMI course, it was expected that students would not understand every single word or utterance, but that they had acquired the ability to cope with not understanding or knowing everything in their year abroad.

Conclusions and Implications

Ideally, vocabulary explanation should be researched across language learning situations for a better understanding of their nature. However, in response to the trends of today, it would be most immediately beneficial to investigate vocabulary explanations in the EMI context as well as other related or popular teaching approaches. More research on teachers' relationships with vocabulary and vocabulary explanation is also needed, as this study only provides a glimpse into this area of research. How the vocabulary explanations affect students in EMI courses is also of great interest, as theoretically, they are likely to have an impact on both student comprehension and learning, both of the course material and of the language.

At present, it seems that EMI is "an unstoppable train which has already left the station" (Macaro, 2017, p. 2). In light of this phenomenon, it is both reasonable and imperative that teacher vocabulary explanations be addressed both in research and in the classrooms. As the distinction between language as a subject of study and a medium of instruction becomes less clear, it becomes increasingly important to consider the specific situational factors that may influence how the courses should be taught and how they will likely be received by students. There is already considerable interest in research in Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) following on the work in secondary education CLIL.

Language education's goals are continually evolving with the times; not only the goals, but also the contexts and the possibilities are constantly transforming. Language development begins before birth and continues indefinitely, meaning that as the status of English in various societies fluctuates, so will the strengths and weaknesses of any educational approach. EMI is currently permeating throughout Asia and other parts of the world as a new way forward that is claimed to be both time-efficient and effective for language development. Although it is difficult to identify any inherently effective or ineffective way to approach language teaching and learning, it is important for researchers, teachers, policy-makers, and learners to understand the context in which they are working and to strive to find the most effective methods to attain their particular goals in their particular contexts. Being a case study, the present study did not attempt overarching discoveries or claims for language learning in the context of EMI worldwide. Instead, it was intended to provide preliminary observations that could form the basis for further research in the area of teacher vocabulary explanations.

Whether effective or not, teacher explanations are common and possibly an unavoidable natural phenomenon in language classrooms. Taking this and the findings of the present study into consideration, too little is formally known about teachers' lexical explanations and elaborations. Given the importance of vocabulary in language learning and the current trends towards teaching non-language courses through the medium of English, it is vital that these explanations are investigated further so that they can be more widely put to good use across curricula. With the goals of EMI in mind, a better understanding of teacher vocabulary explanations within and without the EMI context, as well as across subjects, countries, levels, and time, could be immensely beneficial to the improvement of EMI curricula worldwide.

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