



To cite this article:

Sánchez-García, D. (2019). I can't find the words now... Teacher Discourse Strategies and their Communicative Potential in Spanish- and English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education. *CLIL Journal of Innovation and Research in Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education*, 2(2), 43-55. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/clil.28>

<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/clil.28>

e-ISSN : 2604-5613

Print ISSN: 2605-5893

# 'I can't find the words now...': Teacher Discourse Strategies and their Communicative Potential in Spanish-and English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education



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English-medium instruction is rapidly becoming a common practice at university worldwide. Despite the necessity of supporting teachers in this context, programs for their continuing professional development are few and far between. This study examines the discourse strategies (DSs) that two university lecturers deploy in the teaching of the same disciplinary content through both their L1 and their L2 to examine the extent to which these DSs help teachers achieve their communicative goal. The study unveils the impact of the language of instruction on teachers' DSs and sheds light on teachers' pressing linguistic needs. Finally, key findings suggest the need to incorporate of DSs in teacher education programs.

**KEYWORDS:**

discourse strategies; EMI; classroom discourse; higher education; teacher education.

La instrucción a través del inglés se está convirtiendo en una práctica común en las universidades de todo el mundo. A pesar de la necesidad de apoyar a los profesores en este contexto, los programas para su desarrollo profesional continuo son escasos. Este estudio examina las estrategias discursivas (DSs) que dos profesores universitarios emplean en la enseñanza de un mismo contenido disciplinar a través de sus L1 y L2 para examinar hasta qué punto estas DSs ayudan a los profesores a alcanzar su objetivo comunicativo. El estudio revela el impacto de la lengua de instrucción en las DSs de los profesores y arroja luz sobre las necesidades lingüísticas de los docentes. En última instancia, los resultados sugieren la incorporación de DSs en los programas de formación de docentes.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:**

estrategias discursivas; EMI; discurso del aula; educación superior; formación del profesorado.

## Introduction

The widespread presence of English as a global language is leaving its imprint on the academic world. First, it was the language in which most research and publishing regarding specific-discipline knowledge took place. Now, it is also steadily becoming the main means of instruction. As reported by Wächter and Maiworm, (2014, p. 16) "the numbers of identified English-taught programmes went up from 725 programmes in 2001, to 2,389 in 2007 and to 8,089 in the present study", which leaves a record of the clear exponential growth of English-medium instruction (EMI) in European higher education.

Consequently, since the swift spread of EMI has outpaced teacher education provision (Pérez Cañado, 2016), the training of lecturers should stand as a major concern as teachers need to be equipped with the decisive linguistic and pedagogic resources to deliver discipline knowledge despite potential conceptual complexities (Mohan & Slater, 2005; Sharpe, 2008). For this reason, even though teachers are experts in their field of knowledge, it may often be the case that their level of L2 competence may not be as perfectly developed as their L1. Thus, they may find it helpful to draw on a strategic use of discourse to successfully convey disciplinary content through the L2.

The present research tries to contribute to the existing body of research regarding EMI teacher lecturing practices by carrying out a contrastive analysis of lecturers' use of discourse strategies when delivering discipline-specific knowledge through both their L1 and their L2. First, a conceptualization of discourse strategies will be offered, followed by the description of the research context and the taxonomies used. Then, the data and the findings will be explained to finally try to throw light on the language aspects that university teachers may benefit from in custom-made EMI teacher educational programs.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Discourse strategies: clarifying the position

This study builds on previous work on communication strategies (hereinafter CSs), which began to be of interest in the 70<sup>s</sup> when a number of empirical studies came to light and examined strategies such as topic avoidance, message reduction, borrowing or paraphrasing. Since then many definitions have been put forward in an attempt to describe their nature (Corder, 1983; Tarone, 1977, Faerch & Kasper, 1983). Although all of them seem to concur that CSs emerge from a still underdeveloped L2 linguistic system and, therefore, are linked to errors and L2 speakers' interlanguage development, no agreement has been reached to whether CSs are intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious, only verbal or also cognitive phenomena.

In this respect, this study conceives of CSs as the observable linguistic phenomena that belong to the discourse practice of speakers, henceforth, the reference to them as discourse strategies (DSs). It is claimed that the use of CSs is not primarily concerned with struggling to make up for L2 limitations, but at being able to find the most efficient and effective way to express complete intended meanings and convey knowledge. A DS is therefore defined as a linguistic behavior that assists the speaker in the delivery of a complete intended meaning (Sánchez-García, 2016). Speakers can do so intentionally, if they are aware of the range of DSs available for them to use, or unintentionally if they use them as resources without being aware of their status as DSs. In addition, DSs can be identified in L1 and L2-speech alike as they are linguistic resources speakers can draw on as available in their linguistic repertoire. This means that they are present in all languages spoken by the language user, although the knowledge attained in each language may influence the variety, quantity and quality of the DSs at a speaker's disposal.

### 2.2. Discourse strategies and teacher education

DSs have proven to be a controversial research topic in terms of their definition and their features, as is their teachability. Scholars seem to adopt strong or moderate positions regarding CDs and their teachability. The strong view (Dörnyei, 1995) advocates the explicit teaching of CSs as distinct categories that build taxonomies, that is, approximation, circumlocution, code switching, etc. as well as the linguistic structures that will realize those strategies. Contrary to this is the moderate view (Bialystok, 1990), which places more importance on the cognitive processes. The proponents of the moderate view argue that teaching strategies makes no sense if language users have difficulties in language processing. In other words, L2 speakers may already possess CSs in their linguistic repertoire, but they lack the means to put them into use (Bialystok, 1990). Detractors of these two perspectives claim that L2 users are already endowed with a strategic competence that emerged and was nurtured by production in their L1; consequently, "the more language the learner knows, the more possibilities exist for the system to be flexible and to adjust itself to meet the demands of the learner. What one must teach students of a language is not strategy, but language" (Kellerman, 1991, p. 147).

**"This paper makes the case that drawing on DSs could provide valuable benefits for teachers and learners involved in EMI."**

This paper makes the case that drawing on DSs could provide valuable benefits for teachers and learners involved in EMI. Teaching and learning disciplinary content through English as an additional language is a fast-growing common practice in higher education (Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Taguchi, 2014; Tedick, 2015; Nikula et al., 2016; Escobar & Arnau, 2018), where lecturers face the challenge of communicating their expertise through a possibly less mastered language than their L1 – so far the traditional language of instruction. In this respect,

*"[t]he teacher of whatever material is being taught in an L2, should not only update his linguistic knowledge to a standard and recognized level of fluency but should develop a different linguistic sensitivity to be able to adapt the contents to the new language and develop teaching procedures that make it possible for the student to learn." (Pavón et al., 2005, p. 18)*

In this line, it is posited that DSs should be teachable by emphasizing the need to raise lecturers' awareness of the existence of DSs within their linguistic repertoire together with the nature and the potential that such strategies offer to assist teachers when delivering contents. Consequently, DSs should be part of teacher education programs aiming to equip teachers with the linguistic competence necessary to engage in EMI.

### 3. Methodology

The present study sets out to analyze DSs as part of lecturers' speech at university level when lecturing through two different languages of instruction to explore their communicative potential and the possible effect that communicating through the L1 or the L2 may have on their deployment. In order to do so, it attempts to answer to these questions:

#### RQ1:

**What are the most common DSs in teacher's discourse in L1 and L2 university lectures?**

#### RQ2:

**To what extent do DSs vary depending on the language of instruction (L1 or L2) used?**

#### RQ3:

**To what extent do DSs help teachers in the achievement of their communicative goal?**

**"DSs should be teachable by emphasizing the need to raise lecturers' awareness of the existence of DSs within their linguistic repertoire together with the nature and the potential that such strategies offer to assist teachers when delivering contents. Consequently, DSs should be part of teacher education programs aiming to equip teachers with the linguistic competence necessary to engage in EMI."**

#### 3.1. Participants and corpus

The study follows a mixed-method design (Hashemi & Babaii, 2013) by providing a quantitative analysis of DSs type frequencies coupled with their qualitative interpretation. The focal participants are two university lecturers teaching in a Business Administration degree at a university in Spain. Lecturer A teaches Consumer Behavior (CB), offered in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the BA program; and Lecturer B teaches Financial Accounting (FA), offered in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the program. These courses are offered in two parallel strands: in one the language of instruction is Spanish (hereinafter L1), which happens to be the L1 of the instructor and most of the students in the class; and the other one is English (hereinafter EMI), which is the foreign language (FL) of the lecturers and most of the students attending. Therefore, the language of instruction becomes the main variable of the study - the lecturers, contents, materials and assessment criteria remain unchanged in each content subject.

Case selection was primarily based on criterion sampling (Dörnyei, 2007) since lecturers met the specific predetermined criteria of teaching the same content through both Spanish and English. At the moment of the analysis, Lecturer A had been teaching CB for 3 years in both language groups; while Lecturer B had been teaching FA through Spanish for fourteen years and through English for the last five. Both teachers have a C1 level (CEFR) of English.

The student cohorts attending the lessons were medium-sized (20 to 50 students) and very heterogeneous regarding their linguistic and cultural background. In CB, around 40% of students in the EMI classes had a diverse European origin, whereas only 10% of them in L1 lessons came from countries other than Spain. In contrast, the cohort in FA was primarily constituted by Spanish students and presented similar numbers of overseas learners in both strands. Students' level of English ranged from B2 to C1 (CEFR) since certifying a B2 level was a university entry requirement to enroll in the English strand.

The corpus collected consists of 16 lectures, which were divided in two subsets of 8 classes (**Table 1**). On the one hand, the first subset was delivered by Lecturer A and consisted of 4 lessons taught through Spanish and 4 lessons conducted through English. On the other hand, the second subset was delivered by Lecturer B and comprised 4 classes given through Spanish and 4 lessons taught through English. The disciplinary contents of the 8 lectures within each subset were the same, which makes them comparable to one another; the language of instruction being the main variable. The data accounted for 1,305 minutes of teaching practice and a total number of 152,530 words. For comparative purposes, results were normalized<sup>2</sup>.

	Lecture & Topic	Minutes	Words
<b>L1 (Spanish)</b>	1. Actitudes en la publicidad	81	11172
	2. Motivación del consumidor e influencias de la familia en la publicidad	88	13189
	3. Influencias sociales en la publicidad	87	12892
	4. La clase social en la publicidad	65	9386
	5. La cuenta de pérdidas y ganancias	101	14080
	6. Seminario: base de datos SABI	52	6082
	7. Hechos contables y libros contables	95	12576
	8. Libros contables: el diario y el libro mayor	65	7811
<b>Total L1</b>		<b>634</b>	<b>87188</b>
<b>L1 Mean</b>		<b>79.25</b>	<b>10898.5</b>
<b>L2 (English)</b>	9. Attitudes in advertising	85	7037
	10. Consumer motivations in advertising	86	7841
	11. Family and social influences in advertising	78	7894
	12. Social class in advertising	72	8872
	13. The income statement	101	8637
	14. Seminar: SABI database	46	4295
	15. Book keeping	99	10054
	16. Accounting books: the journal and the ledger	104	10712
<b>Total L2</b>		<b>671</b>	<b>65342</b>
<b>L2 Mean</b>		<b>83.875</b>	<b>8167.75</b>
<b>Overall total</b>		<b>1305</b>	<b>152530</b>

**Table 1.** Corpus collected

### 3.2. Analysis and taxonomy

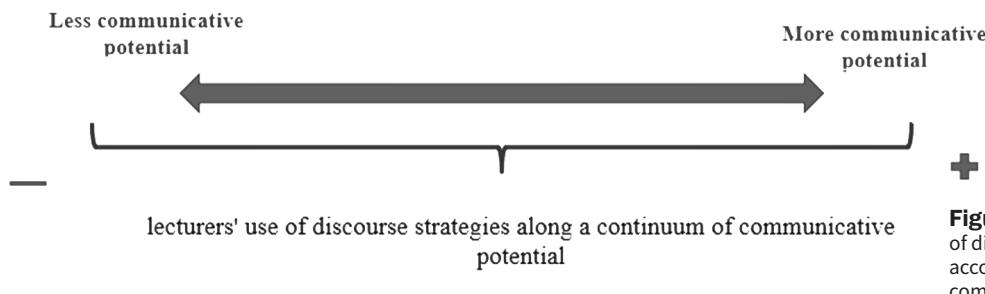
After obtaining the informed consent of all participants, lectures were audio-recorded, videotaped, and manually transcribed following the transcription codes by Du Bois et al. (1993). At a first stage of the analysis, DSs were identified and tagged following the taxonomy shown in **Table 2**, adapted from Dörnyei & Scott (1997). The main change in the new classification has entailed narrowing

down several DSs categories from the original taxonomy that could be subsumed into others. Since the identification of strategies was not always clear-cut, two different coding processes were undertaken. Special attention was paid to strategies that could overlap in which case they were re-examined. After that a quantitative analysis of strategies, which included frequencies and statistical significance, was conducted to make visible frequencies and patterns that would otherwise remain imperceptible.

STRATEGIES	DEFINITIONS	EXAMPLES FROM THE CORPUS
Message Abandonment	Leaving a message unfinished	T: So the idea is that-( <b>abandonment</b> ) Ok, we are going to do the initial amount of the balance sheet
Omission	Leaving a sentence unfinished when not knowing a word and carrying on as if it had been said	If you don't want to stay here you can go out. I know it is more exciting than being here so why ( <b>omission</b> )
Circumlocution	Describing or exemplifying the target object or action	The informati- <b>a company which business is the integr- the... telecommunication media and contact centers industries</b>
Approximation	Using an alternative term, such as a superordinate or a related word, which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible	Spanish young people have a better attitude towards Coke than towards eeehhh <b>private brands</b> (2) which are much cheaper and taste in a very similar way
All-purpose words	Extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking	Let's say I don't know ahead of other brands in electronic devices or <b>whatever</b> .
Word coinage	Creating a non-existing word based on a supposed rule	T: ¿Cómo se dice lupa? S: <b>Loop</b>
Restructuring	Leaving an utterance unfinished following an alternative plan; modifying or contributing with a more exhaustive alternative to provide further elaboration	But I <b>ask you, I'm going to ask you</b> to be completely quiet until half past nine.
Foreignizing	Using an L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonologically (with L2 pronunciation), or/and morphologically (adding to it an L2 suffix)	On Tuesday. <b>The control-</b> [with L2 pronunciation] the test
Code Switching	Alternating between two or more languages in conversation	You can feel the <b>adrenalina</b> , the adrenaline, so it's really targeted at young people
Retrieval	Uttering/repeating a series of incomplete or wrong forms or structures before reaching the optimal form	<b>You have the... you have the</b> amount in the balance sheet and you have the date
Self-repair	Making self-initiated corrections in one's own speech	It's in million- <b>sorry in miles</b> , ok?
Repetition	Repeating words immediately or long after they were said	T: You have to rate <b>from one to ten, from one to ten</b> , all the flavors

**Table 2.** Taxonomy of DSs (adapted from Dörnyei & Scott, 1997)

While the identification and context-sensitive analysis of DSs was under way, it became fairly evident that certain strategies were likely to function as more favorable linguistic tools to achieve the ultimate goal of effective communication than others since they enhanced teachers' communicative competence. Accordingly, a classifying continuum of a linguistic nature that could be adaptable and transferable to other language contexts was elaborated (**Figure 1**) and prompted a further analysis. At this second stage of the study, DSs were once again examined and classified along this continuum according to whether they had more or less communicative potential in terms of the extent to which they seem to help lecturers in conveying their intended meaning completely. Reporting on the impact of these strategies on students' learning was considered beyond the scope of the study at this point, but will be a possible future follow-up. The current analysis is only concerned with how teachers manage to communicate full structured and complete meaning and which DSs seem to mediate in that process.



**Figure 1.** Continuum of discourse strategies according to their communicative potential

STRATEGIES	L1 LECTURES	EMI LECTURES	P-VALUE	TOTAL
<b>Less communicative potential</b>				
Message abandonment	0.55	1.3	0,000	<b>1.85</b>
Omission	3.83	1.42	0,000	<b>5.25</b>
<b>Medium communicative potential</b>				
All-purpose words	0.36	1.16	0,000	<b>1.52</b>
Codeswitching	0.97	3.39	0,000	<b>4.36</b>
Foreignizing	0.03	0.87	0,000	<b>0.9</b>
Word coinage	0.01	0.01	0,837	<b>0.02</b>
<b>More communicative potential</b>				
Retrieval	5.53	4.68	0,021	<b>10.21</b>
Restructuring	4.45	5.64	0,000	<b>10.09</b>
Self-repair	1.49	2.89	0,000	<b>4.38</b>
Repetition	5.63	3.73	0,000	<b>9.36</b>
Approximation	0.06	0.33	0,000	<b>0.39</b>
Circumlocution	0.09	0.16	0,184	<b>0.25</b>
<b>Total</b>	23	25.58		<b>48.58</b>

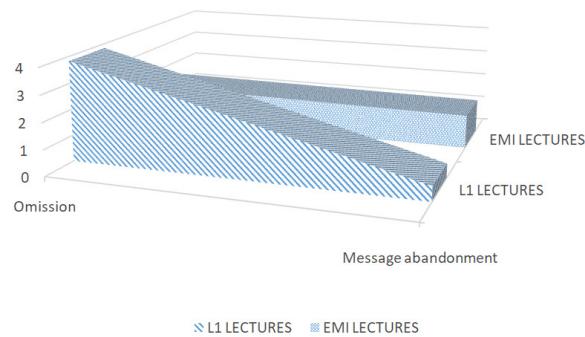
**Table 3.** Frequencies (%) of DSs in L1 and EMI lectures and statistical significance

## 4.2 Communicative potential of DSs in L1 and EMI university lectures

In order to unravel the data just presented, DSs have been analyzed and classified according to the extent to which they mediate in lecturers' complete achievement of their communicative goal.

### 4.2.1. A closer look at less communicative potential

DSs with less communicative potential refer to those strategies which fail to convey an intended message completely. In the lectures examined this seems to be the case of omission and message abandonment. Findings display that whereas in L1 lectures dropping the message half way or omitting part of it seems to be favored over the complete abandonment of the topic (3.83% / 0.55%), in EMI lectures both DSs are deployed with similar frequency (1.42% / 1.3%) (see **Figure 2**).



**Figure 2.** DSs with less communicative potential in L1 and EMI lectures

Evidence suggests that omission seems to work as an economical discourse practice by which lecturers do not need to continue talking to get meaning across since what is left unsaid can easily be picked up or inferred. As illustrated in **Example 1, 2 and 3**, it is usually so because the context of situation fleshes out the communicative event, preventing potential communicative breakdowns.

### Example 1

T: Está bien que elabores la idea, pero intenta elaborarla **con un eehh lenguaje un poco más...entiendo la idea pero...**

[It's ok for you to elaborate the idea, but try to elaborate it with a eh more...language... I understand the idea but...]<sup>3</sup>

### Example 2

**So we go to the- we put the mouse in the...** modify the search in the same search strategy we click there and we can chan- we can modify the.. data.

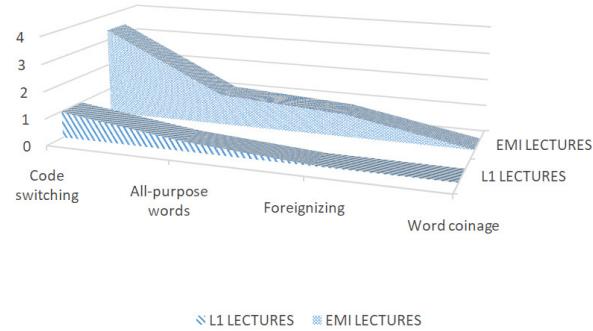
### Example 3

Next one. **Clean please the...** Ok, so the next eehh the next entry.

Teachers are also likely to resort to omission when the context of action, culture, language and the oral co-text makes it possible for the students to fill the linguistic gaps.

### 4.2.2. A closer look at medium communicative potential

DSs with medium communicative potential refer to those strategies that have the potential to assist the lecturers in the complete fulfillment of their communicative objectives, but which due to specific characteristics of the educational context in which they are articulated, they may lose their effectiveness. In this study and following their frequency of use, code switching, all-purpose words, foreignizing, and word coinage have been found to be in-between effective strategies (**Figure 3**).



**Figure 3.** DSs with medium communicative potential in L1 and EMI lectures

When it comes to code switching practices, while this strategy hardly ever seems to take place in Spanish-taught lessons (0.97%), it has noticeable presence in English-medium ones (3.39%). One condition calling for lecturers' use of codeswitching in EMI lessons is linked to facing linguistic difficulties (**Example 4**), especially when deviating from the main topic, such as in asides, and when having to manage students' behavior and classroom organization (**Example 5**). Additionally, the L1 is used to translate the classroom materials originally provided in the L2, and also when teachers voluntarily offer a comparison of specialized terminology in both languages (**Example 6**)<sup>4</sup>.

### Example 4

Do you imagine how manyeehhh... **¿Cómo se dice? Auditorías.** [How do you say Auditorías?]

### Example 5

Ok, let's choose... **¿Dónde está esto?** Ok, I like this one. [**Where is this?**]

**Example 6**

We call each transaction entry. Ok? In Spanish we call **asiento**. Like a chair. This is an entry.

In contrast, codeswitching in L1 contexts only takes place in the form of loanwords. Teachers tend to adopt words borrowed from English to Spanish typically because they have been accommodated into Spanish or because they are of common knowledge in that linguistic background (**Example 7**).

**Example 7**

Y al ampliar el **target**, al ampliar el **público objetivo** el icono que tenían quizá ya no representa tan bien a la marca.

[And when extending the **target**, when extending the public **target** the icon may not represent the brand that well.]

The apparent usefulness of teacher code switching may be lost in this particular setting in which English works as the lingua franca and not all students may have enough knowledge of Spanish. Therefore, they may miss important content as derived from teacher's switches into Spanish.

All-purpose words refer to extending a general lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking, and its use is unequally distributed in L1 and EMI contexts. The former presents 0.36% occurrences, whereas a higher frequency of 1.16% is shown in the latter. It is quite plausible that, as native speakers, teachers possess a broader linguistic repertoire of alternative terms to express similar meanings in their L1 than in the L2, including a deeper knowledge of class inclusion and lexical degrees of specificity and generality.

Lecturers seem to rely on all-purpose words primarily when they are missing specificity and accuracy in what they say, as shown in **Example 8 and 9**.

**Example 8**

If you need to do an exercise in finance or in marketing or **whatever** during your degree, you can use this database.

**Example 9**

When we use a... inventor- **a thing** a.... good for more than one period is an asset.

The employment of such a strategy seems to avoid disruptions caused by having to recall the accurate term

needed, and allows communication to flow nicely and conveniently. What may make all-purpose words lose their potential power as effective strategies is precisely that lack of accuracy. Accuracy is an aspect to be acquired by university students in their process of becoming experts in their disciplinary field (Llinares et al., 2012; Rappa & Tang, 2018). Therefore, although all-purpose words may help the teacher convey information, its overuse should be avoided when resorting to this strategy as a substitute for specialized disciplinary terminology.

Foreignizing consists of using an L1 or L2 word by adjusting it to L2 or L1 phonology, morphology and/or meaning. Its rates of frequency only show 0.03% in L1 lectures and 0.87% in EMI lessons. **Example 10** illustrates the most frequent realization of foreignizing found in the lectures analyzed.

**Example 10**

Pensad ahora como es la publicidad de los cereales Kellogs para niños. Siempre está basada en dibujos animados generalmente con **caracteres** que son divertidos para los niños...

[Think about how are the commercials of Kellog's cereals are for kids. It's always based on cartoons usually with **characters** that are fun for children...]

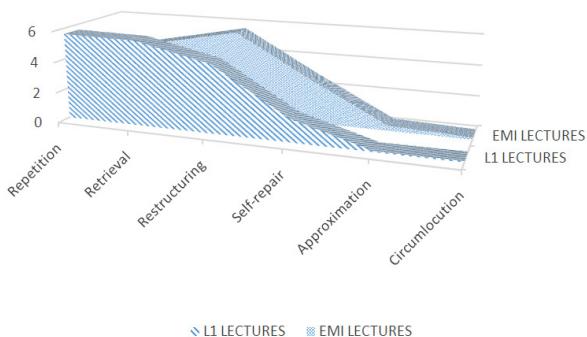
It presents a classroom moment in which the teacher inserts the word *caracteres* in a sentence. However, this term does not exist in Spanish with the meaning intended by the teacher. It is the English word 'character', which refers to a person represented in a movie or story, and in this particular context in a cereal commercial targeted to kids, uttered with Spanish pronunciation. Thus, it represents a case of semantic foreignizing since the word from the source language, English, is articulated in the target language, Spanish, by adapting its phonology but retaining the meaning it has in the source language.

Interestingly, no cases of word coinage on the part of the teachers have been found in the lectures analyzed. However, it may be worth considering that drawing on word coinage, foreignizing and/or code switching practices implies that students need to have a certain knowledge of the two languages coming into play; if that is not the case, they may not be able to infer the intended meaning and the communicative potential of the DS may disappear.

#### 4.2.3. A closer look at more communicative potential

DSs with more communicative potential refer to the strategies that help the lecturer find the most suitable linguistic plan to transmit the intended meaning completely.

The most predominant types of effective strategies are related to lecturers' enhanced need for speculating with language structures and concepts. Although in varying degrees of frequency in L1 and EMI contexts, lecturers seem to find repetition, retrieval and restructuring as the most favorable strategies to accomplish their communicative goals, while barely drawing on approximation and circumlocution (see **Figure 4**).



**Figure 4.** DSs with more communicative potential in L1 or EMI lectures

Repetition seems to be teachers' primary way of highlighting important information; whether it refers to some procedures that students need to be aware of or whether it concerns key factual knowledge of the discipline that has been introduced for the first time, as in **Example 11**. Repeating important points becomes also an effective strategy to provide learners with more than one opportunity to be exposed to the relevant content.

### Example 11

The idea is to record all the transactions at the same time- this is very important, at the same time in the journal and in the ledger. We should record all the information of the journal at the same time that all the information in the ledger. So it means that the information in both books are the same but with different structure (...) The same information that I put in the journal is the same information that I put in the ledger. The same information, ok? (...) But in order to understand the accounting process we need to do both things at the same time at the same time.

Findings reveal repetition with 5.63% occurrences in L1 lectures, and with 3.73% in EMI ones. This result contradicts findings by Thøgersen & Airey (2011), who unveiled that in English (L2) the lecturer used more repetition than in Danish (L1) lessons. The reason leading to this could be closely bound with students' participation. Learners in L1 contexts are extremely less participative than those in EMI classes (Moratinos-Johnston et al., 2018) which seems to force

the teacher to make sure that the information is reaching students more frequently in L1 contexts than in EMI ones. A culturally-rooted rationale may be also tied to this fact since it is typically Erasmus students those who partake more actively, while Spaniards tend to take on a much more passive learning role (see section 3.1. for details on students' cohorts).

Retrievals are attempts to reach the appropriate wording when communicating. In their quest for the right language sometimes teachers express their loss for words overtly. The majority of cases in which teachers cannot find the exact word often result in the use of related terms that somehow lose the original meaning (**Example 12 and 13**). Still, by using this strategy, lecturers manage to convey complete and meaningful information.

### Example 12

*[It's really eeehhh it's eehh I can't find the word but it's eeh it's really impacting let's say]*

### Example 13

*Nuestros grupos de convivencia ejercen una presión... una... una... no me sale la otra palabra ahora. Bueno, nos dan información.*

*[Our reference groups exert a pressure... a... a... can't find the word now. Whatever, they give us information]*

Retrievals are more exploited in L1 (5.53%) than in EMI (4.68%) teacher discourse. This result may have to do with teachers realizing that they can be much more accurate in their L1 because of the myriad of linguistic resources at their disposal. In contrast, their acknowledgement of a narrower linguistic repertoire in the L2 may have them not considering it as an option to retrieve more accurate linguistic items since they are unknown to them.

In a similar vein, teachers also draw on restructuring to reach the optimal linguistic forms that best adapt to their communicative goal. Switching or modifying a first intended structure for a new one seems to be motivated by diverse purposes, such as elaborating on a previous message to offer more information, being much more precise in knowledge delivery, improving the original intended meaning, and providing students with more rigorous disciplinary terminology (**Example 14 and 15**).

### Example 14

*The story of this transaction is that there is a owner that want to found- to start up a new business, right? And he deposit 500,000 euros in a bank account.*

**Example 15**

I don't like the cereals because **they don't taste** or they they they not-  
**they're not chocolate-flavoured.**

It is not a rare sight to find out that restructuring moves in EMI lectures (5.64%) surpass those in L1 classes (4.45%). It seems quite natural to have a lower command of different meaning nuances in a L2 than in the L1, which makes restructuring practices convenient to arrive at a proper way of expressing the intended meaning when communicating through a L2.

Fairly frequently teachers are likely to draw on self-repair as a way to improve their discourse on the go. In both languages this strategy involves improving language and content accuracy and correctness (Example 16, 17 and 18).

**Example 16**

The negative audit report means that **the financial statement doesn't follow the transfer view, doesn't follow the accounting principles.**

**Example 17**

So cooperative there are **five hundred-five thousand sorry, five thousand companies.**

**Example 18**

Luego voy a poner la anotación del debe. **Perdón, la cuantía...** huy, la cuantía del debe.

[Later I will write **the debit annotation. Sorry, the amount,** oops the debit amount.]

Although findings display that self-repairs are more pervasive in EMI contexts (2.89%), which may imply that more production mistakes tend to be articulated through an L2, it is striking that language inaccuracies also occur in teachers' L1 (1.49%). In fact, data show very similar figures regarding the number of self-repairs in L1 lectures: 1.24% instances by Lecturer A and 1.65% cases by Lecturer B. This opens up the possibility of considering that such mistakes may not always be the consequence of language difficulties, but the result of the speakers' rapid connection between thinking processes and their spontaneous realization through the linguistic system. In any case, self-repair helps teachers improve their intelligibility by correcting possible language and content mistakes, leading them to achieve more effective communication.

The least two used DSs are presented next. Approximation

refers to the use of lexical items which share semantic features with the target words that cannot be recalled at the moment of speaking. This strategy generally occurs with notably lower frequency in L1 speech (0.06%) than in L2 discourse (0.33%) and typically entails the employment of superordinate words. It seems to be the case that teachers' main resource when a specific concept cannot be recalled is broadening the strict sense of that at-the-moment non-retrievable target term (**Example 19 and 20**). A further realization of approximation strategies includes offering synonyms (**Example 21**).

**Example 19**

The contribution that **the owners of the firm** do, the **shareholders**, we call it capital.

**Example 20**

An expense is a less- a decrease of the... **firm's wealth.** It's a decrease of **equity.** The definition of expense.

**Example 21**

You can of course find many fakes of eeehh of eeehhh **clothes, apparel...**

Despite its potential usefulness helping teachers communicate an intended message by means of resorting to many words to describe something for which a concise word is not readily available (**Example 22**), circumlocution is barely used by lecturers. There are 0,16 instances of such DS in EMI and 0,09 in L1 lessons.

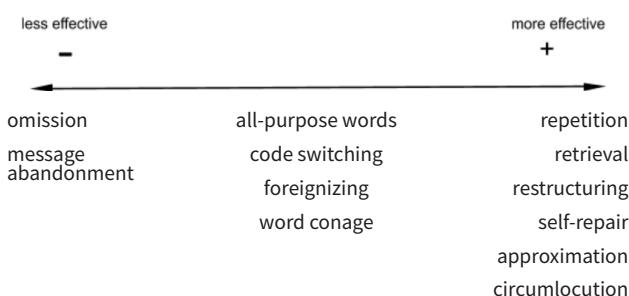
**Example 22**

[bills of exchange] It's like a... a document, a official document in which you have a official stamp and it's like money. It's like money but not exactly money.

Previous examples illustrate the effectiveness of approximation and circumlocution as DSs since when lecturers' linguistic resources do not assist them in finding a precise term, they can come near their original intended meaning through other closely related words.

#### 4.2.4. Resulting continuum of DSs in the lectures analyzed

The overall picture of the analysis of the communicative potential of the DSs examined in these Spanish- and EMI lectures is distributed along the continuum as follows:



**Figure 5.** Resulting continuum of DSs

Findings consider omission and message abandonment as the practices with the least communicative potential within teachers' linguistic repertoire since they often facilitate the partial or total dropout of the intended communicative objectives instead of helping in their achievement. Although lecturers may find the use of these context-embedded strategies convenient for the communicative situations at hand, their communicative potential is very restricted as the intended message is never fully delivered, and can be even lost when the strategies are context-reduced. In their place, there seems to be other discursive alternatives that may be more advantageous, namely, all-purpose words, code switching, foreignizing, and word coinage. These strategies can, however, lose their communicative potential if all classroom participants do not have a shared linguistic background (Smit, 2019). Put simply, if the teacher switches from English, which is the language of instruction, to his/her L1 but students have limited or none competence in that language, communication would fail. A similar situation would happen if the teacher resorts to foreignizing or word coinage using an unknown language to the students as reference. Therefore, the role of English as a lingua franca (ELF) places some communicative challenges that lecturers need to be aware of. The kind of strategies that are likely to assist lecturers in attaining their intended communicative goals are retrieval, restructuring, repetition, self-repair, approximation and circumlocution. Although these DSs entail impromptu linguistic adaptation of forms, and in some cases may lack accuracy (as in the case of approximation and circumlocution), they mediate in teachers' verbal production offering alternative language solutions that eventually conclude with the complete conveyance of the intended information.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

This investigation is concerned with the different DSs that university lecturers employ when teaching disciplinary content through their L1 and their L2, and the extent to which these DSs are effective tools in mediating the communication process. In the light of RQ1, it could be claimed that the language through which the teaching and learning process is realized seems to play an important role in the type of DSs used and the frequency

with which lecturers need to appeal to them (Thøgersen & Airey, 2011). In fact, lecturers seem to draw on the very same types of strategies, but they prioritize one over another depending on the language used as the medium of instruction. This is why the strategies identified as part of teachers' classroom discourse are typically common to all lessons, but their occurrence differs in L1 and EMI contexts. For example, sometimes teachers feel the urge to produce roundabout speech by means of modifying language to suit their intended communicative goals in EMI lessons. Some other times students' scarce involvement in L1 lessons force teachers to draw on particular DSs, such as repetition. These findings suggest that each learning scenario exposes the lecturer to distinct teaching challenges regarding not only their personal communicative needs, but their students' understanding and learning needs. And it is precisely the use of DSs that seems to answer and cater for the different discursive needs emerging when delivering contents through different languages of instruction.

In response to RQ2, it has been discovered that some strategies may render more potential than others when mediating effective communication among classroom participants. Consequently, a continuum of DSs has been put forward to examine their communicative potential. With this proposal and considering that real-life communication is to a great extent problematic, it may be of significant value to prepare L2 language users to cope with performance difficulties (Dörnyei, 1995). For this reason, this study tries to emphasize the importance of raising teachers' awareness regarding their classroom language use and the plentiful resources they can actually draw on to ease and improve their communication in the classroom (Sánchez-García, in press). This could have a clear impact on lecturers' continuous professional development programs, which could provide teachers with opportunities to reflect and become familiarized with DSs. Some of the strategies that could be enhanced may include approximation or circumlocution which, as evidenced in this study, are barely used by teachers but are likely to function as effective linguistic tools to convey disciplinary knowledge and possibly empower lecturers with a higher sense of security when doing so.

In future research it would be interesting to enlarge the sample and analyze and compare a larger number of teachers and their deployment of DSs as well as their impact on students' learning. Likewise, similar research could be conceived as a longitudinal study to examine the discourse challenges that lecturers face in EMI contexts over time to help them overcome them. ■

## Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks to Emma Dafouz for her academic generosity never taken for granted, and the reviewers for their valuable feedback.

## Notes

- 1 L1 refers to the native language of the participants, while L2 is used to refer to English as a foreign language (FL) and English as a second language (L2) interchangeably.
- 2 %o refers to number of occurrences per 1000 words (Biber et al., 1998).
- 3 Translations are the author's.
- 4 For a more comprehensive study of codeswitching in EMI contexts see Author.

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