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Original Research

Multilingual pedagogical reasoning: A framework for language-teacher development in EMI higher education

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The growing prevalence of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education has prompted closer consideration of academic-language development, multilingual participation, linguistic inequality, and the preparation of teachers working in English-medium systems. EAP and related language-support teachers occupy a distinctive position because their responsibilities centre on language and academic communication. The professional capability through which they reason when pedagogical, linguistic, and institutional considerations support competing responses remains insufficiently theorised. This conceptual paper develops multilingual pedagogical reasoning as a framework for language-teacher development in multilingual EMI higher education. Using a problem-driven theory synthesis, the paper engaged selected EMI, EAP, teacher-cognition, critical multilingual, language-management, agency, and professional-identity scholarship iteratively and purposively, assigning a distinct explanatory function to each retained theoretical resource. The synthesis defines multilingual pedagogical reasoning as situated professional judgement through which language-support teachers interpret consequential language-related dilemmas, consider plausible responses, and justify choices under particular pedagogical, linguistic, professional, and institutional conditions. The resulting framework distinguishes reasoned judgement from enactability and presents multilingual practice as one possible response among several. It incorporates evidence-informed reconsideration and positions professional identity as a site where responsibility and legitimate expertise are reconsidered. Four relational propositions and explicit scope conditions make these claims available for empirical examination. The framework offers a theoretically specified basis for professional learning centred on authentic pedagogical dilemmas. It remains provisional and open to qualification, reformulation, or rejection through practitioner appraisal and subsequent empirical investigation.

Keywords: *English Medium Instruction (EMI), professional development, English for academic purposes, multilingual pedagogical reasoning, Language Management Theory, teacher agency, professional identity*

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1. INTRODUCTION

English Medium Instruction (EMI) has become a prominent feature of higher education internationalisation, particularly in contexts where English is associated with academic mobility, institutional competitiveness, and participation in increasingly internationalised academic environments (Macaro, 2018; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). In many universities, English serves as a medium

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'English-dominant activity may remain pedagogically defensible when students are developing access to academic registers, genres, or communicative practices expected elsewhere in their studies. For language-support teachers, the more difficult question concerns how to judge among plausible responses when academic-English development, learner repertoires, participation, language hierarchy, and the learning purpose do not point towards a single pedagogical choice.'

for teaching academic subjects and has symbolic value in institutional aspirations concerning internationalisation, global visibility, and graduate preparedness. For example, Karim et al. (2023) found that Bangladeshi STEM and business graduates perceived their EMI education as contributing to English-proficiency development, employment, and workplace communication. These aspirations coexist with pedagogical difficulties when students access academic knowledge through a language that differs from their prior schooling or fuller linguistic repertoires. At the classroom level, these tensions take distinct forms in different higher-education contexts. In Bangladesh, Rafi and Morgan (2022) documented a disconnect between macro-level language policy and meso- and micro-level university practices in language-learning and content-acquisition courses, alongside varying degrees of natural translanguaging. In mainland China, Jiang and Zhang (2023) showed how linguistic and multimodal resources contributed to knowledge construction, cognitive scaffolding, engagement, and participation in an Electronic Business EMI classroom. In Türkiye, Bozbıyık and Balaman (2023) documented students' use of multilingual and multimodal resources to resolve problems of understanding in undergraduate EMI classroom interaction. In South Korea, Williams (2023) showed how undergraduate students' accounts of their EMI experiences connected language use with access to disciplinary content and documented the limitations of monolingually framed choices between Korean and English. In these settings, institutional English-medium arrangements coexist with multilingual practices through which participants pursue access to disciplinary knowledge, understanding, and participation.

In this context, EAP and related language-support teachers occupy a distinct professional position. Their work includes language instruction, academic literacy, genre, disciplinary communication, and students' participation in English-medium study (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Wingate, 2025). EAP teacher development already has an established, though uneven, literature addressing professional expertise, institutional provision, observation, collaboration, and academic-literacy practice.

Emerging EAP—EMI scholarship has begun to examine the more specific demands created when language specialists work in expanding EMI systems (Wingate, 2025). Zhou and Delogu (2026), for example, foreground the professional-development needs of EAP teachers in Chinese EMI provision. This growing literature clarifies an important distinction. Language-support teachers share some conditions with disciplinary EMI lecturers. Their professional responsibility centres on language and academic communication, including the exercise and development of that expertise when English-medium institutional expectations intersect with multilingual academic participation.

The professional problem becomes more demanding when multilingual pedagogy is considered. Evidence from tertiary EAP settings shows that translanguaging can expand pedagogical possibilities without constituting a uniformly appropriate response. In a Chinese university EAP course, Liu et al. (2024) found that students generally perceived teachers' and students' translanguaging practices as supporting understanding and learning, classroom communication, and motivation, and expressed concerns about reduced English exposure and overreliance on Chinese. From the teacher-development side, Liu et al. (2020) showed that researcher—teacher collaboration in a Chinese university EAP course contributed to changes in an EAP teacher's beliefs and translanguaging practices and documented tensions between monolingual TESOL ideologies and multilingual pedagogical principles. Evidence concerning instructors in East Asian tertiary EMI contexts indicates that teachers may adopt translingual strategies for academic and socioemotional purposes and work under institutional language policies that assign differing pedagogical value to those strategies (Neufeld et al., 2025). This evidence concerns tertiary EMI instructors generally; its applicability to EAP practitioners remains open to empirical investigation. English-dominant activity may remain pedagogically defensible when students are developing access to academic registers, genres, or communicative practices expected elsewhere in their studies. For language-support teachers, the more difficult question concerns how to judge among plausible responses when academic-English development, learner repertoires, participation, language hierarchy, and the learning purpose do not point towards a single pedagogical choice.

Such pedagogical judgement occurs under specific professional and institutional conditions. Language-related judgements are mediated by how teachers understand their professional responsibilities and by the conditions under which particular actions become legitimate or possible. Professional identity and agency are consequently relevant to the problem, particularly where teachers' understandings of legitimate expertise intersect with institutional language expectations. Adjacent evidence from disciplinary EMI settings illustrates these relationships. In a Chinese

STEM EMI programme, Ou and Gu (2024) show how lecturers' professional identities interacted with institutional and classroom discourses and influenced their engagement with translanguaging. In a Bangladeshi private university, Rahman et al. (2026) show how EMI teachers' understandings of their professional responsibilities, English-only policy expectations, and classroom conditions influenced their language choices and exercise of agency. These studies concern disciplinary EMI teachers. Their findings indicate the relevance of professional positioning, agency, and institutional conditions to the study of multilingual pedagogical reasoning.

EMI professional-development scholarship already offers substantial accounts of how educators learn for English-medium teaching. Dang et al.'s (2023) systematic review identifies persistent misalignments between the challenges faced by EMI educators in higher education and the formal professional learning available to them and emphasises the importance of ongoing informal learning and educator agency. Wang et al. (2025), reviewing empirical research on EMI teacher development in higher education from 2018 to 2022, identify formal training, collaboration, and self-initiated practice as major routes to development and characterise EMI teacher learning as hybrid, contested, and potentially transformative. This literature principally concerns EMI educators. It establishes important routes and conditions for professional learning, with applicability to EAP and related language-support teachers requiring separate investigation. Work involving language specialists brings the discussion closer to the present focus. Akıncıoğlu (2024), for instance, shows how structured collaboration between language specialists and content teachers can support interdisciplinary professional learning in Turkish EMI university settings. Akıncıoğlu (2025) addresses the institutional level and positions faculty development in a wider framework of EMI policy, quality, and professionalisation. These studies clarify how professional learning can be organised and institutionally supported. The particular professional capability required for consequential language-related judgements still requires theoretical specification.

The unresolved problem concerns the object of professional learning: the capability that these professional-development formats are intended to develop. Existing EMI teacher-development research has concentrated largely on the professional development of educators teaching academic subjects through English, addressing linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, psychological, and related aspects of EMI teaching (Dang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Wingate (2025) identifies limited engagement between EMI and EAP scholarship in student support and teacher education. Zhou and Delogu (2026) report that the professional development of EAP teachers in EMI contexts remains substantially underexamined compared with that of content teachers. Related conceptual work has proposed a professional-development framework for Global South ELT that integrates teacher cognition, reflective practice, post-method and decolonial perspectives, language management, and translanguaging, with the aim of supporting critical reconsideration of English-only beliefs and more context-sensitive pedagogical action (Karim et al., 2026). That framework refers to the development of teachers' pedagogical reasoning and organises professional development around critical examination of monolingual assumptions and movement towards language-management- and translanguaging-informed practice. Less clearly theorised is the professional capability through which EAP and language-support teachers make judgements when language-related pedagogical dilemmas place institutional English-medium expectations, academic-English development, students' multilingual repertoires, participation, and unequal language conditions in tension with one another, without prespecifying either multilingual or English-focused practice as the preferred response. We define multilingual pedagogical reasoning as the situated professional judgement through which language-support teachers interpret such dilemmas, consider plausible pedagogical responses, and justify their choices under particular pedagogical, linguistic, professional, and institutional conditions.

The paper addresses the following question: how can professional development for EAP and related language-support teachers in multilingual EMI higher education support multilingual pedagogical reasoning and account for institutional conditions of enactment and the definition of professional responsibility?

To address the question, this conceptual paper develops a professional-development framework centred on multilingual pedagogical reasoning. We examine how such reasoning may be supported through professional inquiry, how reasoned pedagogical judgements encounter institutional and professional conditions, and how evidence from enactment can return those judgements to further consideration. Professional identity remains relevant as a site where teachers reconsider professional responsibility and legitimate expertise. The proposed relationships are derived through a problem-driven theory synthesis of selected EMI, EAP, and language-teacher-development scholarship together with theoretical resources relevant to multilingual pedagogy, professional judgement, situated action, and professional identity. The framework offers a theoretically explicit set of propositions for empirical investigation. Its status is provisional, with empirical validation and transferability requiring further research.

2. METHODOLOGY

The framework was developed through a problem-driven theory synthesis based on iterative source selection tied to the focal professional problem. Conceptual research

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can advance theoretical understanding when differentiated perspectives are placed in relation around a focal subject, provided that the rationale for selecting theoretical resources, the explanatory function assigned to each, and the logic through which they are integrated are made explicit (Jaakkola, 2020). A conceptual framework likewise requires an integrated account in which its constituent constructs perform distinguishable explanatory functions and contribute to an integrated understanding of the subject under investigation (Jabareen, 2009). The synthesis was organised around the specific professional problem of how language-support teachers reason through language-related pedagogical dilemmas when academic-English development, students' multilingual repertoires, participation, unequal language conditions, and institutional expectations may support different courses of action.

The authors engaged the literature iteratively and purposively in relation to the focal problem. Source identification followed the explanatory needs arising during manuscript development. Sources were identified through the authors' prior familiarity with key scholarship, general searches undertaken as conceptual needs emerged, and examination of references in relevant works where these pointed to additional sources pertinent to the argument. Sources were examined for the specific conceptual or empirical contribution they could make to the developing argument, with attention to their theoretical orientation, principal claims or findings, population and setting where applicable, and relevance to the focal professional problem. The source base was last checked and updated in August 2026. The project record contains no systematic search covering all potentially relevant literature, formal database-search strategy, systematic citation-chaining procedure, or claim of exhaustive coverage. Sources were retained when they were directly relevant to EAP or related language-support teachers, or when adjacent scholarship provided a necessary conceptual resource for explaining professional judgement, multilingual evaluation, language management, enactability, professional identity, or professional learning. All three authors contributed sources and participated in retention decisions. The first and third authors conducted the conceptual synthesis, with the first author leading the formal analysis. We consequently report the procedures actually used, including their iterative character and the absence of formal inclusion criteria associated with systematic reviewing.

The focal problem was first situated against selected relevant EMI and EAP teacher-development scholarship. Dang et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2025) were used to establish the principal professional-learning concerns already developed in higher-education EMI scholarship, including formal and informal learning, collaboration, agency, and institutional conditions. Both reviews principally concern educators teaching academic subjects through English. Scholarship involving language specialists and EAP practitioners was therefore also examined. This included Akıncıoğlu's (2024) work on language-specialist and content-teacher collaboration, Akıncıoğlu's (2025) institutional framework for EMI professionalisation, Wingate's (2025) account of the relationship between EAP and EMI student support and teacher education, and Zhou and Delogu's (2026) examination of EAP teacher development in Chinese EMI higher education. Karim et al.'s (2026) framework for Global South ELT was considered as a related conceptual approach because it brings teacher cognition and reflective professional learning into relation with post-method and decolonial perspectives, language management, and translanguaging-informed pedagogy. Its directional architecture organises professional development around critical reconsideration of English-only beliefs and movement towards language-management- and translanguaging-informed practice. The present synthesis allows multilingual, English-focused, multimodal, and other responses to remain potentially defensible according to the dilemma and its conditions. This comparison also indicated that professional-development routes and conditions such as collaboration, sustained learning, agency, reflective inquiry, and institutional support were already substantial concerns in the literature. The problem retained for synthesis was narrower: the professional judgement required when language-support teachers weigh pedagogical, linguistic, ethical, and institutional considerations in consequential language-related dilemmas.

Theoretical resources were differentiated according to the aspects of the focal problem they could explain. Teacher cognition provided an account of what teachers think, know, and believe and of how such cognition develops in relation to prior learning, teacher education, classroom experience, and practice (Borg, 2003). Scholarship on teacher judgement and pedagogical reasoning contributed a different resource: an account of teachers' pedagogical judgements, their planning and interactive decisions, and the processes of comprehension, reasoning, transformation, evaluation, and reflection involved in professional teaching (Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Shulman, 1987). Accounts of the planned and purposeful mobilisation of learners' wider linguistic repertoires in pedagogical translanguaging scholarship expanded the range of language-related possibilities available for consideration (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). Higher-education research further indicated that such possibilities required evaluation through their consequences for learning, academic-English exposure, participation, and opportunities to contribute knowledge (Liu et al., 2024; Zheng & Qiu, 2024). These bodies of scholarship were retained for distinct and complementary explanatory purposes, allowing professional judgement to remain the focal object without making increased multilingual language use its predetermined outcome.

Language Management Theory (LMT) was retained for a more specifically language-focused analytic purpose. Its account of noticing, evaluation, adjustment, and implementation provides a vocabulary for examining how aspects of communicative activity become objects of management. The distinction between simple and organised management connects management during concrete interaction with trans-interactional processes involving social networks and institutions. LMT contributes a language-management vocabulary to the framework. Pedagogical, ethical, and critical evaluation comes from the additional theoretical resources used in the synthesis. Ecological accounts of agency addressed a different explanatory question: why a reasoned pedagogical judgement may encounter conditions that restrict or prevent its enactment. Agency was approached as achieved through actors' engagement with particular contexts and as temporally influenced by prior experience, future orientations, and practical-evaluative engagement with present circumstances (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Priestley et al.'s (2015) extension of this ecological perspective to teachers locates agency in relations among professional histories, aspirations, resources, relationships, and the cultural, structural, and material conditions of work. Teacher-identity scholarship was retained for another aspect of the problem: understanding professional identity as continually reconsidered in context and examining how teachers' professional self-understandings relate to what they recognise as legitimate expertise and responsibility (Beijaard et al., 2004; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Varghese et al., 2005). Identity was consequently positioned in the synthesis as relevant to professional responsibility and legitimate expertise without prespecifying movement towards a particular professional identity.

Professional-learning traditions were considered differently. Reflective practice, communities of practice, mentoring and collaboration, and sustained professional development offer established accounts of how teacher learning can be organised and supported (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Farrell, 2015, 2018; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mann & Walsh, 2017; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Wenger, 1998). These traditions were considered as possible resources for organising professional inquiry. The project records contain no documented comparison or formal screening of alternative professional-learning theories. Their contribution concerns the conditions and arrangements supporting professional learning.

The proposed framework assigns the explanation of language-related professional judgement to other theoretical resources. Reflective dialogue, collaborative inquiry, mentoring, sustained engagement, and participation in professional communities were used as potential forms of support through which professional judgements could be articulated, alternative interpretations encountered, evidence examined, institutional conditions considered, and pedagogical decisions revisited. This distinction kept the synthesis centred on language-related professional judgement and allowed professional-learning scholarship to inform how inquiry into that judgement might be organised and supported.

The conceptual relationships were derived through comparison of these differentiated explanatory functions around the focal professional problem, with the distinctions among them preserved. The synthesis examined how resources addressing the interpretation and evaluation of language-related dilemmas could be related to those addressing possibilities for situated action, subsequent reconsideration, and professional responsibility. The contributing perspectives remained distinct theoretical resources. Relationships were retained where the contributing resources performed distinguishable explanatory work and could be articulated in a form open to subsequent conceptual appraisal and empirical investigation. Professional-learning arrangements remained analytically separate from these relationships, provided potential support for inquiry, and formed no mandatory sequence of stages in the reasoning process.

The resulting framework represents a theoretically specified account developed around a bounded professional problem. It makes no claim of exhaustive literature coverage, standardisation as a professional-development intervention, or universal applicability as a developmental sequence. Its parts were retained because they perform distinguishable explanatory functions in that problem. The relationships among them are stated as theoretical propositions for practitioner appraisal and empirical investigation. The framework is thus provisional and open to refinement, qualification, reduction, rearrangement, or rejection according to subsequent empirical evidence.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Critical multilingual pedagogy

The multilingual turn in language education challenges monolingual assumptions that have influenced theories, curricula, pedagogies, and practices in language education. It redirects attention from monolingual norms and deficit-oriented views of multilingual learners towards the linguistic and semiotic repertoires through which they participate in learning (Conteh & Meier, 2014; García & Wei, 2014; May, 2014; Romanenko et al., 2026). For EMI higher education, this change is particularly significant because institutional language arrangements may privilege English. Classroom meaning-making also uses multilingual resources that exceed English-only accounts (Baltezarević et al., 2026; Neufeld et al., 2025). The issue concerns how English-medium education can recognise multilingual resources and sustain students' access to academic English.

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Thus, language-related pedagogical judgement requires contextual evaluation because English-focused and multilingual practices may each serve particular learning purposes.

The significance of this tension includes classroom techniques and teachers' professional development. Writing about teacher professionalisation in pre-service and in-service settings in England, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria, Putjata et al. (2022) argue that multilingual pedagogy continues to lack regular implementation despite strong psycholinguistic and sociopolitical arguments, and report persistent monolingual mindsets in educational settings. They further illustrate how teachers' educational biographies influence their orientations towards multilingualism and how monolingual education policies and professionalisation can perpetuate monolingual beliefs. Their discussion concerns teacher professionalisation outside EMI higher education. Its relevance here comes from locating multilingual pedagogy in teachers' professional development and classroom practice. For language-support teachers in EMI settings, this position directs attention to assumptions about legitimate language use and to how multilingual and English-focused pedagogical possibilities may be considered in relation to learning purposes, participation, access, and unequal language conditions.

Translanguaging offers one influential pedagogical expression of the multilingual turn because it foregrounds how bi/multilingual speakers use linguistic, semiotic, and multimodal resources for meaning-making (García & Wei, 2014; Li, 2018). In East Asian tertiary EMI contexts, Neufeld et al. (2025) found that instructors generally held positive stances towards the academic and socioemotional value of translanguaging and documented scepticism and tensions with university language policies. Their review further shows that instructors planned and implemented translingual strategies, materials, and tasks and made responsive changes in language use in relation to immediate classroom needs. This evidence concerns tertiary EMI instructors generally. For EAP and related language-support teachers, it identifies pedagogical possibilities that may warrant consideration where academic-English development and multilingual meaning-making intersect.

Translanguaging provides one possible response to the pedagogical and equitable challenges of EMI. A critical multilingual perspective asks how particular language practices affect access, participation, and the recognition of different linguistic and epistemic resources. Higher-education evidence illustrates both the possibilities and the qualifications involved. In a Chinese university EAP course, Liu et al. (2024) found that students perceived translanguaging as supporting understanding and learning, classroom communication, and motivation and identified concerns about reduced exposure to English and over-reliance on Chinese. In an EMI degree programme at a Chinese university, Zheng and Qiu (2024) show how transnational teachers and students used translanguaging to counter epistemic injustice and expand opportunities for knowledge participation. Such findings caution against evaluating multilingual pedagogy simply by the visible presence or quantity of languages used. More consequential is how particular language practices influence learning, participation, access to academic language, and opportunities to contribute knowledge in a given context.

Critical multilingual pedagogy provides an ethical and pedagogical basis for evaluating language-related choices. The reasoning used to select among plausible responses requires further theoretical specification. Multilingual mediation may support participation or conceptual elaboration and may privilege a dominant common language over less represented repertoires. Sustained English-focused work may support access to academic registers and may make immediate participation more demanding for some learners. The unresolved theoretical issue concerns how language-support teachers interpret such tensions, consider plausible responses, and justify pedagogical choices with multilingual and English-focused practices retained as context-dependent possibilities.

3.2. Language management

Critical multilingual pedagogy clarifies some of the considerations against which language-related choices may be evaluated and offers limited detail on how communicative activity becomes identifiable as a matter for attention and possible adjustment. LMT provides a complementary analytic resource. In LMT, language and other aspects of communicative activity may become objects of management when a departure from an expected norm is noted and evaluated, after which an adjustment may be designed and implemented (Nekvapil, 2007, 2016; Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015). Of particular relevance to EMI is the distinction between simple and organised language management. Simple management occurs during concrete interaction. Organised management is trans-interactional and may involve social networks or institutions with the authority to influence language-related practices. LMT is especially concerned with the relationship between these levels and their connections as part of the same analytic process (Nekvapil, 2016; Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015). This distinction allows immediate language-related events to be considered in relation to the wider conditions through which they acquire pedagogical and institutional significance. Difficulties involving comprehension, participation, terminology, task interpretation, or academic-language use may become noticeable in classroom interaction. Possible responses may also be influenced by medium-of-instruction policy, assessment requirements, curriculum expectations, professional authority, and institutional understandings of legitimate academic language.

'A language-support teacher may judge multilingual scaffolding, English-focused rehearsal, or another form of support appropriate for a particular learning purpose and may lack the authority, curricular space, institutional support, or material resources needed to act accordingly. Professional judgement and pedagogical enactment consequently need to be distinguished as analytically distinct processes.'

LMT performs a different analytic function from critical multilingual pedagogy. It offers a language-specific vocabulary for examining how communicative activity becomes noticeable and evaluable, how adjustments may be designed and implemented, and how management during concrete interaction relates to organised processes outside the immediate encounter (Nekvapil, 2016; Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015). Its analytic contribution concerns noticing, evaluation, adjustment, and implementation. Additional pedagogical, ethical, and critical resources provide grounds for evaluating possible responses. Questions of academic-language access, recognition, participation, available repertoires, and linguistic inequality require evaluative consideration outside the identification and management of a language-related event. The two perspectives perform distinct and complementary functions. LMT explicates the language-management process, and critical multilingual scholarship foregrounds pedagogical and distributive considerations relevant to evaluating possible responses.

Keeping these functions distinct also keeps translanguaging among several pedagogical possibilities. Language-education scholarship documents a wider repertoire of possibilities involving learners' own languages, bilingual approaches, crosslinguistic comparison, multilingual scaffolding, different languages for input and output, and explicit work on vocabulary and discourse using several languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Hall & Cook, 2012). These possibilities can accompany multimodal mediation, genre exemplification, deliberately sustained engagement with English, and other pedagogical responses when warranted by the learning purpose. The relevant professional question concerns how particular possibilities relate to academic-English development, participation, available repertoires, and possible linguistic exclusion under specific pedagogical conditions. This perspective presents language-related difficulties as situated pedagogical questions involving classroom interaction and institutional conditions. Academic vocabulary, genre expectations, task comprehension, oral participation, and access to disciplinary discourse can be examined as situated pedagogical questions whose interpretation involves classroom interaction and the organised conditions surrounding it. Adjacent evidence from tertiary content teaching illustrates how language-related work already arises during disciplinary instruction. In first-year accounting classrooms in a New Zealand tertiary institution, Basturkmen and Shackleford (2015) observed frequent language-related episodes, largely concerned with technical vocabulary and conventional ways of articulating disciplinary ideas. Using data from the same study, Basturkmen (2018) examined how two accounting lecturers understood their responsibility for supporting disciplinary language development and the strategies they used to address language issues arising incidentally during teaching. These studies provide evidence about disciplinary lecturers; applicability to EAP and other language-support teachers remains untested. They establish no account of how language-support teachers reason through such situations. Their relevance comes from showing that language-related pedagogical work can arise during disciplinary teaching. They leave open how language-support teachers interpret and justify such judgements as part of their professional responsibilities. This question becomes more complex once a pedagogical judgement encounters the conditions under which teachers are able to act.

3.3. Cognition, agency, and situated action

Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, professional experience, and understandings of their institutional context influence how pedagogical situations are interpreted and which responses initially appear plausible (Borg, 2003; Lukácsi & Fűköh, 2023). Such cognition may produce different forms of classroom action under different contextual conditions, since contextual conditions may facilitate or constrain the extent to which teachers can enact practices consistent with what they know and believe (Borg, 2003). A language-support teacher may judge multilingual scaffolding, English-focused rehearsal, or another form of support appropriate for a particular learning purpose and may lack the authority, curricular space, institutional support, or material resources needed to act accordingly. Professional judgement and pedagogical enactment consequently need to be distinguished as analytically distinct processes.

An ecological understanding of agency provides a basis for explaining this distinction. Biesta and Tedder (2007) define agency as an achievement arising through actors' engagement with particular contexts for action. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) define agency in temporal terms: it incorporates past experiences and habitual patterns, is oriented towards future possibilities, and is exercised through practical-evaluative judgement under present contingencies. Using these foundations, Priestley et al. (2015) define teacher agency as an ecological achievement influenced by teachers' personal and professional histories, future aspirations, and engagement with the cultural, structural, and material conditions of their work.

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This perspective resists reducing difficulties in enactment to individual deficits of knowledge, commitment, or willingness. The analytical question concerns teachers' pedagogical judgements and the scope for action under the conditions in which those judgements are made.

EMI research provides adjacent empirical evidence for this relationship between professional judgement and conditions for action. In a study of six disciplinary EMI teachers at a private university in Bangladesh, Rahman et al. (2026) examined how teachers' perceptions of their professional responsibilities interacted with linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional affordances and constraints and with the classroom practices through which agency was enacted. Their analysis identified content-focused practitioners who tended to reproduce English-only policy and multilingually aware facilitators who strategically used Bangla and multimodal resources to support learning. Teachers' practices ranged from policy reproduction to strategic resistance, with understandings of professional responsibility interacting with contextual constraints and influencing possibilities for action. Their analysis also connects macro- and meso-level policy and institutional conditions with micro-level classroom realities and situates teachers' decisions in connected policy, institutional, and classroom conditions. The findings concern disciplinary EMI teachers. They provide adjacent evidence that pedagogical judgement acquires practical form under particular arrangements of affordance and constraint.

Institutional positioning adds another aspect to this relationship. Wang et al. (2025) show that collaboration between EMI teachers and language specialists can involve expertise exchange and mutual learning and may reproduce power asymmetries in which language specialists are positioned as subordinate supporters and their expertise may be undervalued. Akıncıoğlu (2025) similarly argues that the marginal institutional status of applied linguistics can contribute to the marginalisation of EAP professionals, particularly where disciplinary colleagues perceive language-specialist guidance as undermining their own expertise. Such work identifies professional authority, access to collaboration, curriculum and assessment arrangements, workload, institutional language expectations, and available resources as relevant conditions for what teachers can do with a pedagogical judgement. An ecological account of agency allows situated action to be examined without assuming that institutional constraints can be overcome through individual effort alone. These conditions also influence how expertise and responsibility are recognised, bringing professional identity into the analysis.

3.4. Professional identity and responsibility

Teachers' understandings of who they are professionally are tied to what they regard as legitimate responsibilities, appropriate forms of expertise, and defensible courses of action. Teacher-identity scholarship presents professional identity as dynamic, multiple, contextually situated, and continually reconstructed through teachers' professional and social worlds (Beijaard et al., 2004; Kabilan et al., 2025; Kayi-Aydar, 2019; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Varghese et al., 2005). Such professional self-understandings can influence what teachers recognise as part of their professional remit and which forms of action they regard as legitimate. Hence, for language-support teachers, questions concerning multilingual mediation, academic-literacy support, disciplinary collaboration, or engagement with institutional language expectations may intersect with how professional responsibility and legitimate expertise are understood.

Relevant EAP research illustrates how professional identities and understandings of expertise are developed under particular institutional and disciplinary conditions. In UK higher education, Fitzpatrick et al. (2022) challenge assumptions that EAP practitioners constitute a homogeneous professional group, showing that they work under varied and locally specific labels in different institutional settings and articulate particular understandings of EAP expertise and its development. In Iran, Atai et al. (2022) trace the identity construction of a novice EAP teacher whose developing professional position was marked by tensions between claimed and constructed identities, content-related conflicts, interpersonal difficulties, and the contextual conditions of EAP work. Managing the relationship between language and disciplinary content emerged in this case as a site of professional struggle involving an unsettled teacher identity. Hu et al. (2024), examining EAP teachers in a Sino-British transnational English-medium university in China, further show how professional identities were constructed in relation to institutional language ideologies and educational policies, including institutionally defined responsibilities associated with EAP teaching, research, and service. In these settings, EAP professional identity varies according to local professional and institutional conditions. This variation cautions against prespecifying an enlarged professional identity when considering the responsibilities of language-support teachers.

EMI scholarship provides complementary, though adjacent, evidence that language policy and classroom practice can intensify professional identity negotiation. In a study of two STEM lecturers in a Chinese EMI programme, Ou and Gu (2024) show how professional identities and agency interacted with institutional and classroom discourses and influenced different orientations towards translanguaging pedagogy. Their analysis identifies tensions between teaching and researcher identities and shows how institutional discourses of internationalism and research meritocracy influenced teachers' language ideologies and classroom practices. Similarly, Karim et al.

(2022), using a dialogical perspective to interpret published literature on EMI in Malaysian and Chinese universities, identify tensions between content-teacher and EMI-teacher positions. Their synthesis describes these tensions as generating multiple professional I-positions and interprets bilingual classroom practices as contributing to a bilingual teacher identity that could diverge from formal EMI policy expectations. Both studies concern disciplinary EMI teachers. They show how professional identity develops through encounters among institutional expectations, classroom responsibilities, language practices, and understandings of legitimate professional action.

Professional identity can consequently be related to language-related professional judgement, with identity transformation retained as one possible outcome of professional development. Teachers' existing professional self-understandings may influence which responsibilities they recognise as theirs and which pedagogical actions they regard as legitimate. Repeated engagement with language-related responsibilities may provide occasions for those understandings to be reconsidered. Such reconsideration may involve reaffirming an existing position, extending or combining responsibilities, contesting institutional categorisations, or declining forms of work considered incompatible with professional expertise or working conditions. The theoretical significance of professional identity for the present problem concerns the reconsideration of responsibility and legitimate expertise. It specifies no predetermined professional identity. The theoretical task is accordingly to account for language-related professional judgement in a way that keeps multilingual evaluation, language management, situated action, and contextually reconsidered responsibility analytically distinct and allows their relationships to be examined.

4. RESULTS

The theory synthesis generated four interrelated conceptual outputs. It specifies multilingual pedagogical reasoning as the focal professional capability, locates that capability in a relational framework, formulates propositions through which the principal relationships can be examined, and establishes scope conditions delimiting the framework's intended application. These outputs represent theoretically derived claims that await examination through implementation.

4.1. Multilingual pedagogical reasoning

Multilingual pedagogical reasoning is defined here as the situated professional judgement through which language-support teachers interpret language-related pedagogical dilemmas, consider plausible responses, and justify their choices in relation to learning purposes, students' linguistic and semiotic resources, academic-language development, participation, language hierarchy, and professional and institutional conditions under which action becomes possible. The construct becomes particularly relevant where consequential pedagogical, linguistic, ethical, or institutional considerations do not converge on a single course of action.

Three analytically distinguishable operations specify this capability. Interpretation concerns what is at stake in a language-related pedagogical dilemma and which considerations apply to it. Consideration concerns the identification of plausible responses and examination of their potential consequences. Justification concerns the grounds on which a provisional pedagogical judgement can be defended under the conditions in which it is made. These operations describe a deliberative relationship with recursive movement among the three operations. Teachers may revisit an earlier interpretation, reconsider available responses, or revise the grounds for a judgement as further considerations become salient.

Multilingual pedagogical reasoning is narrower than teacher cognition and concerns professional judgement among several possible teaching strategies. Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, and professional experiences influence how a situation is interpreted. The construct concerns the professional judgement used to consider and justify competing possibilities. The amount of multilingual practice provides no direct measure of reasoning quality. Depending on the dilemma and its conditions, a defensible response may involve multilingual mediation, sustained English-focused work, multimodal support, sequencing the use of linguistic resources, adaptation of a task, or another pedagogical response. What defines the construct is the reasoned interpretation, consideration, and justification of plausible alternatives, with no predetermined linguistic practice specified as its outcome.

4.2. Framework relationships

The framework locates multilingual pedagogical reasoning between the recognition of a consequential language-related dilemma and the conditions under which a provisional judgement may become actionable. Teacher cognition provides analytical resources. Critical multilingual evaluation and LMT-informed language-management analysis make different aspects of the dilemma accessible for consideration. Professional identity and understandings of responsibility also interact with reasoning through teachers' conceptions of legitimate expertise and professional remit. These resources inform professional judgement without prescribing which response should follow. A provisional pedagogical judgement subsequently encounters conditions affecting enactability. What becomes possible may differ from what the teacher regards as pedagogically defensible, allowing a response to be enacted as intended, adapted, negotiated, deferred, or prevented. Where enactment or partial enactment occurs, evidence

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may support, qualify, complicate, or challenge the earlier judgement and return it to reconsideration. Professional-learning arrangements support inquiry throughout these relationships and form no constitutive stage of multilingual pedagogical reasoning. Figure 1 represents this relational architecture.

4.3. Relational propositions

Four propositions specify the principal relationships proposed by the framework and make them available for conceptual appraisal and empirical investigation.

Proposition 1. Language-related dilemmas and multilingual pedagogical reasoning. Multilingual pedagogical reasoning becomes particularly salient when language-support teachers encounter consequential pedagogical dilemmas in which considerations concerning academic-English development, learners' multilingual repertoires, participation, language hierarchy, learning purposes, and institutional expectations support more than one plausible response. Under these conditions, professional judgement involves interpreting the dilemma, considering plausible responses, making the grounds for a provisional pedagogical judgement explicit, and making no predetermined language strategy the default response.

Proposition 2. Evaluative resources and professional judgement. Critical multilingual evaluation and LMT-informed language-management analysis contribute different resources to professional reasoning. Critical multilingual evaluation foregrounds recognition, participation, academic-language access, students' repertoires, and unequal language relations. LMT-informed analysis supports examination of what becomes noticeable and evaluable, possible adjustments, and connections between interactional management and organised processes outside the immediate encounter. Neither determines whether a multilingual, English-focused, multimodal, or otherwise configured response is preferable in a particular situation.

Proposition 3. Institutional conditions and enactability. Reasoned language-related pedagogical judgements may result in several classroom outcomes, including enactment, adaptation, deferral, or prevention. Their enactability is influenced by relations between teachers' professional

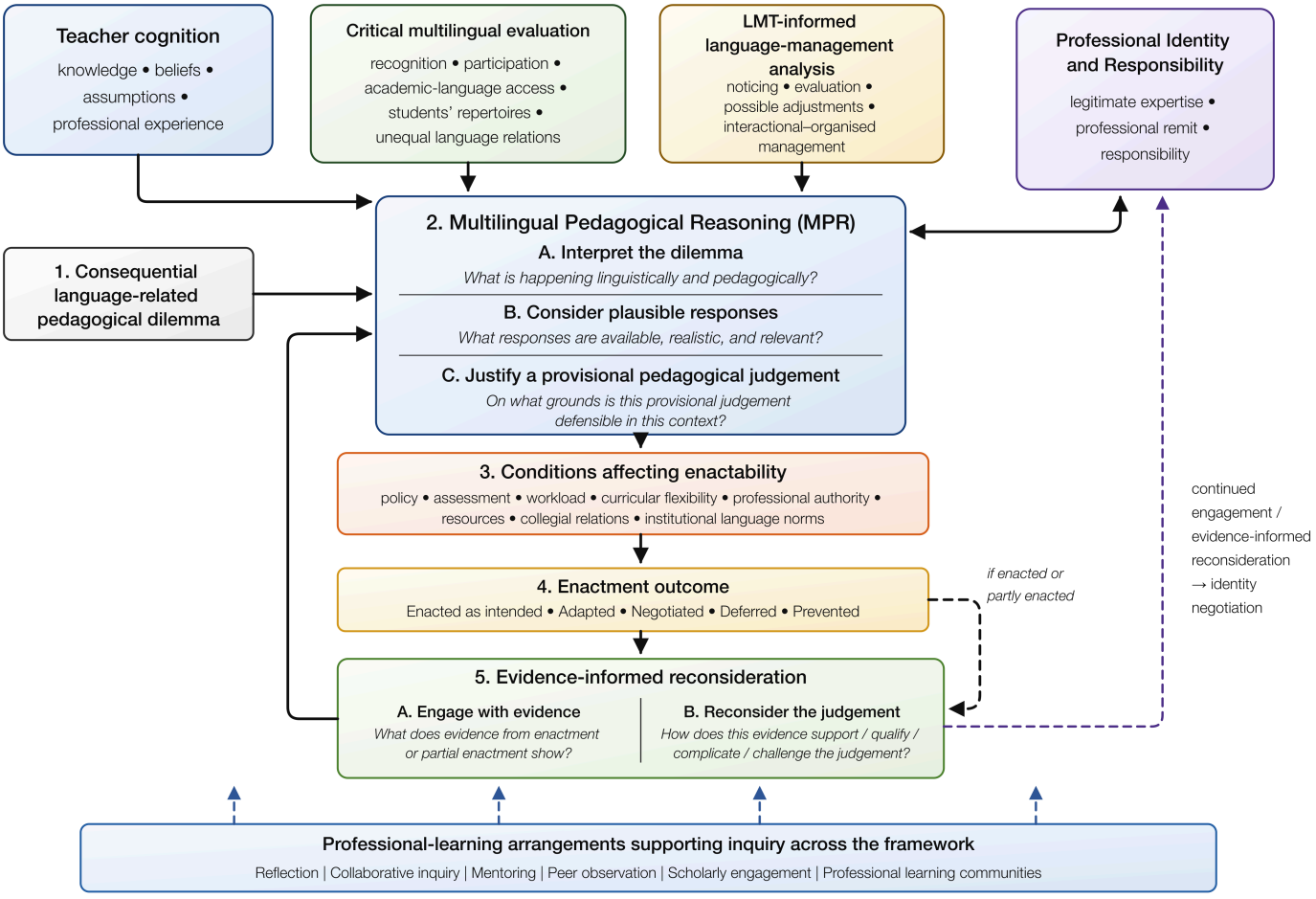

Figure 1. A professional development framework for multilingual pedagogical reasoning in EMI higher education

purposes and the cultural, structural, material, and relational conditions of their work. Policy, assessment, workload, curricular flexibility, professional authority, resources, collegial relations, and institutional language norms may expand, restrict, or redirect possibilities for action. A reasoned response *may accordingly be enacted as intended, adapted, negotiated, deferred, or prevented.*

Proposition 4. Evidence-informed reconsideration and identity negotiation. Where reasoned pedagogical judgements are enacted or partly enacted, evidence concerning their consequences can provide grounds for supporting, qualifying, complicating, or reconsidering the original interpretation, response, or justification. Continued engagement with language-related pedagogical responsibility may also create occasions for professional identity negotiation and may prompt teachers to reconsider what they regard as legitimate expertise, professional remit, and responsibility without requiring movement towards a predetermined professional identity.

These propositions express theoretical expectations awaiting examination through implementation. Their value depends on whether the proposed distinctions and connections remain analytically useful when examined in the professional settings for which the framework is intended. Subsequent empirical evidence may support, qualify, reformulate, or reject them.

4.4. Scope conditions

The framework is intended primarily for EAP, ESP, English foundation, academic-English, communication-skills, and related language-support teachers working in multilingual EMI higher education. Its propositions should not be transferred automatically to disciplinary EMI lecturers, whose professional responsibilities, language-related expertise, curricular authority, and institutional positioning may differ from those of language-support teachers. Evidence from disciplinary EMI settings can clarify adjacent relationships, but applicability to the focal professional group remains an empirical question.

The framework does not assume that explicit multilingual pedagogical reasoning is required for every language-related classroom decision. Much pedagogical activity may proceed through established routines and accumulated professional knowledge. The framework becomes relevant where a consequential language-related situation presents more than one plausible response and where competing linguistic, pedagogical, ethical, or institutional implications warrant explicit consideration and justification.

Application of the framework does not presuppose supportive multilingual policy, unrestricted teacher autonomy, teacher—student knowledge of a common language, or access to every potentially useful pedagogical resource. Restrictive policy and limited professional discretion may themselves become conditions relevant to professional reasoning. Where teachers possess little authority to modify practice, the framework may function more strongly as a means of professional analysis and institutional diagnosis than as a basis for pedagogical experimentation. Multilingual pedagogical reasoning can be used by teachers with partial knowledge of the languages represented among their students. Teachers' linguistic knowledge, students' available repertoires, peer resources, multimodal possibilities, academic-language demands, and other locally available resources form part of the conditions against which plausible responses and their enactability are considered.

The framework also distinguishes its conceptual claims from claims about educational effects. It does not predict that greater multilingual language use will necessarily improve learning, participation, confidence, or academic literacy, nor that professional learning organised around the framework will necessarily transform classroom practice or professional identity. These remain empirical questions. The more circumscribed claim is that the framework provides a theoretically specified basis for investigating how language-support teachers reason through consequential language-related pedagogical dilemmas, how institutional conditions influence the enactability of their judgements, how evidence may inform subsequent reconsideration, and how engagement with language-related professional responsibility may intersect with professional identity negotiation.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Conceptual contribution

The contribution of multilingual pedagogical reasoning becomes clearer when the framework is considered against what EMI and language-teacher professional-development scholarship has already established. Dang et al.'s (2023) systematic review identifies persistent misalignments between the challenges experienced by higher-education EMI educators and the formal professional learning available to them and emphasises informal ongoing learning and educator agency. Wang et al. (2025), reviewing 30 empirical studies of EMI teacher development in higher education, identify formal training, teacher collaboration, and self-initiated practice as major developmental routes and characterise EMI teacher development as a hybrid, contested, and potentially transformative process. Both reviews principally concern educators teaching academic subjects through English. Wang et al. (2025) also consider language specialists in collaborative arrangements. The professional group addressed here comprises EAP and related language-support teachers. This scholarship establishes the importance of professional-learning opportunities, agency, collaboration, and institutional conditions. Less clearly specified is the language-related professional capability around which development for language-support teachers might be organised.

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Karim et al. (2026) provide a closer conceptual point of comparison through a professional-development framework for Global South ELT that brings teacher cognition and reflective professional learning into relation with post-method and decolonial perspectives, language management, and translanguaging-informed pedagogy. Their framework supports critical engagement with English-only assumptions and movement towards pedagogical action informed by language management and translanguaging. The framework developed here addresses a related, more specific problem. It uses the quality of professional judgement as the criterion of development and foregrounds the judgement required when language-support teachers encounter consequential dilemmas for which multilingual, English-focused, multimodal, or otherwise configured responses may remain defensible under different pedagogical and institutional conditions. Professional learning is consequently oriented towards making the grounds of such judgement explicit, contestable, and open to reconsideration and leaves the eventual linguistic response open to situated professional judgement.

The conceptual contribution is also relational and analytically differentiated. Teacher cognition, critical multilingual scholarship, LMT, ecological accounts of agency, and professional-identity scholarship are retained because each addresses a different aspect of the focal problem. Their combination forms no encompassing theory of teacher development. Maintaining those distinctions allows the framework to separate the resources brought to professional judgement from the judgement itself and to distinguish a pedagogically defensible judgement from the institutional conditions affecting its enactability. It also leaves professional identity as a contextually reconsidered aspect of responsibility, with identity transformation excluded as a required indicator of developmental success. The resulting framework can consequently be examined through relationships that remain analytically distinguishable without relying on a general claim that several established theories jointly explain teacher development.

This positioning also contributes to multilingual pedagogy, as it presents multilingual practice as one possible outcome of professional judgement and leaves the direction of development open. The availability of multiple linguistic resources leaves questions concerning participation, recognition, academic-language access, and unequal language relations open for situated evaluation. A multilingual response may facilitate participation for some students and disadvantage students who lack access to a locally dominant language. Sustained English-focused work may support access to an academic register and increase immediate communicative difficulty for some learners. The relevant developmental question concerns whether teachers can justify a response through its learning purpose, the available linguistic and semiotic resources, its participation consequences, its implications for academic-language development, and its effects on differently positioned learners. This concern has particular relevance for EAP and related language-support professionals. Wingate (2025) identifies limited engagement between EMI and EAP scholarship in relation to student support and teacher education and argues for greater cross-fertilisation between the two areas. Focusing directly on EAP practitioners in Chinese EMI higher education, Zhou and Delogu (2026) found that professional development specifically addressing EAP teachers was limited in the EMI provisions they investigated and associated this situation partly with insufficient institutional awareness and support. Multilingual pedagogical reasoning extends this conversation through its focus on the judgement required of professionals whose remit already centres on language and academic communication and may encounter competing demands among academic-English development, multilingual participation, linguistic inequality, disciplinary expectations, and institutional legitimacy.

A further contribution concerns the separation of pedagogical judgement from enactability. Akıncıoğlu (2024) demonstrates how structured collaboration between language specialists and content teachers can support interdisciplinary work in Turkish EMI university settings. Akıncıoğlu (2025) places EMI professionalisation in institutional policy, quality, governance, and professional-development arrangements. Such work establishes that professional learning cannot be understood as an individual undertaking detached from institutional organisation. The present framework applies this finding to the interpretation of pedagogical action through a distinction between what a teacher regards as defensible and what surrounding conditions make possible. This distinction cautions against reading non-enactment as evidence of weak professional reasoning and against interpreting visible innovation as evidence that the judgement producing it was necessarily well founded. It also resists relocating responsibility for institutionally constrained action onto individual teachers when policy, assessment, workload, curricular authority, collegial relations, or institutional language expectations materially delimit what they can enact.

5.2. Professional-learning implications

These conceptual distinctions have implications for how professional learning might be organised. The framework permits several developmental formats and allows institutions to use existing professional-learning arrangements. A new programme based on a fixed sequence of multilingual strategies is unnecessary. Reflective practice, collaborative inquiry, mentoring, peer observation, scholarly engagement, and professional learning communities are possible arrangements through which language-related judgements can be articulated and examined.

Work on reflective practice and dialogic reflection demonstrates how professional experience can be articulated, questioned, and reconsidered (Farrell, 2015, 2018; Karim et al., 2024; Mann & Walsh, 2017). Wider professional-development scholarship identifies collaboration, sustained engagement, feedback, professional support, and professional communities as conditions supporting teacher learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Their relevance comes from the opportunities they create for inquiry. The framework assigns them no mandatory place in a programme.

Professional learning can consequently begin with consequential language-related dilemmas arising from teachers' own settings. These may involve uneven classroom participation, difficulties with academic terminology, students' use of familiar languages during a task, competing demands between academic-English development and immediate comprehension, or tension between an institutional English-medium expectation and an identified learning need. Professional inquiry makes the teacher's interpretation accessible for scrutiny, surfaces assumptions underlying that interpretation, supports consideration of plausible responses and their consequences, and examines the conditions under which different responses would be more or less enactable. Where action occurs, relevant classroom evidence can inform subsequent inquiry. Where action is restricted, attention can address the constraint, possibilities for adaptation or professional discussion, and the relationship between pedagogical defensibility and institutional permission.

The organisational form of such inquiry should remain context-sensitive. It might be incorporated into an existing EAP development programme, mentoring relationship, professional learning community, peer-observation arrangement, collaborative inquiry, or longer-term professional-learning initiative. No particular duration or combination of arrangements follows from the framework itself. What matters is whether teachers have meaningful opportunities to articulate language-related judgements, encounter alternative interpretations, examine relevant evidence, consider conditions affecting action, and revisit earlier decisions.

This position also assigns responsibility for professional development to teachers and institutions. Meaningful inquiry requires time, access to relevant scholarship and evidence, opportunities for professional dialogue, and sufficient professional discretion to examine alternatives. Some institutions may provide collaborative relationships between language specialists and disciplinary colleagues. Other institutions may position language-support professionals peripherally or offer them limited authority over curriculum and assessment. Institutional conditions should consequently become explicit subjects of professional inquiry. Where teachers repeatedly identify defensible responses that cannot be enacted because of workload, policy, restricted authority, or inaccessible resources, interpreting the difficulty only as a need for further teacher training would obscure an important institutional source of the problem.

5.3. Worked illustration

A hypothetical EAP case illustrates how these relationships may function without presupposing a preferred response. Consider a teacher preparing multilingual undergraduates for an assessed argumentative writing task in an EMI programme. During small-group planning, several students struggle to elaborate claims and evaluate supporting evidence when discussion occurs entirely in English. Some begin using a shared familiar language to clarify concepts and test arguments before returning to English, and their discussions become more sustained. Other students do not share that language, while the assessed task ultimately requires each student to construct an argument independently in English. The dilemma is not simply whether multilingual interaction should be permitted. The teacher needs to consider how conceptual elaboration and participation might be supported without marginalising students with different linguistic repertoires or weakening the academic-English development required by the task.

Several responses remain plausible. The teacher might maintain English throughout planning to maximise engagement with the language expected in assessment, permit students to plan through whatever linguistic resources are available before reformulating their ideas in English or combine flexible multilingual or multimodal planning with an explicit transition to English academic argumentation. The latter could also require organising participation so that access does not depend on membership in a particular language group. Judging among these possibilities requires attention to the purpose of the task, students' available repertoires, participation, academic-language expectations, and possible inequalities of access. It also requires consideration of what the institutional conditions surrounding the activity allow.

Suppose the teacher judges that flexible use of linguistic resources during initial planning, followed by an explicitly English-focused stage in which students reformulate claims, evidence, and argumentative relations, offers the most defensible response. The judgement does not determine its enactability. Where institutional expectations regulate only the language of assessed production, the teacher may possess sufficient discretion to use multilingual planning during preparation. Where English-only expectations extend to all classroom interaction, the same response may need to be adapted, negotiated, deferred, or left unenacted. The pedagogical judgement may remain defensible even when the conditions required for its enactment are restricted.

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If the sequenced response is enacted, evidence may complicate rather than merely confirm the original judgement. Classroom interaction and student work might indicate that multilingual planning enabled some students to elaborate ideas and participate more extensively, while groups organised around a dominant shared language made participation more difficult for classmates with other repertoires. The subsequent English-focused stage might reveal a further tension if students develop sophisticated arguments during multilingual planning but struggle to reconstruct those relationships in the academic English expected in writing. Such consequences would provide grounds for reconsideration rather than a simple judgement that the response succeeded or failed. The teacher might alter group organisation, provide multilingual and multimodal planning options that do not depend on one shared language, or strengthen support for movement from conceptual planning into English academic formulation.

Engagement with the dilemma may also raise questions about professional responsibility and legitimate expertise. The teacher may regard mediation of multilingual participation as consistent with an existing understanding of EAP expertise, may extend that understanding to encompass additional language-related responsibilities, or may remain cautious about assuming work that the institution does not recognise or support. None of these possibilities represents a prescribed identity outcome. The illustration shows how pedagogical alternatives, institutional enactability, evidence-informed reconsideration, and professional responsibility can remain connected while the particular judgement remains open to contextual justification. It is offered as a demonstration of the framework's relational logic, with questions of effectiveness reserved for empirical evaluation.

5.4. Limitations and validation

The framework has limitations arising from both its conceptual development and its evidentiary base. It was developed through problem-driven theory synthesis using a selective, non-exhaustive literature base, and the theoretical resources retained reflect the explanatory needs identified through that process. The intended professional group comprises EAP and related language-support teachers in multilingual EMI higher education. Some relationships use adjacent evidence involving disciplinary EMI teachers and scholarship outside the focal professional group. Such evidence supports the framework's theoretical plausibility. Further research is needed to determine whether the proposed relationships also characterise the professional reasoning of language-support teachers.

The proposed distinctiveness of multilingual pedagogical reasoning requires validation with practitioners. The construct has a narrower scope than general teacher cognition or pedagogical reasoning and focuses on consequential language-related dilemmas involving academic-language development, multilingual repertoires, participation, linguistic inequality, and institutional language conditions. Empirical work is required to establish whether practitioners experience these distinctions in the proposed way. If language-support teachers and researchers cannot meaningfully differentiate multilingual pedagogical reasoning from established forms of pedagogical reasoning, or if critical multilingual evaluation and LMT-informed language-management analysis contribute no discernible value to the examination of language-related choices, the construct or its boundaries would require reconsideration.

These limitations favour staged empirical appraisal before claims of validation or effectiveness. Cross-sector guidance on complex interventions distinguishes conceptual development, feasibility, implementation, and evaluation and allows movement between these concerns as uncertainties emerge (Skivington et al., 2021). Feasibility scholarship similarly differentiates acceptability, implementation, practicality, adaptation, and integration from subsequent claims concerning effectiveness (Bowen et al., 2009). Proctor et al. (2011) distinguish implementation outcomes from later service and client outcomes. These sources originate in health and implementation research and provide methodological distinctions from those fields; they supply no evidence about the present framework in language education. Their methodological relevance is limited to keeping these questions separate and avoiding a single claim of validation.

An initial stage could examine conceptual clarity and professional relevance through appraisal by EAP and related language-support teachers and relevant researchers. Such work would ask whether the central distinctions are intelligible, correspond to recognisable professional dilemmas, and omit consequential aspects of language-related

judgement. Where this appraisal supports further investigation, small-scale implementation could examine feasibility, acceptability, and contextual operation in existing professional-learning arrangements. Attention would be required to teachers' engagement, workload, professional discretion, access to evidence and expertise, language policy, adaptations, and instances of non-enactment.

Subsequent longitudinal, comparative, or design-based research could examine whether and how teachers' reasoning changes over time and how those changes relate to pedagogical enactment. Evidence would need to show how teachers interpret dilemmas, consider plausible responses, justify provisional judgements, engage with competing consequences, and reconsider earlier decisions. Adoption of the framework's terminology would provide insufficient evidence of change. Only where sufficient evidence supports the framework's conceptual clarity and practical operation would investigation of institutional or student-related outcomes become warranted. Even then, changes in participation, academic-language development, task performance, professional support, collaboration, or policy interpretation would require separate evidence before attribution to professional learning organised around the framework.

Empirical appraisal should remain capable of supporting, qualifying, reducing, or rejecting the framework. Particular parts may need to be reduced, relationships reformulated, scope claims narrowed, or the construct itself reconsidered if the proposed distinctions do not remain useful in practice. Validation consequently involves iterative assessment of theoretical clarity, professional relevance, contextual use, and empirical defensibility. This process may support revision or rejection of the framework.

6. CONCLUSION

EAP, ESP, Academic English, foundation, communication-skills, and related language-support teachers working in multilingual EMI higher education may encounter language-related pedagogical dilemmas that cannot be resolved through the application of a preferred method or language strategy. Judgements concerning Academic English development, students' multilingual repertoires, participation, access, and unequal language conditions are made in institutional environments that may privilege some forms of language use and constrain others. Professional development for these teachers consequently needs to engage with available pedagogical resources, the interpretation of consequential language-related dilemmas, consideration of plausible responses, and justification of pedagogical choices under situated professional and institutional conditions.

This paper has developed multilingual pedagogical reasoning to describe this professional capability. The framework distinguishes the quality of professional judgement from the conditions under which that judgement becomes enactable and recognises that pedagogically defensible responses may be enacted, adapted, negotiated, deferred, or prevented. It also positions evidence as a resource for reconsidering earlier judgements and addresses professional identity through teachers' reconsideration of legitimate expertise, professional remit, and responsibility. Professional development, on this account, is defined by the capacity to examine and justify language-related pedagogical judgements and recognise the conditions under which different courses of action become possible.

The framework remains theoretically derived and requires empirical validation. Its value will depend on whether its distinctions and proposed relationships remain intelligible, professionally relevant, and empirically defensible when examined with language-support teachers in multilingual EMI settings. Subsequent research may support some relationships and may require qualification, reformulation, or rejection of other relationships. Multilingual pedagogical reasoning is consequently offered as a theoretically specified means of making language-related professional judgement accessible for systematic inquiry. Pedagogical choice, institutional possibility, and professional responsibility remain open to contextual examination.

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