

Your Monthly EMI Newsletter

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EMI English Medium Instruction

Dear Reader,

We are the EMI-team situated at the Language Teaching Centre of the University of Freiburg. We offer a range of support services, including individual and small group training measures, to teachers who communicate their expertise in English to a multilingual, multicultural student body.

We are proud to present the EMI newsletter, in which we will offer monthly tips on language, language use for teaching, intercultural learning and more.

We hope you enjoy it! – Gregg, Louise and Susanne



EMI Language Tip of the Month

German idioms that can't be directly translated into English

Idiom 1: "Den Roten faden verlieren"

Students often "lose their train of thought" in essays, presentations or even when answering or asking a question in class. Be careful not to translate the German idiom "Den roten Faden verlieren" literally, which would directly translate to "lose the red thread". In English however we "**lose the train of thought**".

Idiom 2: "Hier spielt die Musik"

Have your students ever been loud in class or distracted from the lesson and you have wanted to use the idiom "hier spielt die Musik"? And you didn't want to use the direct translation "This is where the music is playing" because you knew it wasn't the correct idiom. The right and great way to tell your students off is to politely say: "**This is where the action is.**"

International Classroom Tip

EMI research¹ shows that EMI students can become **frustrated at the lack of cultural awareness**:

B.A. student, male, 25:

"Another strange experience that I had, actually this week twice was [...] the lecturer had assumptions about my background and how it functions where I'm from and because of that he said some incorrect things. Not discriminatory, but incorrect in terms of how this functions for example in where I'm from. He had an idea about that. An assumption about that and he assumed this in his comments, which did not entirely work".

Teachers at the University of Freiburg can limit such instances of intercultural faux pas via a survey function in ILIAS. For example, a pre-course survey can simply give teachers a better overview of where students are from and what their background is (previous studies, time in other countries, etc.). During the semester, teachers can pose meta-questions before sessions to find out more about students' pre-conceptions on topics to be covered in a lesson and thus, be better

prepared for the lesson. One such example could be to ask “What is sustainability?” and limit the answer to 30 words. Answers can be shown in class via the ILIAS system so that students themselves see how other students answered the questions (experiencing peers’ assumptions). This sharing of diverse views is one approach to spark discussion, leverage diversity and create more intercultural transparency in your international classroom.

¹We are currently doing qualitative research with students from English Taught Programs at the University of Freiburg.

Language Joke

The linguistics professor

A linguistics professor is speaking to his students one day. “In English,” he says, “a double negative forms a positive. In some languages, though, such as Russian, a double negative is still a negative. However, there is no language in which a double positive can form a negative.” A voice from the back of the room says, “Yeah, right!”

(Owen Connors, Audio Editor, Spotlight)

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