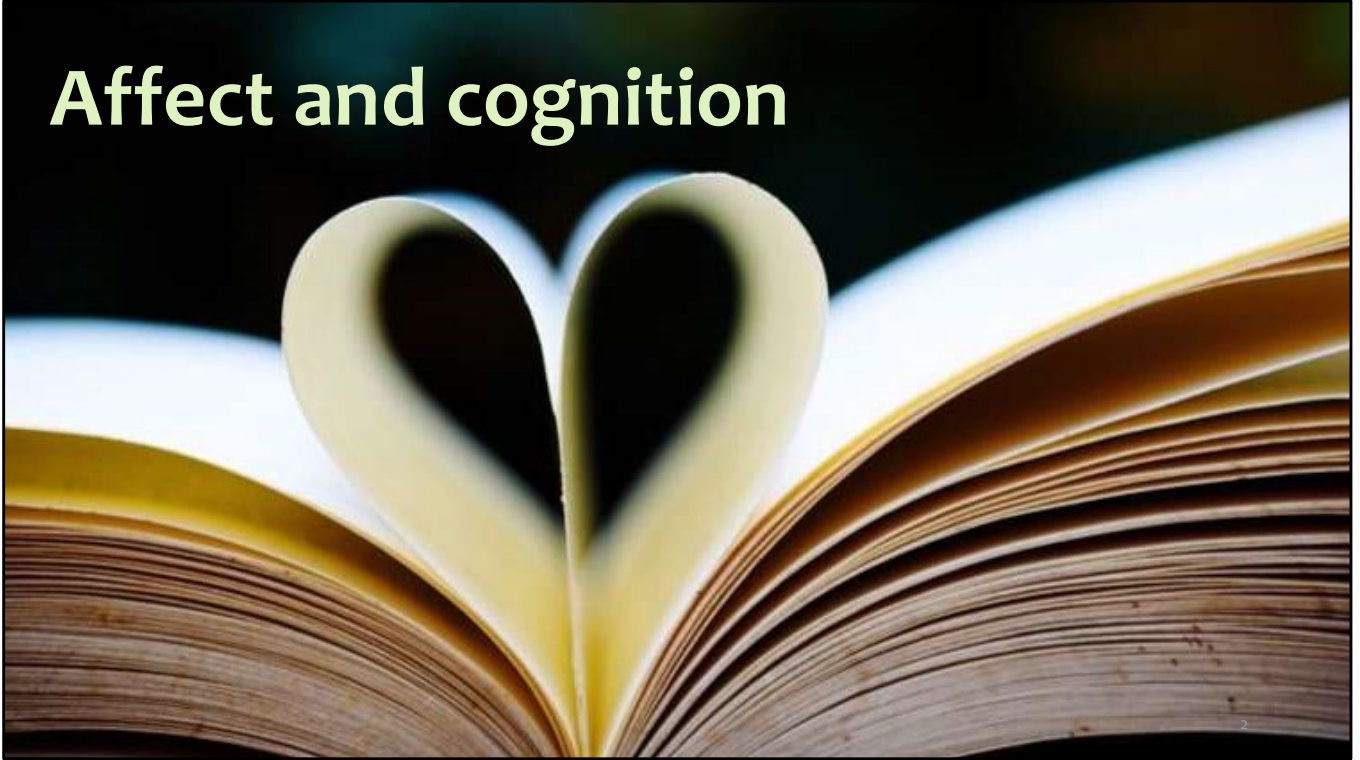


Before I start, let's pin our colours to the mast.  
Michelle Hunter a freelance BE teacher Germany,  
in-service and pre-service learners;  
since 2018 researching the field of EMI, affective side of teaching and learning  
EMI degree programme in Germany

So why am I here talking to ELT teacher developers  
Who identifies as a teacher trainer / developer for ELT teachers?  
Do we have content teachers  
ELT professionals who support EMI teachers?  
EMI researchers...?!?

I'm talking in TDSIG showcase  
ppl observe classroom activities a lot and might be curious to hear about what I've seen  
in my context  
keen to learn from you about your experiences.  
hoping we can learn from each –  
anything that boosts my chances of finishing my PhD with a good outcome is much  
appreciated!

# Affect and cognition



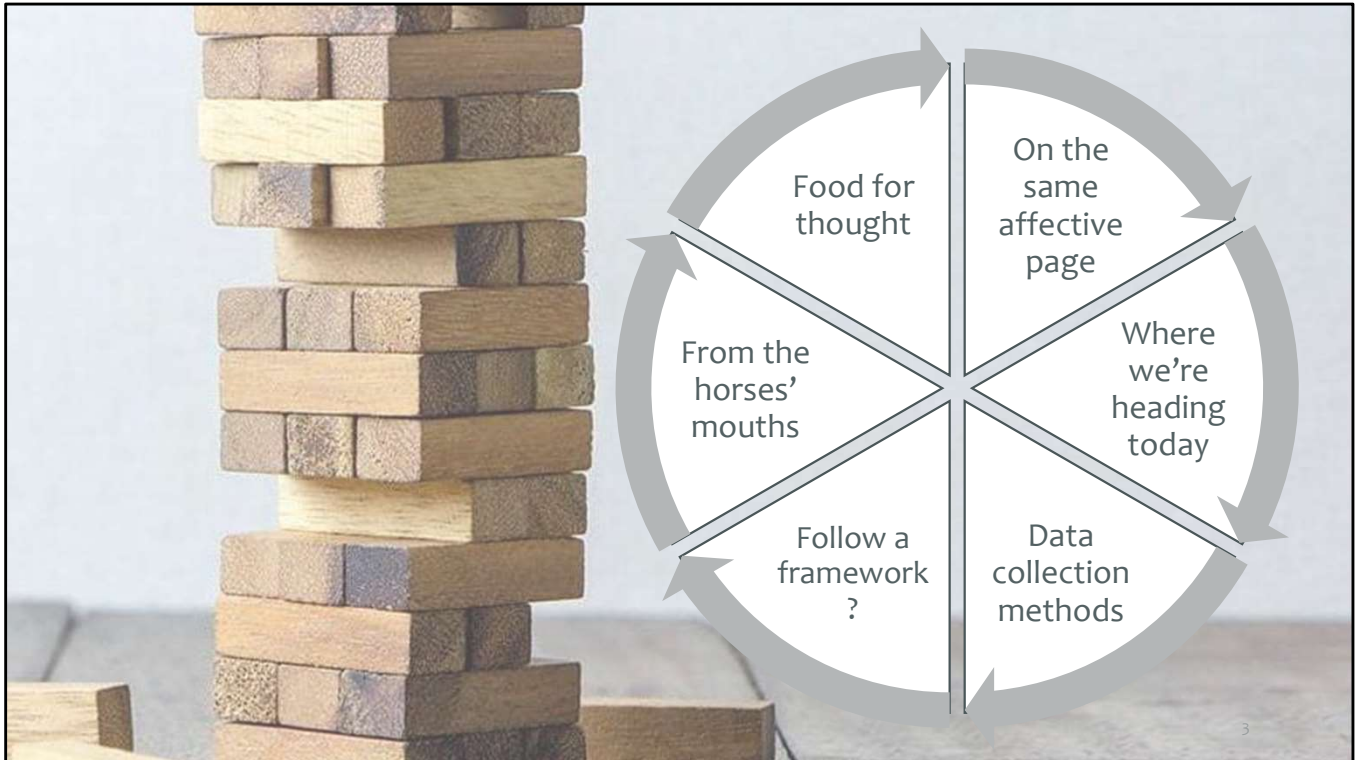
I believe one thing that connects us all is that we know – probably from personal experience – that emotion and cognition are intimately connected in a learning environment – irrespective of what is being learned.

abstract for this talk (pause and look, for effect!!) - limited empirical research to prove it, we in the broad field of ELT know the significance of affect on language learners and their ability to learn.

whole person development needs attention given to both the head and the heart,

not only those aspects within each individual but also how the head and heart stuff affects and develops between individuals in the group.

This is what I'm aiming at capturing and unravelling with my doctoral research.

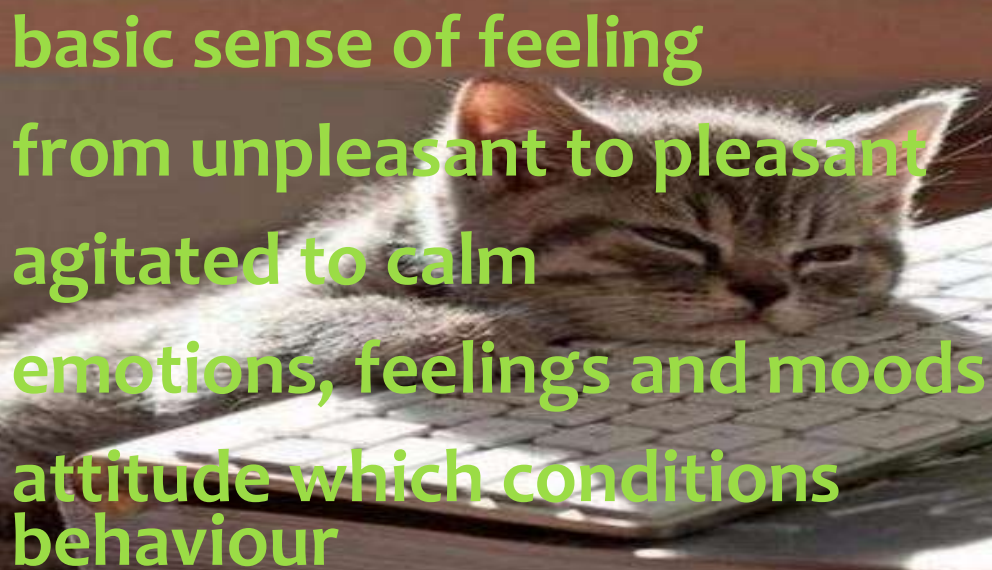


You'll be pleased to know that time does not permit me to give you a full-on academic research methodology presentation, so what I want to do is focus on what is more likely to interest you. So this is the plan for today's talk:

1. Make sure we're on the same "affective page" by defining what I've come to understand affect is
2. Run through 3 of my RQs so you'll know where I'm coming from and where we're heading
3. Briefly outline 2 of my 5 data collection methods
4. Share what I hope will be a useful framework for you when reflecting on events during classroom observations
5. Then share some actual data directly from the horses' mouths – what did EMI teachers say about how it feels to teach through EMI
6. Then if I have timed it right, you get the chance to share your thoughts and insights on the topic.

The story I shall share today relies mostly on what I learned from the pilot study I did back in 2020 – if you're interested I'll show you later where you can read a full version of the pilot study – all methodology and results. OK. Let's back up briefly and be clear on what I'm talking about here. I've mentioned affect a number of times – I wonder how many of you are in the position I was when I embarked on this project? I had a naive understanding of affect being an umbrella term for emotions, feelings and moods. Quite a tidy definition, simple to grasp, something I could observe in class, measure and analyse. Then I started reading more and realised I'd actually opened a Pandora's box! There are long-standing and strongly held contradictory views on exactly what affect is. Without giving you a run down of my lit review, this is what I felt

resonated best for me – see what you think...

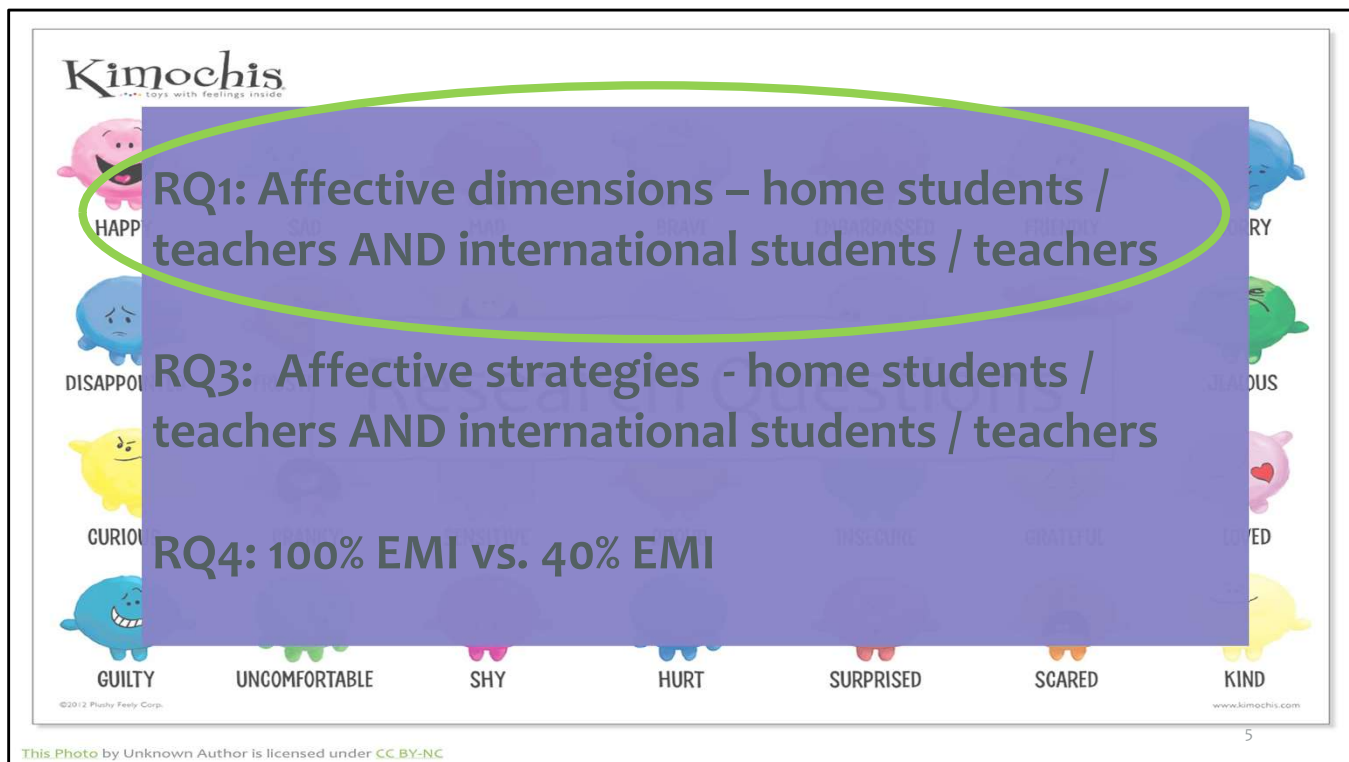
A close-up photograph of a small, grey and white tabby kitten lying down on a laptop keyboard. The kitten's head is resting on the keys, and its eyes are partially closed. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image in a bright green, sans-serif font.

basic sense of feeling  
from unpleasant to pleasant  
agitated to calm  
emotions, feelings and moods  
attitude which conditions  
behaviour

Cognitive neuroscientist and brain researcher Lisa Feldman Barrett (2017) describes affect as a “...basic sense of feeling, ranging from unpleasant to pleasant (valence), and from agitated to calm (arousal)” (Barrett, 2017: 36).

Williams, Mercer & Ryan (2016) define affect as “an umbrella term that covers emotions, feelings and moods” and that “affective states can vary in terms of their intensity, duration, identifiable cause, and whether they are more private or public in their expression.” ([Williams et al. 2016, p. 80-81](#)).

Jane Arnold, who has written extensively about affect in language learning expands the definition further by including **attitude which conditions behaviour** (Arnold and Brown 1999, 1).



OK. So I had this complex concept at the heart ('scuse the pun) of my project and had to design a data collection plan that would address the RQs I'd developed. Although we're going to see data relating to the first RQ, here is a condensed version of 3 of my RQs which will give you a bit more of an overall picture of what I'm talking about :

**RQ1: What affective dimensions do i) home students / teachers and ii) international students / teacher experience in the EMI classroom? How do they differ?**

**RQ3: What strategies do students / teachers employ to address/manage affective responses in the EMI classroom?**

**RQ4: How do student data regarding affect & affective strategies differ between those studying through 100% EMI and  $\leq 40\%$  EMI?**





6

My main focus is on observing lectures and interviewing participants of those lectures. The initial idea was that if I could identify a (CLICK) “critical incident” – just something small, arising from a language-related interaction or mis-communication that seemed to precipitate an affective response, I could then ask the person involved how that felt and how they managed those feelings and enable them to get back on track with the lecture.

Ideally, if I were suitably equipped and trained, I’d have had participants hooked up to brain scanners, taken hormone samples and conducted neuropsychological experiments.

In lieu of being able to do that, I decide to use stimulated recall interviews – anyone familiar with this method? It seems to be relatively popular in language learning research. Basically, the idea is to capture as closely as possible in light of its retrospective nature, what an individual was thinking or feeling in the moment that has been observed by the researcher. To do this, I used video clips from lectures I’d recorded along with an interview protocol which, among other things, reminded me to look out for any CRITICAL INCIDENTS.

For the pilot, I was only able to do this once in an actual classroom – I’ve since attended numerous lectures for the main study and so can add extra detail to the story if you’re interested in the Q&A later.



## A Framework to Follow



Hiver's (2015) 4-phase  
model of self-organization

(Following Complexity Theory)

7

To help me make sense of what I observed I turned to a couple of models that provide frameworks to help think through and analyse the data. I'm going to run through one of them with you next and then get to some actual data – a bit of theory then some results.

Is anyone familiar with Phil Hiver's work on self-organisation? I came across his 4-phase model when reading articles about complexity theory – a theory that speaks to me when I think about what goes on in our language learning classroom.

In any classroom at any time there is so much complexity – so many interchanging and interchangeable variations, it's almost impossible trying to pick them apart and identify what might be going on.

Factor in the nebulous nature of affect, how can any researcher get to the truth and present scientifically reliable data?!

Complexity theory posits that **there is an irrefutable-interrelatedness between multiple component parts and that these parts (or 'organisms') iteratively respond to their environment, recursively producing "dynamic and continuous change. ... producing new realities, new collectivities and new relations."** (Morrison, 2006) .

I keep this in mind when interpreting my data....

## Hiver's (2015) 4-phases of self-organisation



Phase 1

Triggering



Phase 2

Coupling  
(feedback loop)



Phase 3

Realignment



Phase 4

Stability

8

Phil Hiver has proposed the following as a way of better understanding how we go from feeling perturbed by something back to a sense of self-organised stability. I'll briefly run through the phases of his model with some teacher-focused examples taken from his book chapter, and then share a student-focused example from my own data.

**TRIGGERING:** In the first phase we experience something – could be small, could be more significant – that causes us to get knocked off-course in that moment – like ripples caused by a stone thrown into still water. Something disturbs our sense of equilibrium and triggers the necessity to re-organise our thoughts or behaviour. Hiver's examples include “disruptive behaviour by a student, a critical comment by a colleague or even the introduction of a new coursebook, .... concerns or realities that teachers deal with in their daily practice.”

**COUPLING:** The second “**coupling**” phase describes the coming together of the disturbance and a subconscious strategic coping mechanism. Hiver equates this behind-the-scenes process as a recursive feedback loop, a process which helps us to learn and adapt each time we encounter a similar disturbance.

**REALIGNMENT:** Over time, having repeatedly dealt with disturbances and applying coping mechanisms, we reach a point where we've figured out the best course action and can regain previous levels of effectiveness & productivity. We've reached the phase of **realignment** – of having learned to adapt to a situation such we can feel stable again.

**STABILITY:** this fourth phase Hiver labels as **Stability** – the phase in which we teachers have accepted and solidified this experience and incorporated what we've learned into our identity.

## Hiver's (2015) 4-phases of self-organisation



Triggering



Coupling  
(feedback loop)



Realignment



Stability

9

To quote from Hiver's chapter - "The teachers have now added a layer of residual experience to themselves that will go on to affect the way they react to future disturbances, almost as if a layer of wisdom was added to their repertoire of dealing with disturbances. This kind of implicit experiential knowledge is largely an inevitable consequence **rather than the product of conscious self-reflection**, but it is also what makes good practitioners so precious: they've seen it all and done it all." (Hiver 2015, p.225)

## Applying Hiver's Model to Real Life Scenario



Phase 1  
Triggering



Phase 2  
Coupling  
(feedback loop)



Phase 3  
Realignment



Phase 4  
Stability

10

So to give you an example of how I mapped Hiver's model to my data, I shall tell the story of one student, an online game of Uno and how to get through a minor critical incident in an all-day EMI seminar.

The scenario is an intercultural seminar being delivered by a native German-speaking visiting lecturer, in English, to a room full of German undergrad business students. At some point it becomes apparent that the majority of the students were not fully focused on the lecture. It turned out they were playing an online game of Uno together.

I'm going to walk back through Hiver's model mapping what I imagined could happen in an EMI class, then give specific examples from a SRI with one student from that class. It's not a perfect match, but you'll get an idea of how the model can be interpreted.

OK. Phase 1: A 'critical incident' occurs during an EMI lecture, which triggers or disturbs a person, eg: a smartphone bings and a number of students giggle in the midst of the lecturer's talk. This disturbs the concentration of our student who loses focus and misses what the lecturer is saying.

Phase 2: Consequently, that person experiences an emotional reaction (could be confusion, doubt, anxiety, annoyance), which initiates a (sub-conscious) affect-regulating response, e.g our student feels annoyed and concerned that the lecturer might notice and feel disrespected by their fellow classmates, their response is to sit up and lean forward to demonstrate they are giving attention to what the lecturer is saying.

Phase 3: The disturbed person who has managed to calm down and contain the affective response can once again refocus on the task at hand, eg: by leaning forward and looking closely at the slide, reviewing the last note they made, the student begins to tune in again to what is being said.

Phase 4: Having decided on how to deal with the disturbance, the person can continue with listening to the lecture, eg: our student feels they've caught up with what the lecturer is saying and feels comfortable that they are getting what they need from the content.



# How does it feel to be an EMI teacher?

Direct quotes from interviewed teachers

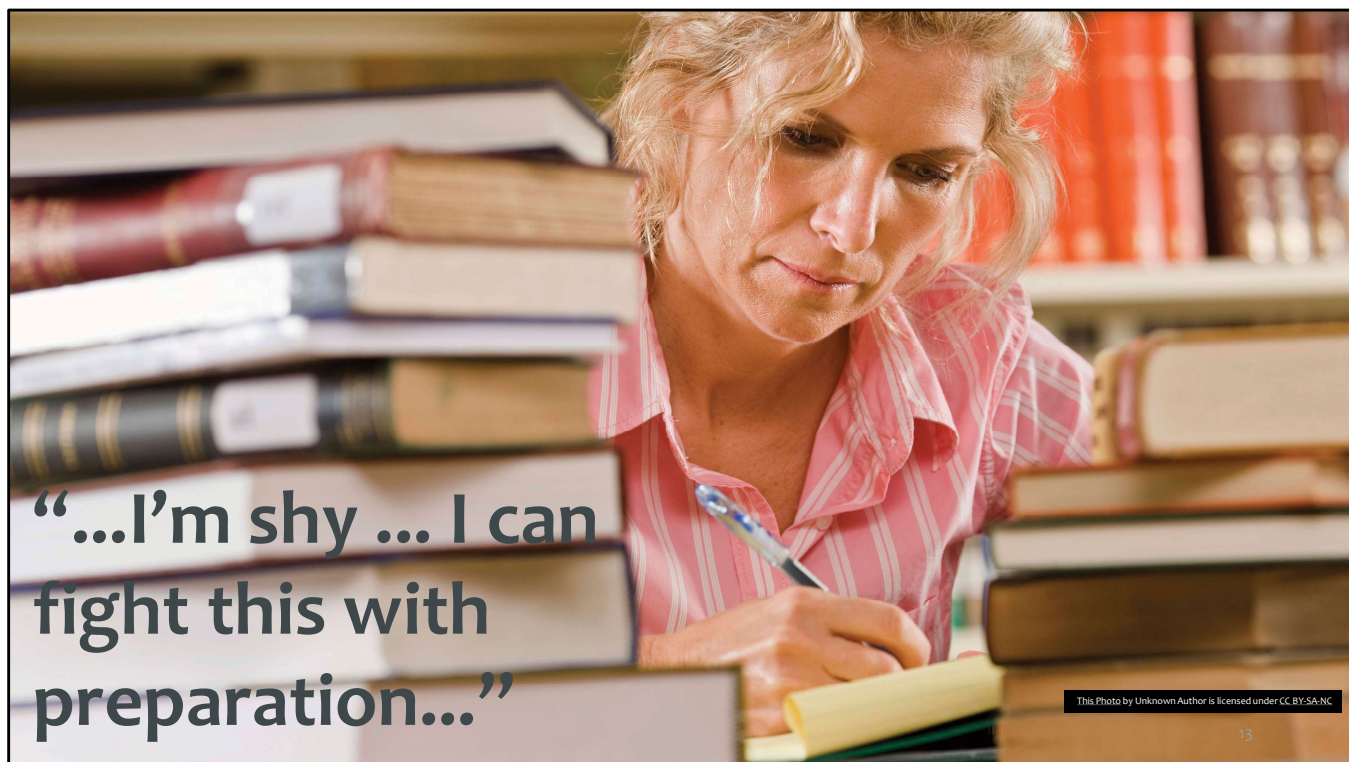
Let's turn to the teachers' perspectives. I thought it might be interesting for you to hear what EMI teachers say about how it feels to teach their content to a class of German students through what is for most of them their second language.

These are quotes directly from 4 different EMI teachers – I'll simply say what they said with little to no comment. You can take from them what you want.



As a general take on teaching through EMI, this German-based, L1 English teacher said:  
*“Many of us are winging the EMI methodology, learning on the hoof.”*





*“I'm shy to teach in English but I can fight this with preparation. .... If I'm prepared, I have read enough, if I've repeated enough times what I want to say...”*

This came from a Ukrainian teacher who’s been in Germany a number of years. He shared with me that he feels most comfortable teaching in English, but nevertheless is still plagued with self-doubt.



*"I have to somehow switch off other languages, or concepts in my head. It's emotionally and mentally exhausting. Tired. I'm tired after the classes."*

This again the Ukranian guy



*“I'm doing mistakes myself - don't take yourself too serious, and then just look at the funny side.”*

This was advice from a highly enthusiastic EL-using German teacher given to her learners. I think this attitude reflects how she feels in class too.

She has a healthy, balanced-approach to teaching through English and deliberately focuses her attention away from language errors and more on the benefits using ELF as a way of reaching more students in one go.

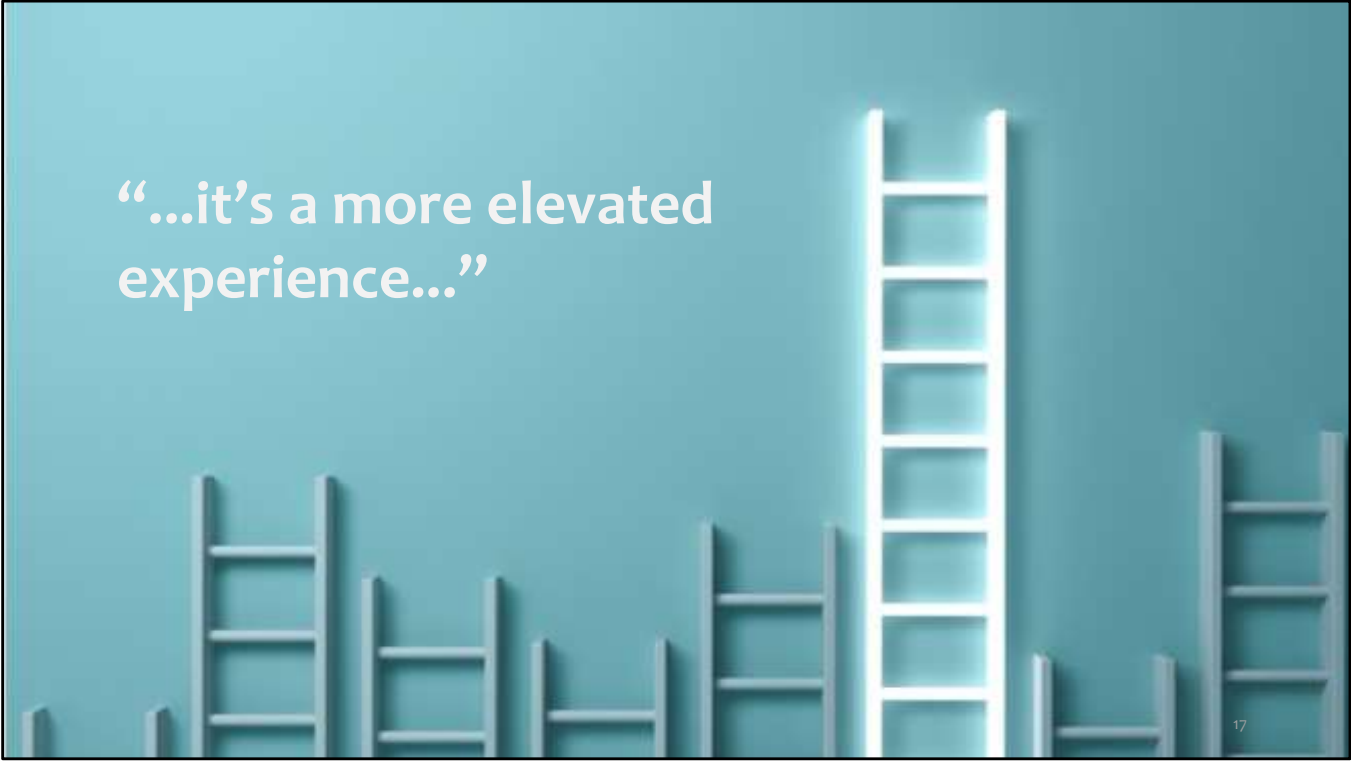




“I’m very grateful...”

“...makes me very happy...”

*“I’m very grateful for being able to express myself in a second language... You can connect with nearly all cultures. It makes me very happy that I’m able to do this.”*



“...it’s a more elevated  
experience...”

*“...personally I think it’s a more elevated experience teaching students who are learning in a second language.”*

The last word goes to my colleague from the UK – who is also an L1 English speaker

As I mentioned earlier, if you’re interested in reading more such quotes and seeing the research design and methodology in more detail...



You can download a free pdf of this book which includes the chapter I co-wrote with my supervisor. The pilot study is presented in detail.



## Selected References

Arnold, J. (2011). Attention to Affect in Language Learning. *Anglistik. International Journal of English Studies*, 22/1, 11-22

Barrett, L. F. (2017). *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain*. Pan Macmillan.

Hiver, P. (2015). Once Burned, Twice Shy: The Dynamic Development of System Immunity in Teachers. In Z. Dornyei, P. MacIntyre, & A. Henry (Eds.), *Motivational Dynamics in Language Learning* (pp. 214–237). Multilingual Matters.

Hunter, M., & Lanvers, U. (2021). Affect in EMI at a German university: Comparing insights from teachers, home, and international students in Wilkinson, R., & Gabriels, R. (Eds.), *The Englishization of Higher Education in Europe*. (pp. 327-354). AUP

Sampson, R.J. & Pinner, R. S. (2020), *Complexity Perspectives on Researching Language Learner and Teacher Psychology*. Multilingual Matters.

Williams, M., Mercer, S., & Ryan, S. (2016). *Exploring psychology in language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

19

Here are references for some of my sources – there are loads more in the book chapter! And now, I want to hand over to you to get your thoughts and answer any questions you might have.





demand high

Many thanks for participating!

Michelle Hunter

[michelle@demandhighsilently.com](mailto:michelle@demandhighsilently.com)

silently