



English-Medium Instruction at Universities. Global Challenges

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The aim of this book is to offer a critical view of English-medium instruction (EMI) program implementation and its impact on differing political, economic, cultural, linguistic and educational situations in Europe and the rest of the world. Divided into five sections, its content focuses on the first four sections, while the last section presents the comments of the editors on some of the main topics discussed. The introduction by the editors and a foreword by Jim Coleman complete the volume.

Part 1 features chapter 1 where ROBERT WILKINSON reflects on the economic, social and political motives and challenges for the rapid expansion of EMI at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. Beginning with a few students and the implication of Dutch, French and German, English soon took over as the only language of instruction. Attracting international students, providing a globalized knowledge, and keeping the institution high up in the international ranking have been accounted as the three main reasons for offering EMI programs. Content selection, a change in methodology, and content and language staff collaboration have been essential for the success of EMI programs at Maastricht, while multiculturalism as opposed to élites, ghettoisms and career benefits still remain weighty challenges.

Part 2 deals with language demands of EMI on stakeholders. In chapter 2 CHRISTA VAN DER WALT and MARTIN KIDD analyze the impact of EMI in South African institutions, where English is used along Afrikaans as the language of instruction in most universities. The research carried out focused on the influence of bi-literacy on performance in multilingual educational settings. For the purpose, a reading comprehension test was conducted in English with a summary of the content in Afrikaans or in English. The authors conclude that although adding material in a first language may be helpful in improving students' performance in English, the

summary format does not seem to be particularly useful by itself, as bi-literacy practice in teaching and assessment should be encouraged with set strategies and materials.

PHIL BALL and DIANA LINDSAY's chapter 3 centers upon their experience as teacher trainers at the University of the Basque Country. The study shows teachers' perceptions concerning their domain of English and teaching skills, especially when dealing with the elaboration of teaching materials. Moreover, lecturing to larger groups, stimulating student participation or the use of reading strategies would feature as key issues in content and language integrated learning (CLIL)-based programs. Other key issues dealt with in this paper are the concerns about pronunciation and oral interaction as well as assessment criteria.

Part 3 features the tensions and issues concerning trilingualism, i.e. English plus other two languages, in Hong Kong, the Basque Country and Catalonia. Chapter 4 is dedicated to analyze the tensions existing between the three vehicular languages at HEIs in Hong Kong: English, the local Cantonese and the national Putonghua (Mandarin). Language policies based on enhancing bi-literacy and trilingualism amongst higher education students have been a source of controversy amongst students and staff at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, mainly due to the expansion of EMI courses and the unsatisfactory situation of local Cantonese-speaking students. In his well-documented paper, DAVID LI concludes that however controversial, the contribution of the majority languages is viewed by citizenries as a linguistic and economic capital, widening the future prospects of undergraduates and setting HEIs within international standards.

In chapter 5, AINTZANE DOIZ, DAVID LASAGABASTER and JUAN MANUEL SIERRA focus their study on a series of questionnaires to gather the views of local and international students at the University of the Basque Country, where English is used as a third language of instruction together with Spanish and Basque. Students had to express their views on critical issues such as the presence of international students, the impact of English on Basque, or the role of Basque in a multilingual university context. The feedback was mostly positive except for the concern expressed by those students whose mother tongue was Basque for the expansion of English at the expense of their first language.

In chapter 6, JOSEP M. COTS focuses on language intervention, beliefs and practices as the three components of language policy which might reveal

ambiguities and tensions in the implementation of EMI at the University of Lleida. COTS shows the ambiguities and excessive regulations of the institution concerning language intervention. As for beliefs, neither students nor lecturers are confident enough with their command of English to get involved in an EMI situation. Finally, language practices based on content and language experts' collaboration reveal that in addition to language competence, there should be a methodology shift from a lecture-centered to a learner-centered approach.

In chapter 7 TAINA SAARINEN and TARJA NIKULA analyze the relationship between international policies and practices in Finnish polytechnics and universities. Based on official study programs and on interviews with teachers and students, they show how English is understood as self-evident in the degree descriptions for international degree programs with no explicit mention of bilingualism. Hence, EMI programs in Finnish HEIs do not seem to comply with the CLIL agenda although Finland ranks first in the proportion of institutions offering degree programs in English. The authors arguably conclude that EMI may not be associated with language policies, Finland's HEIs being a vivid example of it.

Chapter 8 is based on a research carried out by OFRA INBAR-LOURIE and SMADAR DONITSA-SCHMIDT at a teachers' education college in Israel. Two research questions were posed to both prospective teachers and students concerning the use of EMI in content courses. The small group of students who voluntarily chose to take an EMI course had a high command of English, which made their views of language improvement an irrelevant issue. No language objectives were set and neither methodology nor content selection was considered in the study. The authors, however, assume the limitations of their research.

Part 4 deals with institutional policies at universities in a variety of geographical and socio-political contexts. In chapter 9 OFELIA GARCÍA, MERCÈ PUJOL-FERRAN and POOJA REDDY analyze the impact of EMI in two very different HEIs whose names are not given: a community college in the Bronx and a university with a dense population of international students. They show how language policies and ideologies in the US are biased by economic and political issues, thus disregarding immigrants' native languages in favour of English monolingualism. Bilingualism amongst international students is perceived as a financial asset while immigrant students are treated with caution and their bilingualism is seen rather as problematic. The results

of the study are very restrictive and might have been more relevant if contrasted with data from other HEIs.

Finally, in chapter 10, ELANA SHOHAMY provides a critical view of EMI, based on the analysis of three problematic issues when institutions are too quick in implementing EMI programs: Achievement of academic content, the difficulties encountered by minority language students, and assessment. After going through the success experienced with language immersion programs in bilingual contexts, SHOHAMY states the widespread use of English as a high prestige language instead of the national languages in academic settings. She concludes that the use of EMI at universities is mainly driven by ideological and economic reasons while discriminating students whose English proficiency is not high enough to cope with academic knowledge.

Overall, this volume makes us aware of the pitfalls and challenges of implementing academic content programs through a foreign language and particularly through English at tertiary education institutions throughout the world competing to stay high in the ranking of internationalization. The variety of experiences within differing political, cultural and sociolinguistic contexts brings to the fore critical issues such as the role of students, staff and administration, together with the impact of EMI programs on language ecologies. Considering language objectives, new teaching methodologies or content and language experts' collaboration contributes to the clarifying view of this book, which should be a highly recommended reading for language policy makers at HEIs in their commitment to improve multilingualism amongst their students and foster internalization policies, EMI and CLIL practitioners, as well as researchers and teacher trainers.

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