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Education:
Issues, Policy
and Practice

EMI within a Global Context – Towards a British Council Perspective

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Introduction: The British Council, English and EMI.

The charitable objectives and core mission of The British Council are laid down in its Royal Charter. One explicit objective is to develop a wider knowledge of the English language. Another is to promote the advancement of education. The global social context in which we develop a wider knowledge of English has changed dramatically in the 80 years since the British Council was founded. In the 1930s, English, while in widespread use around the world, was by no means the global lingua franca that it has become. Belonging to the traditional English-speaking countries, English was on a much more equal footing globally with other European languages like French and German. It was in part a symbol in a wider ideological battle in Europe which culminated in the Second World War. When the British Council started teaching English in those early years in countries such as Egypt and Portugal, the language was seen in quite different terms from today – certainly with strong socio-political connotations, but not as the basic skill necessary for functioning internationally, sometimes nationally, in a wide range of domains, which it has now become. While the ideological battles involving the English language have changed since the 1930s, they have by no means disappeared.

It can be argued that English no longer needs to be promoted. It has acquired a force of its own across the world, with over one billion people learning English and over two billion either learning or knowing the language to some extent. I cannot think of a national education system which does not teach English at secondary school level, and national education systems have moved to teaching English at primary level in droves over the last two decades.

It is in this context that we see a surge of interest and activity in the area of English-medium instruction (EMI) around the world. To be clear, I am referring to the use of the English language in education systems at all levels (early years, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult) to teach and learn other subjects such as mathematics, science and history in a context where the majority of learners (and teachers) are not first-language English speakers. I will not attempt a more sophisticated definition here. What I am clearly not talking about when I refer to EMI is the traditional teaching of English, especially English as a foreign language, as a subject on the school or university timetable. While there is some blurring of the boundaries between EMI and 'English as a subject', the distinction is clear in most contexts, yet the discourse and debate around EMI is littered with confusion between these two concepts. While seemingly easy to distinguish the two (EMI and 'English as a subject'), they surprisingly often confuse educational debates, especially when those debates take on a political element and are played out in the media, as we can see in various contexts recently.

This particular paper is written following a conference on one particular element of the EMI wave, namely the growth in EMI in European universities in non-English speaking countries. It might seem natural to think that the British Council, with its well-known objective of developing a wider knowledge of English, would be almost unconditionally in favour of EMI. I will argue that this is in fact far from being a sensible position, and is not the position that we should take or do take.

Three Fallacies in EMI

To move towards our position on EMI, I will first address three issues, which complicate or cloud the debate. I will present each issue in the form of a fallacy or perhaps a misunderstanding of what EMI is – with a nod to Phillipson's use of fallacies in building his Linguistic Imperialism hypotheses (Phillipson, 1992).

The Monolithic Fallacy

The first fallacy is that EMI is monolithic - there is just one type. This fallacy is generated by the (imagined) individual who sees, researches, understands one particular EMI context, and then transfers that context to other contexts inappropriately. It is difficult to adopt a generic policy approach to EMI without considering the specific situation. Consider the widely differing characteristics of the following EMI contexts to appreciate a flavour of the diversity of EMI.

- A UK university campus in Malaysia - a course led by a British academic;

- A university course in Scandinavia. Local students have selected the EMI track;

- Another university in Scandinavia – the medium of instruction changes to English due to the presence of foreign exchange students;

- A university in "anglophone" Africa, or in India;

- A rural primary school in Africa - children share a common language;

- A secondary school in an African city - children have many language backgrounds;

- A course for refugees from a middle-eastern country in UK;

- A well-resourced public school in Spain – curriculum is part EMI, part Spanish.

The On-Off Fallacy

The second fallacy is that education is either EMI or not-EMI, that EMI is an on-off switch, a black and white concept. This fallacy is perpetuated in questions along the lines of "Has (that institution) gone EMI yet?". EMI is not even a single continuum but more likely a number of continua. At institutional level, some faculties, departments within faculties, courses within departments, and modules within courses may contain some elements of EMI. At course level, some (often not all) elements of a course might be wholly or partially EMI, and those elements might be on an optional or compulsory basis for the learner. By elements here I mean, for example, the spoken interaction in lectures, tutorials, and study groups, the reading list, acceptable language of written assignments, and the language of examination and assessment (oral and written). The interplay between different levels and elements of EMI, along with issues of optionality and obligation, lead us to see EMI as a much more nuanced concept.

The 'Policy is Practice' Fallacy

The third fallacy is that EMI policy in a given context is the same as EMI practice in that context. We notice a tendency to assume that if a national or institutional authority states that a certain context is EMI in policy statements and publicity material, then that is actually the case. This equation of policy and practice is far from reality. A senior educationalist's personal story to me exemplifies this. Working in a prestigious university in a South Asian city, he walked the corridors, listening to teaching of many subjects going on. The language of the lecturers and students had one thing in common – they were all speaking the dominant local language, which is universally spoken and understood by the university community. He recommended to the university's senior management that there should be a university language policy. The response of the university managers was that there indeed was a clear university language policy – this was an EMI situation and the teaching and learning in class should take place and indeed did take place in English. There are two elements to the mismatch here. Firstly the practice was not at all in line with the policy. Secondly the policy-makers had not recognised that the practice was not in line with the policy, though it was a simple issue to verify that it was not. Pride in the university's EMI policy seems comparable to Andersen's fairytale of "The Emperor's New Clothes". The books in the university library were indeed predominantly in English. Around the world, and across educational sectors, we

see examples of top-down imposed EMI policies leading to a variety of practices as teachers struggle to balance the requirement to implement EMI with their natural drive to give learners the best educational outcomes, and often with their own linguistic capabilities. The most obvious manifestation of this is the practice of teacher and learner code-switching (or translanguaging) in which more than one language is used in interactions in an effort to efficiently impart skills, knowledge and attitudes. It seems clear that such classroom code-switching, often viewed negatively, can be a powerful educational technique when properly used.

In developing a position on EMI then, we need to be looking at a world of EMI in which there are many different practices in different contexts, with a complex situation within each of those contexts, where what is actually happening may well be quite different from what we are told is happening.

The Case of HE in Europe, and Lessons from Elsewhere.

I now turn to the particular phenomenon of the dramatic increase in EMI in Higher Education in Europe and Asia over the last decade or so, with an apparent significant acceleration in the last two to three years. Coleman wrote in 2006 of the drivers for the growth in EMI already discerned – "a rainbow of motives ranges from the ethical and pedagogical through the pragmatic to the commercial. Foreign language learning in itself is NOT the reason why institutions adopt English medium teaching". Noticeable in this quote is the correct assumption that it is institutions rather than higher level systems that are making the policy decisions in the direction of EMI. In general terms it would appear true and uncontroversial to say that the move to EMI in this sector is largely as a result of two factors. These are firstly the increasing dominance of English as a global and European lingua franca in an ever larger number of domains, and secondly the growth in mobility, especially student and staff mobility in Higher Education. In Europe this is commonly largely attributed to the standardisation of European HE systems through the Bologna process. EMI is then often seen by institutions as a benefit both to local students who might travel outwards and to

students from foreign-language backgrounds who might travel inwards.

Stakeholders in the EMI debate will presumably have a common aim of maximising learning outcomes in any given context. It would seem uncontroversial to state that learners will learn better if they have a good command of the language of instruction (whether referring to speaking, listening, reading or writing skills) and many of us with advanced level skills in foreign languages are still aware that we can learn more effectively and efficiently through the use of a first language. Here clearly lies the biggest risk in EMI. Inappropriate introduction can lead to diminished educational outcomes if either learners or teachers do not have a sufficiently advanced command of English.

A good deal of research has taken place in the area of the impact of learning in a second language, particularly in the African EMI context at primary level. As early as 1953, UNESO made the statement, "On educational grounds we recommend that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible" (UNESCO Vernacular Languages in Education 1953). A separate issue is the required level of English of teachers. Haryanto (2013) shows an example at school level in Indonesia, "teachers could not fully use English as medium of instruction because they may not be proficient in the language."

The debate in EMI often revolves around the relative rights of stakeholders. These stakeholders with rights obviously include the learners (whose rights might conflict with each other, for example the case of a local and an exchange student), the teachers, the local language community more widely, the university's right to make policies in support of its underlying mission, and indeed the right of a national government to seek economically competitive education policies and to legislate to protect one or more national languages. We should consider those who wish to retain the right to interact within their domains in languages that are not English, as well as those who strive to master the English needed to operate in the many domains that require it. If access to education is in any sense a right, and that includes access to an education of quality, then access in a language that is understood by the learner must be

fundamental. This language rights issue is not limited to education, but applies to other domains such as access to health services and to public information.

The issue of conflicting rights in an EMI situation led to a court case in Italy in 2013, which the language rights lawyer Rosemary Salomone addresses:

"In zeroing in on the language question, the court opened the discussion to the nature of language learning, the role of language in the university classroom and the potential effect on instructional quality. Mere proficiency in a language, the court noted, does not necessarily imply competency to teach effectively in the language. Teaching in a university calls for the ability to formulate and explain complex concepts at a high level of abstraction. While many professors may publish in English, especially in the sciences, and may be familiar with the technical terms of their disciplines, they are not necessarily equipped to convey fluid thoughts in an academic lecture or in an unscripted class discussion. Of course, that does not mean that such skills cannot be acquired with time, practice and exposure".

(The rise of English in academe – A cautionary tale. Rosemary Salomone, University World News, 20 July 2013)

Moving from social to the linguistic issues, we should also be aware that an increase in EMI is certain to have an effect on accepted forms of English usage as the population of judges of such acceptability is widened substantially beyond the traditional group of native-speaker knowers, to a much wider group of non-native speaking teachers of content subjects. Those teachers, unconstrained by native-speaker notions of correctness, will accept different ways of expressing in English. The new forms will become codified and widely accepted. This is a natural process of language evolution. English, like other languages, does have the capacity for substantial simplification without significant loss of meaning.

Towards a British Council Perspective

It is against this background that we seek to find a reasonable starting position on this still emerging phenomenon in all its complexity. My developing credo on EMI for the 2013 Segovia EMI conference contains the following points:

- EMI is neither a positive nor a negative move in itself;
- As an agency active in international education and English, British Council will support organisations and individuals to develop and implement appropriate policies in EMI;
- EMI should improve or maintain learning outcomes;
- Any EMI policy should take account of the rights and needs of all stakeholders;
- EMI policy should be explicit in terms of learner and teacher choices in each element;
- A move towards EMI will probably require extra support for teachers;
- EMI requires learners and students with high English proficiency;
- A move towards EMI requires careful preparation of learners;
- EMI will change standards of acceptability in English.

Perhaps time will tell whether EMI is an inevitable consequence of internationalisation whose benefits outweigh some undoubted costs. Meanwhile we should strive to make sensible decisions in individual contexts based on sound educational principles. While the current paper is a personal view, I would say that the British Council position on EMI in general is by no means as clear as it is on many high-level issues. I cannot think of any colleagues who would disagree with a positive answer to the following questions:

Do we believe in the right of everyone to access high-quality education? Yes.

Do we believe that language rights form an important subset of human rights? Yes.

Do we believe in the benefits of knowing more than one language and of multilingualism in general? Yes.

In the more specific case of EMI, things are not so clear-cut. We can see that EMI has the potential for damage as well as undoubtedly for benefit. We certainly believe that this is an under-researched issue that needs more descriptive work on what is actually happening and the perceptions of learners and teachers, as well as more analytical work on the effect of EMI on learning outcomes and the distillation and dissemination of best EMI practice.

Do we believe in English-medium instruction? Sometimes.

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Defining and Researching English Medium of Instruction: The Need for Clear Thinking and a Clear Research Agenda

Ernesto Macaro

What is "English Medium Instruction" (EMI) and in what way is it different from other terms which are used to describe a relationship between a subject being learned and the language through which it is learned? These are crucial questions which I believe underpin any discussion about the value of EMI and need to be considered in any research into EMI.

We therefore can begin by asking, is the notion and practice of EMI fixed or is it fluid? If it is fixed, then who has fixed it? If it is fluid, who is involved in shaping the course of its trajectory?

If we take the view of EMI as fixed notion and practice then we can go about comparing it to other related notions and practices. For example we could place it somewhere on a continuum which would be based on the educational aims of the teacher and the learners. (See Figure 1) So at one end of that continuum we could place "General English" or "English Language Teaching" (ELT). This is where the subject being learned is the English language itself, the orientation of that subject is communication using the four skills, and its content is vocabulary, morphology, syntax and so on. Of course there is still a debate about whether ELT should be taught through the medium of English but that does not concern us here today.

At the other end of the continuum we could put EMI. We could say that EMI's overarching aim is to promote knowledge and understanding of an academic subject such as physics or economics, and that historical and geopolitical factors have determined that such a subject (in non-Anglophone countries) should be taught through the medium of English rather than in the majority language of the country in which the programme is taking place.

"Content and Language Integrated Learning" (CLIL), "Content- based language teaching" (CBLT) and "Immersion", we could argue, should go somewhere in the middle of the continuum because they aim to promote both knowledge and understanding of a subject and improved language skills. Indeed CLIL has this dual aim embedded in its title.

Then we have "English for Special Purposes" (ESP) and "English for Academic Purposes" (EAP). Where to place these on the continuum? Well, on the one hand, as in Figure 1a, we can posit that the main aim of any ESP or EAP course is to improve the students' mastery of the English language but focusing on a very specific register and lexical set. Therefore we would place it on the language-dominant aim of the continuum. On the other hand we could argue, as in Figure 1b, that the aims of these courses are so geared to the acquisition of subject content or the ability to operate in such a specific 'language use' situation, that they should be placed nearer the content-dominant aim of the continuum. We need not take this further for now, but I mention it just to raise the question in our minds that fixing educational notions and practices can be problematic.
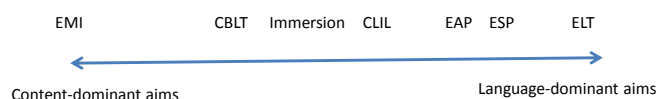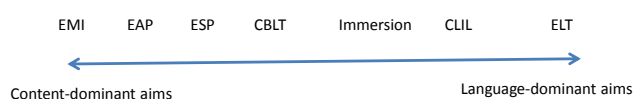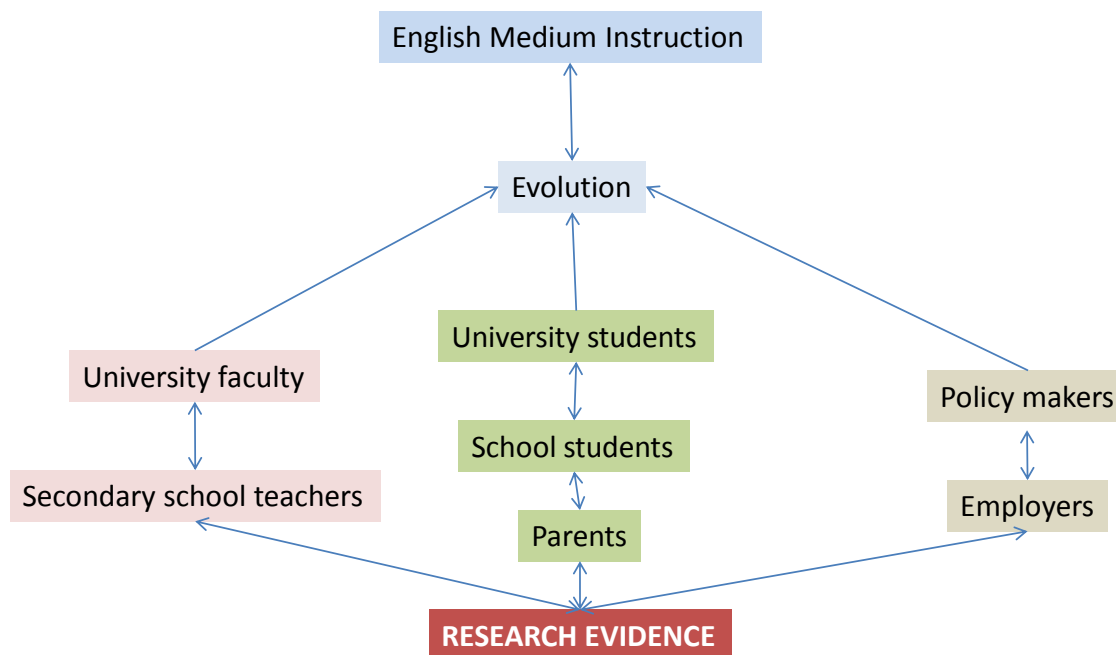
Figure 1a. The comparasion approach

EMI   CBLT   Immersion   CLIL   EAP ESP   ELT

Content-dominant aims   Language-dominant aims

Figure 1b. The comparasion approach

EMI   EAP   ESP   CBLT   Immersion   CLIL   ELT

Content-dominant aims   Language-dominant aims

Another way to start thinking about and defining EMI is to say that it is in a state of fluidity and that over time it will go through a process of evolution. That process of evolution, in my view, should be research evidence-informed. The research should be gathered from groups of stakeholders and end-users of EMI.

The first group of these is university faculty and secondary school teachers (see Figure 2). Clearly being able to adopt EMI in tertiary education will have a knock-on effect on how and why English is taught in secondary education. Whilst I don't believe that any individual phase of education should be beholden to the phase further up, there nonetheless needs to be a dialogue between them.

Figure 2. End-user driven approach

English Medium Instruction

Evolution

University faculty

Secondary school teachers

University students

School students

Parents

Policy makers

Employers

RESEARCH EVIDENCE

The second group of stakeholders and end-users of EMI are students (both secondary and tertiary) and parents. It seems to me that their attitudes towards, and understandings of the notion and practice of EMI need to be explored and taken into account. What are their views of the costs and benefits of an EMI programme approach?

The third group is made up of policymakers and employers. We often hear from policymakers that language skills are essential for the workplace, but the evidence that languages are then used by all employees is less strong and so a discussion needs to be had about whether all students should be learning academic subjects through EMI and, indeed, which subjects.

I am of course coming down on the side of the "evolutionary approach" to EMI rather than the fixed notion and definition of what it is, and I do so primarily because of what motivation theory tells us. Goals which are arrived at by consensus are pursued with much greater motivation than goals which are imposed on us. So let us think briefly of what might be the goals or the aims of adopting EMI. The following are aims which could be described as having potential benefits to the students of the country adopting the EMI programme:

- To facilitate learning of academic subjects by home students. The argument could be that much academic content is written in English and therefore students will find it easier if the teaching is done through English;

- A way of ensuring that home students can compete in a world market by enhancing their global employability in specific areas;

- To improve the English language capacity of the home country in general;

- EMI could be seen as a more cost-effective way of doing this than ELT/EFL;

- EMI as a more authentic way to learn a language. The ELT/EFL community has been arguing for decades

about the nature of authenticity in language learning. In being able to understand an academic lesson we have an indisputable authenticity – or so the argument might go.

The following could be described as being about bringing benefits to the institution adopting the EMI programme:

- To internationalise universities. By offering courses through the medium of English the institution will attract students from all over the world thereby bringing both revenue and prestige to it;

- A way of forcing change in Higher Education pedagogy. If it can be demonstrated that EMI requires (among other things) much greater levels of interactivity, EMI will bring about a desirable change in the way that programmes are taught.

A different and more general aim might be a new multilingual and multicultural tool for developing intercultural communication. In other words EMI might be adopted because by bringing different languages and cultures together, a greater ideal might be achieved perhaps in terms of world peace and understanding.

All the above could be perfectly laudable aims, but are they shared by all the participants in the process? Research is clearly needed so that major mistakes are not committed. So what kind of research questions might we want to ask? Here are just some of the questions that we are beginning to investigate at Oxford:

- What is the current and predicted uptake of EMI globally?

- What are the different forms of EMI currently being developed?

- Is the learning of academic subjects improved by EMI? If so by which groups of students?

- What programmes related to EMI are being introduced in Initial Teacher Education, Professional Development and is EMI reflected in Materials Development?

This is research evidence which needs to be established, the current global landscape if you like, so that we do not jump to conclusions about what "everyone else is doing" and making assumptions that "what they are doing is right and at the right time". The next set of research questions concerns how to deliver quality on EMI courses:

- What levels of English competence enable EMI teachers to provide quality instruction?

- What are the implications for secondary education resulting from EMI in tertiary education?

- To what extent do language assessment systems need to change (for teachers and students)?

- What are the most sustainable mechanisms of teacher education and development beyond the immediate period of engagement on a course?

And then there are a set of research questions which drill deeply inside the pedagogy of the classroom or lecture theatre:

- How does classroom interaction change as the medium of instruction changes?

- What are the psycholinguistic representations in the mental lexicon of abstract concepts encountered in academic subjects through EMI?

- Do abstract concepts result in restructuring of the bilingual lexicon?

- What strategies are used by learners in EMI classrooms in oral and written comprehension tasks?

- What are the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic effects on students' L1 resulting from EMI used in various phases of education?

I think these questions need to be asked and the research carried out as EMI programmes are being adopted. Of course we cannot stop the "phenomenon of EMI", and I would not necessarily want to, but I think some measure of reflection is needed and the pace of introduction needs to be thought about.

With regard to the "landscape" in Europe we do have some tentative initial research evidence. A survey carried out by Rima Dapous and Anne Wiseman of the British Council in eight European countries suggests that: some two thirds of teachers felt there was no requirement to have a certain level of English competence/qualification to teach EMI; that, on the other hand, the vast majority believed there was a need to improve their English but only half of the institutions surveyed were offering any help with improving their English; that a very clear majority favoured a discipline-specific English-upgrade course; that more than half of respondents wanted accreditation, preferably from a UK institution.

With regard to drilling deep into the pedagogy of the classroom or lecture theatre, some research has also already been carried out, but before outlining some of this research we should consider what is involved in the interaction of an EMI classroom. In my view there is not a huge difference in what is involved compared to the interaction in a ELT/EFL classroom, except to say that in an EMI classroom the interaction is almost exclusively message-oriented, rather than the medium-oriented interaction (i.e. about the language) which quite often characterises the ELT/EFL classroom. The EMI teacher is in the business of putting across ideas and concepts and they do this by trying to explain these through language. Thus all the theories and constructs that pertain to communicative ELT also pertain to EMI: input modification, modified interaction, pushed output, teacher feedback, learner feedback/confirmation of understanding, codeswitching, etc. There are some differences with ELT but essentially the task of putting across meaning is the same.

One of the differences is that in the EMI classroom we have three registers for the learner (and the teacher) to have to contend with. There is the technical language which is specific to that discipline ("electrode", "voltage", "zinc sulphate"). There is the more general academic vocabulary and "ways of talking" ("factual recall", "describe", "calculate", "solution", [plus] "discourse markers" and "conventions"). Then there is what we might call the "vernacular" or "everyday colloquial English" (just some stuff; you stick it in something; you end up with). It is likely that the technical language will not cause too many problems; it may be easily

memorised and subsequently recalled. The general academic vocabulary may pose difficulties. Consider the word "solution" as used in chemistry and how its meaning differs from "solution" used in mathematics and "solution" used in international politics. This difficulty posed by the different "senses" of "solution" is compounded by the respective equivalents in the learners' first language. For example each sense of "solution" in English is rendered in Chinese by a different set of morphemes/characters. Then there is the difficulty encountered by students with vernacular/colloquial English, with its metaphors, its collocations and its phrasal verbs.

EMI teachers will need to undertake their explanations of concepts using many linguistic resources among which we could list: Definition, Paraphrase, Circumlocution, Exposition, Contextualization, Synonym/Antonym and Hierarchical Exemplification. This will need considerable amounts of teacher professional development and language update in some cases.

One piece of research that I have been involved in which would suggest this need for professional development was in collaboration with Dr Yuen Yi Lo now at the University of Hong Kong (Lo and Macaro, 2012). We found that in those academic subjects that switched to EMI at grade 10 (from Cantonese in Grade 9) the proportion of teacher talk increased significantly while the percentage of student talk decreased. The mean length of teacher turns rose significantly. The "richness" of student responses deteriorated and basically lessons became less interactive and more in the "transmission mode".

Another interesting study carried out by Tatsiana Senina at the University of Oxford (Master's Dissertation) used 50 public lectures given by both native speakers of English and non-native speakers. What Tatsiana found was that non-native speakers used far fewer discourse markers, referential questions, display questions, survey questions, checkpoint questions, and rarely had an "informal question time" for the audience. She also found in non-native speaker lectures less use of the pronoun "we" (which brings the audience into a discussion frame) and fewer opportunities for the members of the

audience to request clarification. All these aspects of classroom/lecture room discourse, previous research suggests, contribute to interactivity and hence to better comprehension. What this study implies is that non-native speaker teachers may need these kinds of linguistic resources in order to communicate more effectively and that merely relying on reducing the complexity or lexical range of one's language is not going to be enough.

One issue that will remain on the research agenda for EMI is what the role of the first language (the L1) is in delivering subject content. Of course the easy answer is to say "ban the L1 and, in any case, with mixed L1 classes the lingua franca has to be English and English only". However in banning the L1, I would argue, we may be depriving teachers and learners of a very important tool in their toolbox. And if there are mixed L1 classes, research may be able to show creative ways of using some L1 to help everyone understand. Let us

not forget that the goal of language learning (and some would argue of EMI) is to create bilinguals, not English monolinguals. So there does need to be a principled exploration of the role of the L1 in the EMI classroom.

I would now like to do a bit more shameless publicity for the research that we are doing at Oxford on EMI. Firstly, we have embarked, in collaboration with John Knagg from the British Council, on a 60-country survey of the extent to which EMI is being introduced globally, and in all phases of education. We want to know who is setting the policy, what the policy is and the extent to which there is adequate preparation for its introduction. We will follow this up with a phase 2 involving more in-depth analysis of a smaller number of countries.

We have also begun to carry out a series of semi-structured interviews in universities in Europe where EMI is being introduced. We have so far 20 interviews with academic subject teachers from Austria, Italy, and Poland. We would like to collect many more of these interviews. So I will end my talk by letting others do the talking. Here are some of the things that the teachers said in response to a question about why we might have EMI in the first place and what they might be trying to achieve by teaching in English:

- To be more international...not only lecturer but also students (A)

- Give the same opportunity to my students as I had (she studied abroad) (A)

- We're linguistically an isolated country. I'm used to delivering talks to everybody who knows the subject but in a classroom it's very different, especially here because Italians are really, really bad with languages. ..So I wanted to prove myself but it's been quite tiring (I)

- I think there is an advantage teaching science in English because it's the official language (I)

- I think our country is interesting for them [foreign students], I ask them this question, they say because of the position of 'XXXX' University which is the best in Poland, but also because they would like to travel around Europe (P).

We asked whether teaching through English was a stated policy of their university:

- .....there are not enough courses taught in English. In my case we do have incoming students but they end up being taught individually as the main course is taught in German (A)

- (We're) trying to convince the rector/principal to offer more courses in English, we have to pull the wagon. There is a strategy paper, internationalisation is a big goal and EMI is part of that (A)

- There isn't a comprehensive policy - more a general trend, not set in stone. It's a new thing (I)

- One opinion is not to use Italian at all, so it becomes quite complex for all the liberal professions that should use Italian, for example medical doctor (I)

- There is. The policy is exchange of students Erasmus, Erasmus mundus (P).

We asked whether they thought that the learning of academic content would be affected:

- I have noticed that if I teach in English I give them half of what I give them in Polish because I go slowly. I don't know if it's worse, perhaps it's even better because I throw away things perhaps that are not so important. It's even better to say less but to explain more (P)

- I'm afraid so, from the point of view of the teacher I'm not able to tell them every single detail as I run out of words, it takes us longer to teach to understand (A)

- in Maths you are saved by the formula, and the formula is true or false in any language (I)

- not in science. It's probably easier because the number of words you have to use in English is lower (I).

We asked whether students' English would improve through the introduction of EMI:

- Errr I don't think so, I'm not going to improve (their) English. I'm going to transfer basic knowledge, try to communicate in a correct way but I'm not going to correct or teach them English!(P)

- Yes because they are forced to communicate with me in English and forced to think in English (P)

- For sure yes, they will be exposed to more input, relevant input (I)

- I hope so, when I do a written exam, and it's sometimes very difficult to correct these tests because I'm not going to correct the English .... this is not my duty (I)

- I'm not interested in their English, I'm interested in their comprehension of micro-biogenetics (I)

- Probably not the level of spoken English, but give them more confidence, understand more when reading (A).

We asked what level of English the teacher needs to teach in EMI:

- it's not necessary that the teacher needs a higher level than the students (A)

- Good question.. I don't know actually...at least you have to be able to understand the questions of the students (A)

- I think for technical disciplines we don't need very deep knowledge of the language. The vocabulary is 400 or 500 words (I)

- teachers should have quite an advanced level, in the way that they're not limited when they have to speak and to make things understandable to the students (I)

- high intermediate if it exists and must be fluent in this specific subject language and be able to communicate with students asking questions and answering (P).

We asked what level of English students need before they do EMI courses:

- Intermediate just to communicate. They don't need to use special terms, I can teach them (P)

- The university can support ... I know there are English courses for the students but I think it's up to them (P)

- University-policy-wise, A2. I think it's not enough they should be B1 at least (A)

- I think they have to be able to listen ... to follow me to understand my words and my thoughts . They don't have to be very good in written English just for following my course (A)

- There is a wide variety. My class was 90% Italian students and class with the exception of 2 or 3 students the level was very low but it was even lower for foreign students...from Africa and their language was an African language and French so in English they didn't feel at ease at all (I).

And we asked how the students get to the level of English before they come to university:

- 9 years English at school and if you have good teachers it should be sufficient (A)

- We try to get them to the right level by giving them grammar classes in the first semester to prepare them for the official course in the 2nd semester (I)

- There isn't a test so the preparation is very different. In my experience European students are a bit equal, different for Indian or Arab students (P)

Finally, we asked respondents where they think EMI will be in 10 years' time:

- Other universities hurry to copy us, but I don't really know what is the objective of this hurry (P)

- In Italy? I doubt it will be much more diffused. There are still so many of my peers who do not speak English. They will never allow it to spread much more than this (I)

- I assume that in 10 years perhaps 50% of the faculties will also have English programmes. It will always be the case that in some disciplines people will say English is not necessary (A)

- It will get more for sure, more in technical studies where they are more used to it, rather than in health care, it's not the area where people are using English (A).

I think these testimonies offer plenty of scope for research.

References

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Conclusions from the Working Groups
Compiled by Mark Levy

- EMI is increasingly seen as an opportunity rather than a threat even by governments which are traditionally more hostile. Many governments are now seeing marketing potential for their countries in EMI.

- HE institutions are not looking for an EMI policy at EU or national level, but there is a need for guidelines and/or agreed principles to facilitate implementation and help assure quality.

- There is a need for a national foreign language strategy which links primary, secondary & tertiary education and the transition between them. Language level expectations at HE need to reflect learning and achievement in secondary education.

- In the absence of a national policy, or even a clear internal strategy/policy, EMI appears to be developing organically. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but ….

- Universities need a clear language strategy which encompasses the offer for both international students and "home" students.

- Successful EMI needs embedding in the institutions at all levels. This includes interdepartmental support and resourcing.

- Public and private institutions present very different scenarios.

- There were some calls for collaboration at a local/regional/national/international level to pool, for example, resources, training, best practice (Setting up 'academic regions'?).

- EMI is an excellent opportunity to focus on pedagogy and improve the quality of teaching (vs. the quality of research).

- An "intercultural awareness" of different learning and teaching styles/cultures is important.

- Current international assessment tests aren't always useful tools for EMI.

- There should be no differentiation in the assessment of EMI and non-EMI courses. This should always be based on agreed learning outcomes.

- All agree that assessment of the English language level of university teachers/lecturers is important, but how this is done, and whether this is done at all, varies widely.

- Is there the danger that students with a higher level of English might be assessed differently because expectations of them are greater?

- Is there a risk of a "shared misunderstanding" between teacher and students because of common low English levels?

- There is agreement that there is often a considerable extra workload around EMI (e.g. extra administration, preparation, marking, etc.) and therefore a question of how this might be compensated / how EMI teachers might be rewarded / incentives for EMI teachers.

- Is EMI (inevitably) elitist? What are the selection criteria? (The most motivated students? The most mobile students?)

- What is the definition of the internationalisation of HE? Is there a shared definition or a common understanding?