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## Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching

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### Book Review

#### *Uncovering English-medium instruction: Glocal issues in higher education*

Authors:

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Though globalization has by now affected practically all aspects of life in the 21st century, it will take some time before we can fully understand its true nature. Hence, any book looking into its effects is highly welcome. The book *Uncovering English-medium Instruction: Glocal Issues in Higher Education* by Branka Drljača Margić and Irena Vodopija-Krstanović, published in 2017 by Peter Lang, makes a valuable contribution to understanding some aspects of globalization processes as reflected through the role of English in higher education (HE).

The book focuses on the fast spreading phenomenon of English-medium instruction (EMI) permeating HE as one of the consequences of globalization. EMI refers to using English to teach academic subjects in non-anglophone contexts (Dearden, 2014). The nine chapters of the book are based on both theoretical insights and empirical data from previous studies and the research that the authors themselves carried out. The book aims, as stated by the authors, at a holistic as well as critical picture of EMI.

Chapter One discusses the aims of the book, offers an overview of EMI worldwide, points to the connection of internationalization of HE and EMI, and introduces the chapters that follow. A special point is made regarding the term EMI, which is used in the book only because it is highly widespread; the authors stress that *languages of learning and teaching* (LoLT) would be more appropriate, as rightly pointed out by van der Walt (2013). In Chapter Two the reasons for introducing EMI as a way of internationalization of HE are looked into. The reasons are considered from the perspectives of global trends and of more local contexts. Overall, educational, economic as well as cultural gains are pinpointed. Enhanced competitiveness, visibility and modernization are pointed out as key reasons among universities for introducing EMI. Interestingly, these are relevant not only at the international level but also local levels as HE institutions are increasingly ranked by the same criteria in local and international contexts. International student mobility is turning HE institutions into multicultural academic environments adding an important intercultural dimension as a special asset. This enables even those students who are not part of mobility schemes to experience “internationalization at home,” as McCambridge and Saarinen (2015) are quoted in the book to say (p. 12). In this chapter, EMI is considered from the point of view of SLA as well. The concept of EMI implies acquiring both the English language and content: extensive language input, increased interaction in English and ample opportunities to acquire the language incidentally in what can be considered authentic communication situations are all considered conducive to acquisition of English. The authors go on to describe possible benefits for EMI teachers (e.g., professional development, international visibility, networking). As suggested in the remainder of the chapter, EMI involves quite a few challenges too! One challenge is the equity issue which emerges because EMI is still prevalent in the private sector. Some fear that it may result in HE becoming a commodity. An equal threat is that in many contexts EMI has been implemented without enough preparation or sufficient concern for quality of education. A frequently mentioned problem is students’ competence in English which, if too limited, can interfere with academic attainment, prevent students from fully participating in classes and cause anxiety and low self-concept, which in turn may result in resistance to EMI. Challenges exist with teachers, too. As the authors stress at different points in the book, teachers’ competence in English, if not high enough, can interfere with the way of teaching (e.g., avoidance of learner-centered and collaborative approaches, less illustration of content, too much simplification), and can damage their professional self-concept and status. Hiring problems for teachers who do not speak English emerge as well, turning English into the gatekeeper to academia. The status of other languages in academia is, consequently, perceived by some as seriously affected by EMI and as becoming marginalized.

The following six chapters shift to the local perspective of the global issue of EMI. They discuss how internationalization of HE through EMI is implemented in

Croatia, a context very similar to many contexts world over. The authors offer insights into the Croatian context (Chapter Three), present the aims and methodology used in their investigations (Chapter Four), report on findings regarding the perception of the value and feasibility of EMI in the Croatian context based on reports of teachers and students who have not been involved in EMI (Chapter Five) and those who have (Chapter Six), discuss all their findings with relevance to the local context (Chapter Seven) and in comparison to results from studies in other contexts (Chapter Eight). In the concluding chapter (Chapter Nine), implications of EMI are reconsidered and recommendations for further research and actions are made.

A particularly valuable feature of the study described in the book is its very interesting research design. Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors collected quantitative data via questionnaires and combined them with qualitative data gathered by means of interviews and classroom observation. Using classroom observation to obtain insights into what happens in real classrooms is a particularly notable characteristic of the study! Also, information was gathered from EMI students and teachers, from non-EMI participants, from teachers and students of Croatian-medium instruction as well as institution management. This allowed the authors to present and discuss the EMI phenomenon from a very broad as well as multi-layered perspective.

Based on the findings, the authors conclude that success of EMI depends on good communication between all stakeholders (institution management, English language teachers, content teachers, teacher trainers and students), and that both top-down and bottom-up policies need to be implemented. This is a strong conclusion about EMI globally based on local findings, which makes this book truly global!

Although an interested reader, I could not help wishing reports on quantitative results were made more reader-friendly. Their numerical and graphical representation could have made those parts of the text more dynamic.

I would recommend the book to all applied linguists interested in new developments in language learning and teaching, to experienced and novice researchers interested in innovative research approaches in the field as well as to teachers (and not necessarily only those at the HE level!) who want to understand and be in touch with new practices in their profession emerging as part of globalization processes. It is my hope that what they learn from this book they would then successfully relay to all EMI stakeholders for the benefit of EMI students. I am sure nothing would make the authors happier.

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