English medium instruction in emerging contexts: An editorial introduction to the special issue

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The burgeoning field of English Medium Instruction (EMI) has witnessed a significant increase in empirical studies yet remains largely insular and under-theorised. This special issue aims to address these gaps by spotlighting EMI in emerging contexts and interrogating its theoretical underpinnings. Comprising 10 empirical studies across diverse geographical and educational settings, this special issue, edited by Heath Rose, Samantha Curle, and Dogan Yuksel, offers a multifaceted examination of EMI's impact on language proficiency, academic achievement, and pedagogical practices. These studies contribute valuable insights into the complexities of implementing EMI. They also reveal a predominant focus on applied linguistics, often to the exclusion of other disciplinary perspectives. This editorial introduction critiques the current state of EMI research, calling for greater interdisciplinary collaboration and theorisation. It concludes with an urgent call for future research that is not only geographically diverse but also critically and theoretically robust. The overarching aim is to broaden the scope of EMI research, particularly in the face of the unrestricted Englishisation of global education systems.

1. Introduction

It is now well established that the phenomenon of English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education is expanding at a rapid pace across the globe. English is becoming universal in many academic disciplines, and internationalisation is being realised via 'Englishisation' of the curriculum within many higher education institutions (Rose & McKinley, 2018). This switch in medium of instruction means that English has shifted from being taught as a foreign language alongside other disciplinary-focussed courses, to becoming an important educational language used for learning and teaching non-language related academic subjects (e.g. studying Engineering content through English; studying Business degrees through English).

Much EMI research has drawn on the following overarching definition: "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro et al. (2018): 19). Although contentious, this definition is relevant to many developing contexts of EMI in higher education, where current trends indicate a move towards rapid expansion of EMI provision at some universities to teach partial courses, whole courses, and entire programmes in English. Some applied linguistics researchers have questioned whether this definition is too constrained and, thus, ignores the substantial research base of EAP research (see Wingate and Hakim, 2022) as well as research into L2

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learners in international Anglophone universities (see, for example, Baker & Hüttner, 2017).

To side-step definitional quibbles that have riddled the field of late (see, Rose, Sahan, & Zhou, 2022; Wingate, 2022), we offer the following working definition for our special issue: EMI, in this special issue, refers to the teaching of academic content via the medium of English in contexts where other mediums of instruction have been the status quo. The absence of several Anglophone and English-majority speaking postcolonial contexts from this special issue's working definition does not disregard important research associated with such contexts where students learn academic content via a second or additional language (L2). However, our adopted definition intentionally puts front and centre EMI contexts that may still be developing in terms of policies and practices, or EMI contexts that are *emerging* for the first time in establishing educational systems. Thus, our research aims to build on, rather than exclude, research, so as to extend our knowledge in emerging or under-researched EMI contexts.

2. Lack of research in English medium instruction emerging contexts

EMI has a long history in post-colonial British contexts, such as Hong Kong, where early decisions were made through English-speaking governance to establish English as a medium of school education. As a result, there has been considerable research into the impact of using English as a second or additional language in educational systems in places such as Hong Kong (see Evans, 2017, for an overview). However, even these contexts are rapidly changing, and necessitate continued research and monitoring. As Shepard and Morrison (2021) astutely observe:

> While local students continue to make up the great majority of student populations at Hong Kong universities, a growing number of non-Chinese local students from various ethnic backgrounds, combined with a substantial increase in the number of international students over the past two decades, has begun to impact the Hong Kong tertiary-level linguistic landscape. (p. 1)

Thus, some postcolonial contexts are re-emerging as areas of intense interest within the EMI research landscape.

EMI growth in the Expanding Circle (i.e., in national contexts that do not have a former Anglophone colonial link) is a much more recent phenomenon, which is driven by an increasingly globalised higher education sector. The growth of EMI in Europe has been well documented, having developed early due to European student mobility and integration initiatives such as the Erasmus programme and Bologna processes. This growth was accompanied by a large volume of research (see Coleman, 2006 for an early overview of such research). EMI growth outside of Europe is markedly different to that of Europe and may necessitate unique solutions to tackle policy implementation challenges, pedagogical challenges, learning problems, and teething issues. As higher education grapples with the emergent problems of rapidly evolving EMI, research is needed in more diverse contexts to shed local insights on a global phenomenon through international research collaboration. This is especially pertinent in areas where EMI is precipitously developing, and where the impact of EMI is comparatively under-researched. In this special issue, an emerging context is defined as meeting the following criteria:

1. A context where English has had little historic widespread use in the Education system, and thus is emerging as an academic medium of instruction; or
2. A national context that is relatively under-represented in EMI research and thus is of emerging interest within the current EMI research landscape; or
3. A context that is contextualised within an emerging economy, and thus may be under-resourced and developing.

In a recent Special Issue on EMI in *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching,* the guest editors call for more EMI research from and with researchers in under-represented contexts, "to address inequities and shed light on these important and relatively unknown contexts … …Only then will we start to develop a knowledge of the full extent of EMI policies and practices on a truly global scale." (Macaro & Rose, 2023:15). This Special Issue aims, in part, to answer this call. This is especially true of several papers in this issue which are the result of international collaboration between researchers working in partnership on funded projects.

3. Critical dimensions of English medium instruction

Criticality has been an important aspect of recent research in the field of EMI, especially in studies from low-resourced contexts, which is also one of the focus points of our special issue. Recent years have seen a book-length treatment of critical EMI (e.g., Block & Khan, 2021; Mirhosseini & De Costa, forthcoming) and chapters, papers, and conference presentations (e.g. Yuksel et al., forthcoming). When a critical perspective is employed, studies on EMI explored the concepts of the use of power, dominance, inequalities, and the impact of neoliberal policies, among others. Some articles in this special issue also investigate these concepts and offer a critical perspective (e.g., Choi & Poudel, 2024; Kuchah & Milligan, 2024).

In a recent review of critical EMI, Yuksel and his colleagues (forthcoming) explore two trends: one focuses on how EMI might contribute to linguistic imperialism via an English-only policy in non-Anglophone countries (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2014; Mackenzie, 2022) and the other on how it enhances inequalities in society (e.g., Song, 2021; Sah, 2022). In terms of linguistic imperialism, the issues of how Englishisation of various higher education contexts, neoliberalist internationalisation agenda and English-only policy in some institutions might strengthen structural, academic, pedagogical and cultural inequalities between English and local languages have been discussed (Fang & Baker, 2021; Sahan et al., 2022). This can be in the form of linguistic imperialism, as defined and elaborated by Phillipson (2001), or academic imperialism, which enhances inequalities in higher education settings (Altbach, 2007). For example, Shimauchi (2018) examines how academic imperialism, closely linked with English Medium Instruction, leads to over-reliance on

academic resources written in English in the Japanese higher education context. Academic inequalities can also be in the form of domain loss, defined as "a lack of national language scientific terminology" (Hultgren, 2018, p. 77) in a specific field due to the popularity of English in academic publishing.

The second research strand, how EMI enhances societal inequalities, explores social and cultural aspects of EMI influence. For example, in the Nepalese context, Sah (2022) investigates how EMI policy contributes to problems with social justice, accessibility and inequity, which might have a negative impact on the local languages. Specifically, he argues that high demand for EMI might prevent the parents from appreciating the local languages of the society and increase the linguistic and cultural hegemony of EMI. Research in the Chinese context also reports similar problems with EMI. Hu and his colleagues exposed a darker side of EMI which might cause economic and social inequalities in society by broadening the differences between the rich and the poor (Hu & Lei, 2014). In the Pakistani setting, Farooq and Hassan (2019) argue that English Medium Instruction also leads to elitism and socioeconomic inequalities in society because the elite class of society appropriates it due to the prestige and status it provides in society.

From a broader perspective, research on critical EMI also aims to challenge the tendencies and policies that are inherent in the adaptations of EMI in many higher education contexts. For example, Fang and Baker (2021) argue for a critical perspective to challenge the English-only practice based on native-speakerism ideology. Similarly, Qiu, Lo, and Teng (2022) state that EMI should not be reduced to an English-only medium of instruction and instead should provide a supportive pedagogical environment for multilingual students who can benefit from their mutual language repertoires.

4. Addressing knowledge gaps in English medium instruction

As highlighted earlier, previous research into EMI has tended to concentrate either around a mobile European higher education sector or in post-colonial contexts, where English is more firmly established as the default academic lingua franca. Thus, extant knowledge of EMI development might be insufficient to address local issues, especially in non-Western, diverse contexts.

Some of this imbalance in EMI has been contextualised by drawing on *World Systems Theory* to exemplify the unequal power relations that separate Western knowledge centres and non-Western countries (see Rose et al., 2023). According to Xu (2020) academic knowledge in higher education systems emulates the centre–periphery dynamic because "countries on the periphery must work within a world system framed by the centre countries" (p. 157–158). We have seen the dominance of this dynamic in the growth of EMI, where some programmes seek EMI training and guidance from powerful Western centres—a practice we would problematise if done uncritically and without incorporating local needs and knowledge.

In recent decades, there have been increased calls in educational research for more non-Western perspectives (Singh & Meng, 2013), and this includes the field of EMI. While we have seen a proliferation of research especially from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, the critical question remains regarding whether such research anchors itself to Western spheres of knowledge or creates new knowledge systems borne from local contexts.

The systematic review of EMI by Macaro et al. (2018), which included papers up until 2015, portrayed an EMI research landscape that was skewed towards the Western hemisphere, with 52 of 102 papers on EMI at the tertiary level being conducted in Europe (similar results of approximately 50% of European coverage was also found at the secondary and primary levels of EMI research). This overview is now quite dated, so it is worth exploring how this landscape has been evolving since this landmark review.

In the journal *System*, we have seen an exploding interest in EMI in recent years, as shown in Fig. 1. In the years 2016–2019 there were on average one paper per year in the journal that used the term "English Medium Instruction" in its title, abstract, or key words. In the years since, we have seen this grow to four papers in 2020, seven papers in 2021, and nine papers in 2022. In 2023, we have this entire special issue devoted to the topic, plus several EMI papers outside of the issue (e.g. Tai, 2023). Prior to this current era, few papers were written on EMI in *System*, with the exception of a seminal paper by Sert (2008) within the context of Turkey.

The research emerging in System shows the changing research landscape of EMI research in recent years. Of the 24 papers published in this period, 11 explore Asian contexts—by far the most dominantly researched region. Of these, five papers researched educational systems in Hong Kong (Ding & Stapleton, 2016; Mendoza & Ou, 2022; Pun & Jin, 2022; Qiu, Zheng, & Liu, 2022; Tai & Li, 2020), a further four within mainland China (An et al., 2021; Hu & Wu, 2020; Zhou & Rose, 2021), one each on Japan (Aizawa & Rose,
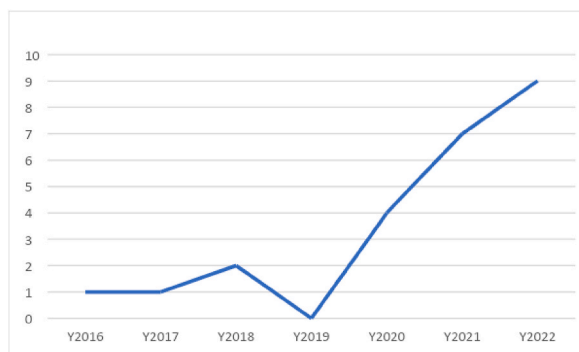

Fig. 1. Number of papers on EMI in the journal System.

2020) and Vietnam (Vo et al., 2022) and two papers spanning multiple East Asian contexts (Galloway & Ruegg, 2022; Kim & Thompson, 2022). The next most frequent region is Europe, with six papers: four in Spain (Breeze & Dafouz, 2017; Doiz & Lasa-gabaster, 2022; Morell, 2018; Sánchez-Pérez, 2021), one in The Netherlands (Hendriks & van Meurs, 2022), and an additional paper on 10 European nations (Orduna-Nocito & Sánchez-García, 2022). EMI in the Middle East is represented by six studies based in Turkey (Bozbıyık & Balaman, 2023; Curle, Yuksel, et al., 2020; Jacknick & Duran, 2021; Sahan et al., 2021; Soruç et al., 2021, 2022) and one in Qatar (Graham et al., 2021). There was only one paper exploring EMI in an African context (Kuchah, 2018) published in this period, and no papers from Central Asia, South Asia, South or Central America, or Southeast Asia.

While a review of EMI research in System shows positive movement towards addressing gaps in knowledge in some periphery contexts, it is clear more research is needed outside of the Western hemisphere to better understand the diversity of emerging contexts where EMI is taking foot. This special issue pushes this agenda further in its inclusion of 10 new papers, many in under-represented national contexts (see section 6 in for further details). It is our hope that these emergent trends may help dismantle hegemonic views of the West at the centre of the global knowledge economy of EMI.

5. Theorising English medium instruction

English Medium Instruction has firmly established its place in the realm of educational research (Macaro et al., 2018). While it may not be accurate to say there is a complete "lack" of theory in English Medium Instruction (EMI) research, it's fair to argue that there is a need for more comprehensive, robust, and specific theoretical frameworks to guide this field of study. This section aims to provide several theoretical frameworks that might be adopted in EMI research.

EMI is a complex phenomenon that intersects various disciplines. It spans across academic areas including linguistics, education, psychology, and sociology. Publications in the field of EMI are often published in journals that focus on applied linguistics, language education, bilingual education, and international education (Wu & Tsai, 2022). While there are numerous theories within these disciplines that can be and have been applied to EMI research, a synthesis or integration of multiple theories within a single study might be necessary to fully capture the complexities of EMI. For example, Rose et al.'s (2020) study that investigated the factors that contribute to success in EMI courses (specifically; language proficiency, academic English skills, and language motivation) drew on Dörnyei and Ryan's (2015) theoretical framework of the L2 motivational self-system. Although this framework provides some insight to the study's findings, this theory was originally conceptualised on the basis of motivation to learn a *language*. In an EMI context however, language learning is often considered a by-product-outcome of learning, not the primary objective (Curle, Jablonkai, et al.,

Table 1
Suggested theoretical EMI research frameworks.

Theoretical Framework	Originating Discipline	Example application
Cognitive Load Theory – This theory proposes that learning is directly affected by the cognitive load *(the total amount of mental effort being used in the working memory at any one time)* involved in processing information.	Educational psychology (John Sweller)	This theory could be used in an EMI study that examines the relationship between students' English language proficiency and EMI academic outcomes. For instance, a student who is not proficient in English might experience a high extraneous cognitive load when trying to understand a lecture in English, leaving less cognitive resources for processing the actual academic content of the lecture. According to the Cognitive Load Theory, this could potentially lead to poorer academic outcomes for the student.
Self-determination Theory – This theory posits that people are motivated to grow and change by three innate needs *(competence, relatedness, and autonomy)* and universal psychological needs.	Psychology (Edward Deci and Richard Ryan)	This theory of motivation could be used to explore what motivates students to engage in EMI and how this motivation can be supported. It could also be used to investigate the link between motivation, needs satisfaction, and academic outcomes in EMI contexts. For example, research might explore whether students who feel more competent, autonomous, and related have better academic achievement in EMI classrooms.
Bloom's Taxonomy – This taxonomy posits that cognitive skills can be classified into six broad categories, each requiring a greater degree of cognitive complexity than the one before it. *Educators use this hierarchical model of cognitive skills to structure learning objectives, assessments, and learning activities.*	Educational psychology (Benjamin Bloom)	Researchers might use Bloom's Taxonomy to explore the relationship between English language proficiency and the level of cognitive engagement. For example, they might investigate whether students with higher English proficiency are able to engage more fully in higher-order cognitive processes in EMI classrooms.
Multiliteracies Pedagogy – This theory posits that literacy extends beyond reading and writing, incorporating understanding and communicating through multiple modes, especially in digital and multimodal contexts. *The goal is to equip learners with the skills to effectively communicate and make meaning in an increasingly diverse, multimodal, and digital world.*	Education *[language and literacy education]* (proposed by the New London Group, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress et al.)	EMI researchers could use the theory of Multiliteracies Pedagogy to study literacy practices in EMI classrooms. They could investigate, for example, how students use multiple modes and mediums of communication to learn content and how these practices influence their learning outcomes.

2020). Furthermore, EMI involves learning academic content through a second/foreign language, which is a complex process involving cognitive, linguistic, and academic aspects of teaching and learning (see Doiz et al., 2020; Kling et al., 2022). The L2 motivational self-system, with its focus on language learning motivation, might not fully capture this complexity. Finally, this theory was developed based on research conducted in Western contexts. Its applicability to non-Western contexts, such as Japan where this study was conducted, might be limited. This example underscores the constraints of depending exclusively on a single theoretical framework, drawn from the field of English as a Foreign Language (ELF) teaching and learning, for its applicability in an EMI research study. To circumnavigate this issue, it is recommended to adopt a multi-theoretical approach in EMI studies. By integrating insights from various theoretical frameworks (not just those from the field of applied linguistics), researchers can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex phenomena involved in EMI. This could involve combining theories from linguistics, education, psychology, and sociology, among others, depending on the specific research questions and context. Such an approach would allow for a more holistic analysis and could potentially lead to more effective strategies for enhancing EMI outcomes. A non-exhaustive list of possible theoretical frameworks, their originating discipline, and example EMI research applications are presented in Table 1.

The application and interplay of various theories in EMI research underscores the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon, requiring a blend of perspectives from linguistics, education, psychology, and sociology to fully understand its complexities. As EMI continues to evolve as a field, the development and application of robust and specific theoretical frameworks will be integral to capturing the intricate dynamics of EMI and illuminating ways to enhance its effectiveness in diverse educational contexts.

6. Papers in the special issue

This special includes 10 new empirical studies on EMI in seven different regional contexts. Some of these regions, such as Myanmar and Cameroon, shed insights into relatively under-explored areas. Others build on a growing body of research in EMI growth hotspots, such as Turkey and China.

6.1. Researching English medium instruction science learning using a path analysis

The first paper in this special issue by Jack Pun and Xina Jin focuses on English-medium instruction (EMI) in Hong Kong. It collected survey data from 356 students in eight secondary schools. The main aim of the study was to develop a statistical model that elucidated the structural connections between second language (L2) students' English proficiency, their language usage in the science classroom, their perceived difficulty in using English in this context, their self-concept regarding science learning, and their science achievement (EMI success). Results of the model revealed robust links between these variables, underscoring the significance of L2 students' self-perceptions and English competence in their acquisition of scientific knowledge. The authors take a comprehensive approach to modelling the data using a path analysis. This provides a more holistic understanding of the impact of EMI on science learning. The authors addressed gaps identified in previous Hong Kong EMI research, particularly the insufficient English proficiency secondary school students have to handle EMI classroom tasks (see Yip et al., 2007). This study contributes to this area by examining the impact of English proficiency on science learning success, highlighting a need to prioritise improving students' English proficiency in order to enhance EMI outcomes in science education.

6.2. Researching translanguaging practices in Turkish EMI classrooms: commonalities and differences across two academic disciplines

The second empirical paper by Yasemin Kırkgöz, Vildan Inci-Kavak, Ali Karakas and Sonia Moran Panero investigated the effects of adopting EMI in Turkish higher education. It focused specifically on translanguaging practices that arise from lecturer and student interactions when teaching and learning through EMI. Data of 44 h of EMI lesson observation recordings in the disciplines of English Language and Literature and Food Sciences were collected and analysed. Findings showed that translanguaging practices (operationalised as the use of two or more languages in teaching and learning), were critical in the classroom. These translanguaging practices varied based on the nature of the disciplinary needs and were used strategically by most students and lecturers. The authors therefore recommend the effective integration of translanguaging as a critical learning/teaching tool into EMI staff training programmes. This study excellently illustrates the challenges and restrictions of imposing monolingual perspectives on bilingual/multilingual EMI stakeholders teaching various disciplinary curricula.

6.3. Research into exploring the role of English proficiency, self-efficacy, and motivation in listening for learners transitioning to an English-medium transnational university in China

The third paper in this issue by Sihan Zhou and Gene Thompson investigated the role of linguistic (i.e., English listening proficiency) and non-linguistic factors (i.e., self-efficacy and motivation) in perceived listening difficulties for learners transitioning to an English-medium transnational university in China. They collected data from 316 students, including standardised English placement test scores, responses to questionnaires on listening difficulties, self-efficacy, and motivation, and analysis of interviews with 34 participants. Their results revealed differences in cognitive stage-specific listening difficulties for students with varying proficiency. Specifically, their findings emphasised the significance of self-efficacy as a stronger predictor of listening difficulties compared to proficiency. Another highlight of their study is the pedagogical implications for EMI teaching and language support in transitioning to EMI programmes, such as providing language support that takes into account the heterogeneity of students' English proficiency and

beliefs in personal capability.

6.4. Research into the role of translingual peer involvement in resolving understanding troubles in the English medium instruction classroom

The fourth paper by Merve Bozbıyık and Ufuk Balaman focuses on EMI classroom dynamics in the multilingual learning environment of Turkey. The study is based on video-recorded classroom interactions (2,5 h) of an EMI Mathematics and Science education undergraduate programme. The authors use multimodal Conversation Analysis to examine how students use their multilingual and multimodal repertoires to resolve comprehension issues in the classroom. Results showed that translingual peer involvement played a significant role in the learning process, and that the translingual classroom environment was treated as normal by all participants. This study brings new insights into EMI classroom discourse in an emerging context. It also contributes to the understanding of classroom interactional dynamics, drawing on *actual* teaching/learning practices. As is the theme in papers across this special issue, this study illustrates noteworthy pedagogical implications of leveraging multilingual resources to enhance EMI comprehension (see Tai, 2021).

6.5. Research into understanding knowledge construction in a Chinese university EMI classroom: a translanguaging perspective

The sixth paper by Anne Li Jiang and Lawrence Jun Zhang explores the use of translanguaging as an effective teaching strategy to enhance the process of teaching and learning in the Chinese higher education context. Lessons were observed, and video-stimulated-recall-interviews conducted with two EMI teachers, and 36 EMI students of an Electronic Business programme. The study focused on sequences of Initiation, Response, and Feedback (IRFs) in classroom interactions. Results indicated that teachers used translanguaging as a pedagogical tool to engage students in interaction and model meaning-making in English. For the students, translanguaging enabled them to participate in and contribute to the dialogic construction of knowledge. This case study highlighted the role of translanguaging in promoting interaction and knowledge construction. These findings have important implications for EMI classrooms, particularly in contexts where students have different levels of proficiency in English. It suggests that translanguaging can be a valuable pedagogical tool that can make classroom interaction more inclusive and cognitively engaging. This can potentially enhance students' understanding and learning outcomes (Låg & Sæle, 2019).

6.6. Research into transnational students' experiences of EMI in Myanmar's borderlands

The seventh paper of our special issue by Jia Li, Yongyan Zheng, and Ying Yan investigated the experiences of multilingual Myanmar students who studied through EMI in secondary schools and universities in Myanmar's borderlands (i.e. both sides of the Myanmar-China border). The researchers conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study between 2013 and 2017, involving 79 students. These Myanmar students had made the decision to cross the border and pursue formal education in China. Data were collected through the use of linguistic autobiography, semi-structured interviews and written materials. Adopting the borderlands theory, the study investigated how Myanmar ethnic minority students encounter and wrestle with EMI learning challenges in these hybridized border regions. The findings unveiled that these students appropriated their agentive practices by leveraging their borderland subjectivities to form an assemblage of semioticised resources. The authors argue for overcoming essentialist practices in EMI education and emphasise the importance of considering socio-political power dynamics within and across borders. By questioning and challenging existing practices, the study opens up avenues for more nuanced and contextually sensitive approaches to EMI implementation.

6.7. Research into the transfer of genre knowledge among three languages: insights from English-Medium postgraduate programs in Kazakhstan

The eighth paper in this special issue by Bridget Goodman, Assel Kambatyrova, and Sulushash Kerimkulova explored the transfer of genre knowledge between three languages: English, Kazakh, and Russian, in English-Medium postgraduate programmes in Kazakhstan. 283 students were surveyed. To measure genre knowledge, the survey included items exploring students' Formal, Procedural, Subject, and Rhetorical knowledge. The quantitative findings were then enriched and contextualised through qualitative insights from student focus groups and faculty and administrator semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that the direction and strength of transfer between English, Kazakh, and Russian languages were different according to the component of genre knowledge in question. The significance of this study lies in its insights into the dynamics of language transfer, a relatively underexplored area in EMI literature, in the emerging context of Kazakhstan. This contributes to the broader understanding of language learning and transfer in multilingual EMI settings (Briceño, 2017).

6.8. Research into a discipline-based investigation of linguistic challenges in English-taught academic subjects

The ninth paper in the special issue by Kari Sahan, Rifat Kamasak and Heath Rose (Sahan et al., 2023) explores the academic literacy of students in English-medium programmes in Turkey, specifically measuring the linguistic challenges they face. The results of the study describe the various difficulties associated with learning higher degrees through L2 English, while further exploring variation in this experience by individual differences, such as L1 background and language-learning pathways to degree entry. They report on data collected from 498 undergraduate students via an online questionnaire of academic literacy-related challenges, revealing writing and speaking skills to be the largest pinch points of difficulty. Significant differences were found in the severity of difficulties faced by students of differing academic disciplines, with social science students experiencing greater challenges in writing and speaking in their

EMI degree. They also found that L1 Turkish students experienced greater difficulties than the international students, as did those students who entered via the one year preparatory program as opposed to via standardised tests such as TOEFL and IELTS. These results have implications for preparatory programmes, indicating more language support is needed for students of a certain profile (i.e. those who have had no prior EMI experience or those studying in the social sciences. They also indicate that the current preparatory programme policies may not be adequately preparing students to learn alongside their international and direct-entry counterparts.

6.9. Research into the enactment of English medium instruction in under-resourced educational contexts: a case of multilingual public secondary schools in Nepal

The ninth paper in our special issue by Tae-Hee Choi and Prem Poudel examines the practised EMI policy through an ethnographic study with 12 classroom observations in three Nepalese public secondary schools. They have also conducted in-depth interviews with three head teachers, 12 teachers and 15 students. Thematic analysis benefiting from the theory of multi-level policy enactment and translanguaging were employed focusing on the usage of dominant and minority/community languages as teaching/learning resources. The major findings of the study revealed that there were English-must, dual-medium and Nepali medium enactment models where teachers and students commonly adopted translanguaging as a common support tool to overcome language and content related problems. These findings have important implications for policy enactment research toward creating equitable MOI policies and practices in multilingual schooling contexts such as enlisting multilingualism as their official policy which might support students from marginal linguistic backgrounds.

6.10. Research into multilingual children's attempts to navigate monolingual English medium classrooms in Cameroon

The tenth paper of our special issue by Harry Kuchah Kuchah and Lizzi O. Milligan focuses on the ways that multilingual children attempt to access the English medium curriculum in Cameroonian primary education. The authors investigate Francophone Yaoundé where there has been a sharp rise in the number of children from predominantly Francophone multilingual homes attending English medium schools. The study employs a child-centred case study with data collected via classroom observations, child-group and individual interviews and recordings of student interactions around unsupervised tasks. The findings of their study demonstrates how learners are benefitting from their multilingual resources to attempt to transgress monolingual norms in the classroom. Specifically, the authors underline that despite a strong curriculum insistence on English-only practices, the predominantly Francophone multilingual children continue to depend on code-switching and translation, mainly into French, to access basic curriculum content. The study includes a discussion of the ways that monolingual policies epistemically exclude children in an immensely complex multilingual context and draws implications for more inclusive policy and classroom practice.

7. Insights: achieving the objectives of our special issue

Our special issue had a stated objective to shine a spotlight on EMI in emerging contexts, as defined as a context where EMI is developing as a model of education, as a context that is of emerging interest, or a context that has thus far been under-represented within the research landscape of EMI. At this point, it is pertinent to evaluate whether this special issue has met these goals, and where it has fallen short. The latter can be an important indication of future areas of needed further research.

7.1. Meeting calls for greater coverage of EMI contexts

Forty-four proposals were submitted to the open call for abstracts for the special issue focusing on '*English Medium Instruction in Emerging Contexts*', representing 22 countries: Turkey (9), Vietnam (5), Kazakhstan (4), Brazil (2), China (2), Japan (2), Nepal (2), Sri Lanka (2), South Africa (2), Thailand (2), Algeria (1), Cameroon (1), Colombia (1), Egypt (1), Gambia (1), Hong Kong (1), Indonesia (1), Kuwait (1), Lebanon (1), Maldives (1), Myanmar (1), and Uzbekistan (1). After the initial screening of the abstracts by the guest editors, 19 proposals' authors from 13 different countries were invited to submit their full manuscripts: Turkey (5), Kazakhstan (2), China (2), Algeria (1), Brazil (1), Cameroon (1), Gambia (1), Hong Kong (1), Indonesia (1), Maldives (1), Myanmar (1), Nepal (1), and

Table 2
Papers included in the Special Issue.

Paper	Regional context	Educational context
Pun and Jin (2022)	Hong Kong	Secondary school
Kırkgöz et al. (2023)	Turkey	University
Zhou and Thompson (2023)	China	University
Bozbıyık and Balaman (2023)	Turkey	University
Jiang and Zhang, 2023	China	University
Li et al. (2023)	Myanmar	Secondary school & university
Goodman et al. (2023)	Kazakhstan	University
Sahan et al. (2023)	Turkey	University
Choi and Poudel (2024)	Nepal	Secondary school
Kuchah and Milligan (2024)	Cameroon	Primary school

Thailand (1).

In terms of coverage, the special issue has addressed some gaps in Macaro and colleagues' 2018 review of EMI as well as our own review of EMI research in the journal *System*. This special issue has shifted focus from the oft-researched continent of Europe, and added important empirical research on under-represented regions within Central Asia, and Africa. Table 2 outlines the contexts of the included studies, which includes important entries from under-represented contexts such as Cameroon, Nepal, Kazakhstan and Myanmar. Through the review and submission process, despite our best intended editorial efforts, we were ultimately unable to include other final papers from contexts such as The Gambia and Brazil, although have encouraged the authors to pursue the publication of their work in future issues of the journal. Thus, while we have expanded the research landscape of EMI via this special issue, it is clear much more work is needed to equalise the level of research intensity that we see in hotbeds of EMI research such as Europe (and to an ever-growing extent, national contexts such as China and Turkey).

Furthermore, outside of the special issue, we have seen some headway being made in terms of EMI research in emerging contexts. In a recent special issue of *Studies in Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*, we have seen research emerge from national contexts such as Sri Lanka (Mahawattha & Rassool, 2023), Morocco (Hammou & Kesbi, 2023), and Vietnam (Nguyen, 2023). An edited volume of EMI policy and practice by Jim McKinley and Nicola Galloway, includes case studies from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Colombia, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kuwait, Mexico, Nepal, South Africa, Tunisia, and Vietnam (see McKinley and Galloway, 2022). In a similar vein, we have recently seen the emergence of edited volumes specific to under-represented regions, such as Curle and colleagues' edited volume of EMI in the Middle East and North Africa (see Curle et al., 2022). While these are clear steps in the right direction, more work is needed to correct the imbalance of world research into the growing phenomenon of EMI. More comparative work is also clearly needed which explores EMI within a single research design across multiple national contexts.

7.2. Meeting calls for greater critical perspectives

In this editorial introduction of the special issue we have also explicitly made calls for greater criticality and theorisation of EMI research. The basis of these calls are evident in the scope of the papers included in this special issue papers. In terms of criticality, many of the papers included in the issue (e.g. Sahan et al., 2023; Pun and Jin, 2022; Zhou and Thompson (2023)) take a positivist viewpoint of EMI, with quantitative measures of constructs such as success, difficulties, and motivation. Even when qualitative data are included, the EMI experience is presented as numbers and measurable outcomes. Other papers, even when incorporating an interpretive paradigm of research, such as Kırkgöz et al. (2023) and Goodman et al. (2023) describe the phenomenon of EMI, rather than resist or challenge it, as has been called for in Critical EMI research. A few of the papers in the special issue, such as Choi and Poudel (2024) and Kuchah and Milligan (2024) not only directly explore what is happening in EMI in their researched contexts (in their cases, Nepal and Cameroon), but also pose the question of whether EMI should be happening there at all. It is more of these critical perspectives, which have been touched upon in our special issue, that we hope to see in future research.

Outside of the special issue we are seeing more of these critical perspectives emerge at the forefront of discussion. In addition to the viewpoints outlined in Section 3 of this paper, we have seen similar calls for greater criticality emerge. Akıncıoğlu (2023), for example, has recently employed a critical stance towards the very definition of EMI, by arguing that EMI "settings are not only multilingual sites for academic knowledge construction but also sites for contesting neoliberal economic and political powers" (p. 13). Sah and Fang (2023) have recently collated a volume of critical perspectives of EMI in Asia to add a much needed 'critical gaze' to the field (see also Sah, 2022). Within this volume, scholars such as Gupta and Lin (2023) have been re-interrogating the current literature to add a critical perspective that has thus far been lacking, to not only investigate how EMI has been unfolding in regions such as Taiwan, but for whom EMI is actually benefiting. Along these lines, future EMI research must be sure to balance the type of researcher perspectives we bring to EMI. While there is always a place for positivist and interpretivist perspectives of EMI, which are useful to empirically investigate the issues surrounding EMI, we must also be sure there remains a space for critical reflection, interrogation, and resistance to the

Table 3

Aligning special issue theories with broader research models.

Paper	Main theories mentioned	Possible meta-theories
Pun and Jin (2022)	Threshold hypothesis	Second language acquisition theories of bilingual competence
Kırkgöz et al. (2023)	Translanguaging; Conversation Analysis	Theories of multilingualism
Zhou and Thompson (2023)	Self-efficacy; language learning motivation; academic literacies (implied)	Second language acquisition theories of individual differences
Bozbıyık and Balaman (2023)	Translanguaging; Conversation Analysis	Theories of multilingualism
Jiang and Zhang, 2023	Translanguaging; Conversation Analysis	Theories of multilingualism
Li et al. (2023)	Borderlands theory; Multilingualism	Theoretical underpinnings unclear.
Goodman et al. (2023)	Language transfer; Genre knowledge	Second language acquisition theories of L1 influence on L2
Sahan et al. (2023)	Self-concept; learning motivation; self-concept; academic literacies (implied)	Second language acquisition theories of individual differences
Choi and Poudel (2024)	Translanguaging; Codeswitching	Theories of multilingualism
Kuchah and Milligan (2024)	Epistemic (in)justice; Learning strategies; Codeswitching	Theories of multilingualism

underlying forces that continue to propagate the hegemonic notion that EMI is an unavoidable outcome of globalisation.

7.3. Meeting calls for greater theorisation

While not a specific objective of our special issue, in this editorial introduction, we have nonetheless challenged what we see as under-theorisation of EMI research. The lack of educational or language learning theory in much EMI research has thus far plagued it as a field of study. In the papers in the special issue, we have seen some attempts at wedding EMI to theory. Table 3 attempts to map theories mentioned in the papers in this special issue to larger theoretical models in wider fields of research. What we see in this special issue is a concentration of theory entrenched in theories of Second Language Acquisition and multilingualism. Moreover, in our review of papers, we found few authors explicitly comment on their larger theoretical frameworks of investigation, necessitating the reader to draw links to meta-theories using their own knowledge of the field. Only one paper (Li et al., 2023) draws specifically on theory outside of applied linguistics.

The result of this is a lack of explicit theorisation in EMI research is two-fold. First, we have developed a field of EMI research that speaks to itself, and communicates relevance only to other EMI researchers without communicating important relevance to larger theories of language learning or education. Second, even when theory is mentioned, there is a danger of EMI being seen as the property of applied linguistics, with language learning at the core of most of its investigations.

This issue is not just one prevalent in this special issue, but has been observed within the wider landscape of EMI research. A recent review of EMI research concluded the field "has been appropriated by academics with an applied linguistics background even though the majority of EMI programmes are taught by non-linguists" (Macaro & Aizawa, 2022, p. 1). They argue that greater collaboration in research agenda setting and the design and interpretation of research is needed in the future. We would add to this call a need to incorporate more theorisations and ways of thinking outside of applied linguistics to underpin such research so that the results contribute to a more diverse and interdisciplinary field.

7.4. Calls for future research

We end this special issue with several calls for directions of EMI research. We need:

1. More critical research into EMI, which interrogates the dark side of EMI and opens up avenues to question EMI, challenge it and resist it;
2. More explicit linkage of EMI research to wider interdisciplinary theories so that our findings contribute to a wider range of research disciplines;
3. More theorisation of EMI itself, as much of the research we have seen explores EMI as a context rather than a phenomenon in of itself worth investigation;
4. Greater coverage of EMI research in contexts that have thus far lacked exposure, particularly North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Latin America, and Central and South Asia.
5. More EMI research outside of the realm of applied linguistics, which explores the wider impact of EMI on concepts such as socio-economic status, migration, mobility, employment, and political economy.

What is clear is that despite a boom in EMI research in the past decade, more research of a different type is desperately needed to explore the wider impact of the unfettered Englishisation of education systems around the world.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Samantha Curle: Conceptualization, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Heath Rose:** Conceptualization, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Dogan Yuksel:** Conceptualization, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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