

Book Review

ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

David Lasagabaster: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

THE EVOLUTION OF EMI RESEARCH IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Alessandra Molino, Slobodanka Dimova, Joyce Kling, and Sanne Larsen: Routledge, 2022.

English-medium Instruction (EMI) represents one of the key discussion points in contemporary research in Applied Linguistics. Its pedagogical challenges and sociolinguistic complexities, in its different implementations at universities around the world, have fuelled intense research activity in the last couple of decades. This has resulted in a vast portfolio of empirical, and, to a lesser degree, conceptual studies, all seeking to further the collective understanding of EMI. Nevertheless, a bird's eye view of the literature reveals gaps not yet adequately addressed and a lack of systematization within—and across—different areas of EMI research. Both volumes in this review aim to raise awareness of these gaps, albeit in different ways. *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education*, as part of the Cambridge Elements series, offers a compact overview of some of the core issues around teaching and learning through EMI as discussed in the literature. Conversely, *The Evolution of EMI Research in European Higher Education*, a contribution to the Routledge Studies in English-medium Instruction series, systematically traces the development of EMI research to identify potential gaps and necessary improvements. The book draws on research undertaken as part of the Transnational Alignment of English Competences for University Lecturers (TAEC) project. Funded by ERASMUS+, the TAEC project developed a Literature Database on EMI research produced over the course of 20 years about five partner European countries (Croatia, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain), which is used as a data source for the literature review in the book. Both volumes testify to the initial steps of EMI research towards an increasingly self-reflexive maturity.

In *English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education*, David Lasagabaster tackles the main areas of discussion around EMI over the course of nine chapters. Chapters 1–3 describe EMI as a strategic tool for the achievement of internationalization objectives, a response to a race

for higher education internationalization of unprecedented scale. A brief discussion around the definition of EMI is also offered, in which terminology such as EMI, Englishization, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), ICHLE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education), and EME (English Medium Education) is compared, showcasing how each term implies somewhat different views of context and language use. The focus of the volume is then specifically set on higher education, highlighting the political and economic drive behind EMI's momentum, as well as the complex relationship between EMI and multilingualism. Chapter 4 offers an overview of core findings from perception studies—very popular in EMI research—grouped by three main categories of stakeholders: lecturers, students, and administration personnel. The inclusion of the latter is certainly welcome since, as stressed by the author, administrative staff has often been overlooked in EMI research; nonetheless, this tripartite focus does leave out policy makers, who are key agents in EMI implementation and themselves underrepresented in the literature. Chapters 5–7 move from perception to observation and task-based research, discussing learning outcomes and pointing to disconnects between the expectations of teachers and students, as well as between different higher education practitioners. This is accompanied by a critique of the paucity and methodological issues that have characterized research on these areas so far. Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 feature the author's conclusions, including a helpful summary of a few broad-scope volumes and a list of other key readings in the field of EMI.

The volume effectively summarizes and contextualizes in the diversified landscape of EMI research some of the most well-known and influential studies available about various higher education contexts. It succeeds in shedding light on areas of improvement of both EMI research and EMI practices, keeping true to its underlying declared ethos of ensuring that EMI 'benefits the whole university community without becoming simply a tool for making profit' (Lasagabaster 2022: 54). Commendable is also the effort to include all continents in the overview of the spread of EMI; while the volume overall relies mainly on European and Asian research (certainly the most prolific), the inclusion of studies from underrepresented contexts such as South America or Africa is most welcome. One of the key points of reflection in the volume is the need for more integration between language and disciplinary expertise, in a view that appears to question divisions between content, disciplinary literacy and language learning. In the author's words: 'All EMI lecturers are language teachers, whether they agree or disagree with the previous statement' (Lasagabaster 2022: 52).

The Evolution of EMI Research in European Higher Education, by Alessandra Molino, Slobodanka Dimova, Joyce Kling, and Sanne Larsen, aims to track the development of EMI research in European higher education by reviewing research published across three decades about five countries at different stages of EMI implementation. The volume opens with a detailed account of how the relevant literature was selected and analysed by the authors, as well as with a compared chronology of EMI research across the five aforementioned contexts (Chapters 1 and 2). Chapter 3 is devoted to EMI policy, investigated at the three orders of macro (international, regional, and national policies), meso (universities' policies), and micro level (classroom decisions); here the authors are able to identify a noteworthy common pattern of rapid introduction of EMI with scarce attention paid to impact on teaching/learning quality, seemingly independent of other contextual variables. Similar to Lasagabaster (2022), the central sections of this volume tackle attitude and perception studies (Chapter 4) and then turn to observations of language use of lecturers and students (Chapter 5), as well as assessment and training for EMI lecturers (Chapter 6) and EMI learning outcomes (Chapter 7). These chapters are able to reach a significant level of detail, often directly citing dataset extracts from the studies discussed. As an additional testament to the volume's methodological attention, these chapters also feature a section of methodological considerations, where the authors offer some meta remarks on the research they have drawn on, noting any relevant limitations. For some of the topics, the biggest limitation noted is indeed the scarcity of available research. Chapter 8 discusses the complex issues of identity and intercultural communication in EMI—which represent more recent explicit foci of EMI research—once again

specifically isolating the two stakeholder categories of lecturers and students. Chapter 9 features the authors' effort to consolidate the findings from their analysis of the literature into an EMI framework for research. The introduction of the framework is in itself one of the most distinctive features of this volume vis-à-vis other works of similar scope. The framework represents an update of [Dimova \(2021\)](#) and it proposes a similar multidimensional approach to EMI as ROAD-MAPPING ([Dafouz and Smit 2020](#)), arguably the currently most well-known conceptual framework in the field. As a distinctive feature, however, [Molino et al. \(2022\)](#) introduce a vertical element to their conceptualization, by positioning the interaction between Language, Pedagogy, and Intercultural Competence as a subset of the Policies, themselves a subset of the Context. This implies a particularly tight associative and causal relationship between policy and practice as, in the authors' view, 'policies established within a particular context dictate' ([Molino et al. 2022: 200](#), my emphasis) the enactment of certain practices. Thus, the volume offers an innovative perspective to the conceptual approach to EMI, as an added value to the already significant contribution of identifying potential longitudinal trends in EMI research in the European context. The systematicity adopted in approaching such effort represents a clear advantage of this volume which, next to 'more robust and deeper analyses within existing research paradigms' ([2022: 207](#)), also argues for the inclusion in EMI research of perspectives from other disciplines (e.g. Psychology, Anthropology, and Educational theory).

The two volumes here discussed both draw from a diversified body of publications to structure available knowledge on EMI in higher education in a coherent ensemble. In doing so, they point to fruitful directions for future studies on EMI. Next to the many merits already mentioned for these contributions, a limitation can perhaps be found in the limited space devoted to the theoretical angle, itself an underdeveloped area in EMI scholarship. [Molino et al.'s \(2022\)](#) framework clearly moves in that direction and could have the potential to generate relevant discussions around its particular positioning of policies and context, which appear to be presented not just as influencing factors to EMI practices, but rather as constitutive elements of such practices.

Overall, these volumes could be greatly beneficial for readership interested in EMI, conveniently providing different access points to EMI scholarship, for different audiences. Indeed, despite similar foci and intentions, these books have different strengths. [Lasagabaster \(2022\)](#) has the advantage of offering an overview of major findings and challenges in EMI research in a clear and compact fashion; given also the non-intimidating page count, this volume could represent a good entry point into the field and its discussions for non-specialists, such as module designers, policy makers, content lecturers, and researchers from specializations other than EMI. [Molino et al. \(2022\)](#), while also not constituting a challenging read for a non-specialized audience, have among their strengths a specific methodological attention, testified by the meticulous description of the procedures adopted in analysing the literature as well as by the inclusion of dedicated methodological consideration sections for the various areas of EMI research addressed in the volume. These elements could no doubt be of interest to scholars with prior knowledge of the field and, even more so, to those who may have an interest in the TAEC Literature Database as an accessible tool for comparative research.

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