

Dimova, Slobodanka, Anna Kristina Hultgren and Christian Jensen (eds). 2015. *English-medium Instruction in European Higher Education*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

This book addresses one of the most urgent challenges for present-day European Higher Education (HE): the increased use of English to teach future generations of workers, thinkers and citizens. This is a crucial issue because what is at stake is not only the immediate effect of language policies, but also what societies they are contributing to shaping. For this reason, this volume is a timely publication that, in the editors' words, will enhance our understanding of "the status of English as a medium of instruction [EMI] in various political, geographical and ideological contexts" (2015: 1).

The book is divided into three parts: *Opportunity or Threat; Before, During, and After EMI*; and *Policy and Ideology*. In the first chapter of Part 1, Robert Phillipson criticises scholarly discourses about English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) for overestimating the spread of EMI, constructing it as self-generating and presenting English as neutral tool. Phillipson argues that English is not impartial and that its potential threat should be verified both empirically and locally. A step in this direction is taken by the subsequent chapters of Part 1, which present the results of questionnaire surveys investigating the benefits and drawbacks of current policies in European countries at initial stages of EMI implementation.

A common perception among lecturers and administrative staff is that EMI helps raise the international profile of universities and encourages student mobility. At the same time, frequently mentioned weaknesses are the risk of lecturers' underperformance (Branka Drljača Margić and Irena Vodopija-Krstanović on Croatia; Virginia Pulcini and Sandra Campagna on Italy) and the insufficient student competence in English (Pulcini and Campagna on Italy; Katherine Gürtler and Elke Kronewald on Germany; David Lasagabaster on the Basque Country). The studies of Part 1 also present distinctive results, partly due to methodological differences in the surveys and partly reflecting context specificities. For instance, the need for a truly international student body seems particularly felt by Croatian lecturers, while lecturers in Germany point out that additional student workload is a problematic aspect.

An interesting theme in Part 1 is the controversial nature of EMI. Lasagabaster reports that at bilingual institutions such as the University of the Basque Country, EMI is perceived as a threat to the minority language by some students, despite the indifference expressed by much of the teaching and administrative staff. It is also interesting to notice that the authors of the chapters themselves take quite different stances to EMI. Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović seem to accept the spread of English as “inevitable” (2015: 44), while Pulcini and Campagna “intend to problematize the link between *internationalisation* [...] and EMI” (2015: 65). Gürtler and Kronewald do not seem to question the fast expansion of EMI programmes in Germany, but throughout the paper, they try to balance opposing viewpoints. Finally, Lasagabaster appears rather critical of the idea that English is exerting a form of linguistic neo-imperialism. These divergent views are rooted in different ideologies about English, a topic that is further explored in Part 3 of the book.

Part 2, *Before, During, and After EMI*, deals with the competences needed by students when accessing HE, the impact of EMI on teaching and learning and the language skills that graduates should possess to be competitive on the job market. The ‘before EMI’ perspective is represented by Hafðis Ingvarsdóttir and Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir’s lucid account of the situation in Iceland. They report on the difficulties experienced by university students in coping with input in English and examinations in Icelandic. A suggestion for improvement is a revision of the curriculum at the secondary school level to equip students with more relevant language skills.

The teaching and learning issues arising ‘during EMI’, instead, are explored in the three central chapters of Part 2. In a dense yet highly readable paper, John Airey provides an overview of his studies on teaching and learning through English (in Denmark and Sweden). As for teaching, Airey notices that teacher talk is characterised by reduced fluency and the use of a more formal register, two features that he interprets as beneficial for students in EMI programmes. In regards to learning, among the most notable results is that students above a certain level of proficiency are able to explain disciplinary concepts equally well in their native language and in English. This finding highlights the centrality of language proficiency, thus offering a possible interpretation for the results obtained by Erkan Arkın and Necdet Osam, who investigate EMI at a Turkish university where they found that studying in

English might lead to the loss of fine-grained concepts, as well as misunderstandings. The issue of content loss is clearly a crucial one. Despite remaining largely unresolved, the insights provided in Part 2 contribute to our understanding of this phenomenon, while also suggesting useful methodological approaches to investigate it empirically. The third chapter of the ‘during EMI’ perspective, by Joyce Kling, deals with the self-perceptions as instructors of EMI lecturers in applied natural sciences at the University of Copenhagen. She notices that language shortcomings (e.g. limitations in vocabulary) are not considered detrimental to the lecturers’ professional identity. According to Kling, this view is influenced by a variety of factors, including the participants’ understanding of language competence in terms of ELF communication and having passed a test (TOEPASS) certifying their ability to teach in English.

In the last chapter of Part 2, representing the ‘after EMI’ perspective, Glenn Ole Hellekjær and Anne-Inger Hellekjær investigate what language skills are required after graduation in Norway. Analysing ministerial job advertisements they find that foreign language skills are seldom mentioned, possibly to avoid a reduction in the number of applicants. Indeed, professional degrees in Norway do not include English modules and employees often lack knowledge of specialised terminology and genres. The authors, therefore, argue for establishing *ad hoc* English courses and exploiting EMI in its full potential, going “beyond incidental language learning” (2015: 239). Readers interested in ethnographic research and in the study of teacher talk will find Part 2 extremely useful. In particular, the chapters by Airey, Arkın and Osam, and Kling, which offer interconnected results that might be relevant to other educational contexts.

Part 3 explores the ideological implications of HE policy documents and of the notion of ‘native speaker’. In spite of the different local traits of the settings examined, i.e. Estonia, Italy and Finland, the authors all agree that EMI gives rise to ideological “tensions” (Soler-Carbonell 2015: 248 on Estonia) and “controvers[ies]” (Santulli 2015: 270 on Italy; McCambridge and Saarinen 2015: 292 on Finland). Josep Soler-Carbonell identifies “a push-and-pull of forces” (2015: 249) in Estonian HE deriving from attempts to promote and regulate the use of English (‘standardisation’) and the need to foster language diversity (‘variability’). One of his main findings is that although EMI is not a new

phenomenon in Estonia, HE policy documents never mention English and favour the label ‘foreign languages’ in relation to internationalisation. According to Soler-Carbonell, while this lexical choice may reflex variability, its vagueness makes it difficult to implement effective language policies and might even lead to increased homogeneity in favour of English.

Francesca Santulli investigates the controversial case of the *Politecnico di Milano*, where the decision to teach all MA courses in English led members of the teaching staff to file a lawsuit against the institution. A most interesting part of Santulli’s chapter is the analysis of the course descriptions and syllabi in Italian and English published on the university’s website. She notices that the English versions underwent processes of omission and adaptation, which alter the original texts in ways that are not epistemologically neutral. Santulli therefore argues that EMI implies not simply a change in linguistic code, but “the adoption of a different point of view and mentality” (2015: 286), the risk being that Anglo-Saxon models are uncritically adopted at the expenses of local traditions and diversification.

Finally, in their chapter on the Finnish context, Laura McCambridge and Taina Saarinen examine whether the notions of ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ English are changing. Drawing data from interviews with EMI stakeholders, they identify two main ideological stances, one reflecting the idea that native English is the unquestioned norm and the other challenging native authority and emphasising other factors such as disciplinary expertise and pragmatism in communication. Considering these “cracks [...] in the understanding of ‘who owns English’” (2015: 312), the authors hypothesise that student mobility flows may change affecting the position of British and American universities.

The book concludes with a chapter by Dimova, Hultgren and Jensen who offer a stimulating overview of possible future research lines. The contribution of the editors in both the introduction and conclusion is very valuable because they successfully assist readers in navigating such a rich volume, while providing a useful background to the studies in the process. To conclude, the book as a whole is a valuable resource for scholars interested in EMI. The methodology in most articles is clearly

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explained, thereby making many of the studies applicable to different settings. Numerous chapters will also be of interest to policy makers and instructors, who will find Part 2 especially relevant for their teaching.

Alessandra Molino
University of Torino