English as ‘the’ Language of Higher Education in E and SE Asia.

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As we shall see, the EMI ‘horse’ has bolted (if you’ll forgive the metaphor) so, following Ernesto Macaro (2015) at Oxford, we need to:
• Observe, but with a critical eye, to exert a positive influence on EMI wherever possible

• Why EMI?

• Where EMI?

• How is it being delivered?
Levels: primary/secondary/HE etc.

Wash back effect of increasing use of EMI in HE

Primary curricula across E and SE Asia – MTBMLE vs English/EMI

Threat to local languages as languages of education/scholarship
• 1 To what extent does a coherent national and/or institutional EMI policy exist? How aware are staff of these policies? What are the attitudes of staff towards the move to increased EMI?

• 2 Does the move to EMI affect students and staff for whom English is an additional language; and, if so, in what ways? What have been the major challenges for students and staff in the implementation of EMI?
• 3 Do staff receive any training/professional development to prepare them for teaching in EMI and, if so, what is the nature of this professional development?

• 4 What is the attitude of students towards the move to increased use of EMI?
• 5 Does the move to EMI affect the roles accorded to and the value ascribed to languages other than English as a) languages of education and pedagogy and b) as languages of scholarship and knowledge creation; and, if so, in what ways?
• 6 What variety of English does the ‘E’ in EMI refer to? Is it a native-speaking variety of English, such as British or American, or does the university recognise the use of English as a lingua franca?
• EL teachers and subject teachers

• EL teachers and subject teachers working together?

• Ts’ EL proficiency
Overview

Recent motivations to further increase EMI in HE

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) agreed at 2012 summit to explore ways on increasing staff and student mobility (cf. European Bologna Process)

ASEAN Universities Network (comprising some 30+ universities) also promoting staff and student mobility among the network.
The Philippines (EMI dominant)

Being promoted as an education hub with EMI courses in HE (Martin 2014)

At least 90 private universities using EMI

UP at Dilman (prestigious university) tried switching to Filipino as the MoI some years ago but staff and student reactions resulted in a reversion to EMI.
Japan (EMI increasing)
[194/800 unis now offer EMI]

Global 30 Project – aimed to attract international students but was a failure with less than 25000 enrolling (cf. with target of 300,000) and suffered criticism as some programmes were exclusively for international students.

Super Global Universities Project – but future of these programmes looks bleak (McKinley 2015)
China

Rapidly increasing number of EMI programmes available (CUCAS website) – including TCM (Kirkpatrick 2009)

Nottingham and Liverpool Jiaotong examples

Compare time given to learning English at Chinese universities cf. with time given to learning Chinese

[Chinese Rhetoric and Writing
http://wac.colostate.edu/books/kirkpatrick_xu/. ]
Hong Kong [EMI ‘dominant’]
6/8 government-funded universities are EMI
(how does this help deliver the ‘trilingual-biliterate’ policy?)
CUHK and controversies over moves to more EMI there (Li 2013)
Washback effect on secondary schools and ‘fine-tuning’
HKIEd and functional trilingualism and the distinction between MoI and classroom language (Xu 2015)
An Example
Malaysia [EMI dominant??]

2002 introduced new policy of EMI at primary 1 for the teaching of maths and science
Abandoned after 7 years because:
Rural and urban poor/low SES children were failing.

Content teachers did not have enough EL proficiency to teach the subjects through English. They taught through Malay in the rural areas; but their low EL proficiency was mocked by children in middle class schools.

These subjects are now taught through Malay (Chinese/Tamil in vernacular schools)
The move to EMI was part of the then PM, Dr Mahathir’s ‘Wawasan (Vision) 2020’.

In addition to EMI for maths and science at primary schools, he wanted universities to use EMI for science/engineering/medical degrees in public universities

(All private universities were/are EMI)
Dr M. was thwarted by Malay nationalists whose insistence of Malay as MoI won the day

Result: public universities graduated people (ethnic Malays) who were basically monolingual in Malay. Private universities graduated people (ethnic Chinese/Indians) who were trilingual.

The monolingual Malays were unemployable except in the civil service.
Result: in 2005 the Govt. ruled that the MoI for science subjects etc. would be English

(note that one motivation for this was increasing local employment opportunities for ethnic Malays)

In Malaysia there are now:
20 public universities

100+ private institutions of HE

Corporate/utility universities (e.g., Telecoms U, Petronas U etc.)

Several branch campuses/twinning arrangements (e.g., Curtin University)
Ali (2013) looked at how EMI was implemented on one public university across three levels: macro (national policy); meso (university documents) ; micro (actual stakeholders).

She found there is no real national policy only that universities are encouraged to ensure their students’ EL proficiency ‘can meet the goals for a quality workforce needed by the country, and for the internationalization of the universities’ (2013:81).
At the meso level, uni documents were ambiguous.

The official Mol of the university is Malay. But it then goes on to say that ‘Languages of instruction, other than Bahasa Malaysia, can be used with permission of the respective faculty, but that in such cases students must be given the opportunity to be assessed in Bahasa Malaysia’; but
when there are international students in the classroom, EMI becomes the de facto policy.

There is confusion among staff. One professor quoted

‘The university is changing and therefore lack of policy becomes much more glaring...we now need a good [language] policy’ (2013:87).
At the micro level – stakeholders not consulted at all; what policy there is, is top-down, but no one knows what it is anyway.

I suspect this is not atypical of the situation in many universities with regard language education policy.
A second example

Myanmar [EMI dominant at HE but...]

Myanmar is ‘unusual’ – more expanding than outer in Kahruvian terms, as, when U Ne Win took over in 1962 he isolated the country and Burmese became the official Mol at all levels

(Changes when his daughter had problems!)
Current policy is for EMI in all universities and HEIs.

EMI for maths and science in final two years of high school.

English introduced as a subject from primary one.
Using English as a Medium of Instruction (MoI): this is fundamentally not working for teaching Maths and Science as few teachers can use English, let alone, teach another subject in English. Students are not learning or understanding important concepts in Maths and Science. They merely remember the technical terms in English for the tests. Most teachers use a mix of Myanmar (for explanation) and English (for technical terms) (Drinan 2013: 8).
EMI - a contrived endeavour, without reasonable amount of prior training or English language input

There is an insurmountable barrier for most teachers and learners to participate even in very basic communication in English

Many teacher educators scored AO level (CEFR) (Khaing 2016)
Over 95% of surveyed staff and students reported that EMI had to be used bilingually along with Burmese (Myanmar language) for it to have any chance of success.
Conclusions

EMI must only be introduced within a framework of multilingualism so that:

(i) EMI does not mean English only.
(ii) The use of the linguistic resources of staff and students should be encouraged.

(iii) Materials and sources and reading lists / classroom language / working on assessments (processes vs products).

(iv) The ‘E’ of EMI needs to be understood as English as a lingua franca not a native speaker variety. 

(e.g. Schaller-Schwaner 2011 on ELFA as multilingual practice in a Swiss university)
In conclusion, EMI will not work unless:

There is a coherent policy developed by all stakeholders; this policy needs to see EMI within a multilingual framework in the ways indicated earlier;

Levels of proficiency in EL are high enough and Ss given ongoing EL development courses;
Professional development for Ts (both pre and ongoing) is provided systematically;

Appropriate materials are available.

These conditions are seldom, if ever, met in the universities and HEIs where we have been undertaking research – including my own (Griffith)
To address the questions raised at the beginning

1 Are there coherent national/institutional language policies for HE?

No – but HKIEd a notable exception (Xu 2015)

2 Does move to EMI affect staff and students?

Definitely – many don’t have EL levels to cope.
3 Do staff receive professional development to help then move to EMI teaching?

Some ad hoc training but nothing systematic to help staff learn to teach content through English.

4 What do staff and students feel about EMI?

No real systematic studies done (by see Ali/Khaing above), so we don’t really know.
5. Are other languages being devalued as languages of education and scholarship?

Local languages are in danger of being sidelined.

Consider, for example, emphasis given to English in Chinese HE compared to the emphasis given to Chinese itself. So even Chinese is being sidelined as a language of scholarship in many cases.
How is the E of EMI being defined?

Almost always as a native speaker variety, not as an international lingua franca of education whose multilingual users now far outnumber native speakers.
References


Kirkpatrick, Andy (forthcoming). The languages of higher education in East and Southeast Asia: will EMI lead to Englishisation? In Fenton-Smith et al. (eds.)


