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English-Medium Instruction at Universities: Global Challenges

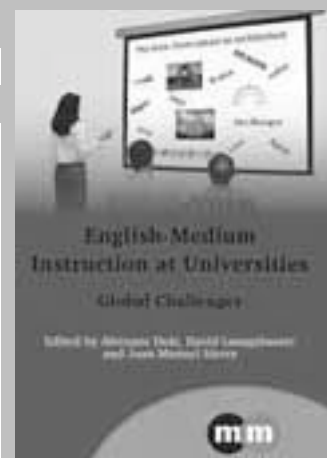
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English-Medium Instruction at Universities: Global Challenges

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English-Medium Instruction at Universities: Global Challenges is a compilation of eleven selected papers, the primary theme of which revolves around English-Medium Instruction (EMI) both on a theoretical and empirical level. The overriding objective of the book is to instantiate language policies of EMI being implemented in a large number of universities, geographically ranging from East-Asia to Southwestern Europe, and disclose the challenges and tensions that stakeholders (i.e., students, lecturers) at universities confront as a result of switching to EMI, with a reference to their first-hand experiences.

The volume, firstly, introduces the authors of the papers to the reader in the ‘Contributors’ section, with a short biography of each. Following this, the foreword, written by Jim Coleman, portrays a general snapshot of the growth of EMI by pointing to the process of Internalization of Higher Education as the main catalyst of this case. Finally, the editors convey the main rationale for writing the book, together with the aim and the summary of the book to the reader in the introduction. The book is, in the main, intended for academics and students who already carry out their academic practices in an EMI institution. However, given the variety of issues and contexts covered by the

writers in the volume, the audience might also include administrators (e.g., policy makers, head of departments), academics, under- and post-graduate students of linguistics interested in language policies, and internationalization of higher education as well as language teachers, last but not least.

This book might and should be considered as an eminent work of its kind, as it grapples with “a highly contemporary and ever-emerging theme” being severely discussed at today’s universities in several countries. In this respect, the timing for this collection seems entirely appropriate, particularly due to the lack of such a collection on the book shelves, as yet. The volume is composed of five parts, with each part echoing a different theme. Each part presents the reader an article or articles on the basis of their relevance to each single theme. Below is a summary of these five parts.

Part 1, “The Development of English Medium Instruction,” introduces the work of Robert Wilkinson, in chapter 1, who sets out to explore not only the challenges emanating from EMI policies, but also the perceived costs and benefits coming along with the advent of EMI in a Dutch University.

Part 2, “Language Demands of English-Medium Instruction on the Stakeholders,” turns to the matter of linguistic demands on lecturers and students, with two contributions. Walt and Kidd, in chapter 2, investigate the academic literacy (e.g., reading comprehension) in South Africa at a multilingual university. In chapter 3, Ball and Lindsay address the language demands of EMI on lecturers in Spanish-speaking Basque country.

Part 3, “Fostering Trilingual Education at Higher Education Institutions,” relates to two contexts and encompasses three contributions. Firstly, in chapter 4, Li strives to explore the role of English in a Chinese university in relation to the notions of hegemony and language capital, with particular attention on language policies of instruction. Doiz and Lasagabaster, in chapter 5, comment on the adoption of English as the third medium of instruction at a bilingual university in the Basque country. Finally, in chapter 6, Cots points out the tensions in a bilingual university in an attempt to adopt English as the third language of the institution in Spain.

Part 4, “Institutional Policies at Higher Education Institutions,” deals with language policies at universities and consists of four contributions. Saarinen and Nikulain, in chapter 7, discuss ‘said’ and ‘unsaid’ language policies employed in Finnish universities as part of involving in internationalization process. In chapter 8, Inbar-Lourie and Donitsa-Schmidt seek to tap students’ attitudes towards the adoption of EMI, along with their key motivations at an Israeli teacher college. In chapter 9, Garcia, Pujol-Ferran and

Reddy argue how implicit language policies in two American universities, which are mostly populated with immigrant and international students, are exhibited in practice. Shohamy, in chapter 10, questions the effectiveness of educational policies regarding EMI by presenting four different settings, which are unlike in terms of their aims, contexts and final upshots, and argues for the adoption of multilingual policies as regards the issue of medium of instruction.

Part 5, “Final considerations,” underscores the key matters discussed in the main body of the volume, including a single contribution by the editors. The editors speculate on the possible future challenges by posing certain questions with respect to the role of EMI, students’ proficiency to tackle EMI, integration of language and content, and effective practices.

This volume exclusively contributes to the current literature on Internationalization of Higher Education, and to our understanding of the role of English as a medium of instruction, which has so far remained as a non-issue (see Tsiligiris, 2012). The editors seem to have achieved their initial goal: “provide critical insights into the English-medium instruction (EMI) experiences which have been implemented at a number of universities” in a wide range of countries (p. xvii). The remarkable feature of the volume is the argument of the challenges and issues with solid foundations based on the empirical studies, and theoretical back-ups. This is of great importance for the field seeing that a coherent theory of Internationalization and its language aspect is still underway (Maringe, 2010).

As for the organization of the book, the chapters cohere well, as they are organized into separate parts according to the relevance of the subject of each contribution, which helps the reader stay in focus while reading the contributions, with a better understanding of the main issues tackled. One minor shortcoming of the volume, in terms of its organization, pertains to the lack of the ‘Index’ section at the end of the book. It is because ‘Index’ is quite helpful for the reader to find and directly access to relevant sources in the shortest time, and with no frustration. Failure to include this section makes the volume less handy than it might have been, otherwise. In addition to this, some contributions are farther from the main hub for EMI discussions, which is the key theme of the volume. Instead, they pay more heed to language policies regarding the local languages, trilingualism and multilingualism with little mention of EMI (e.g., chapters 2, 4, 9). Besides, the geographical breakdown of contributions is not evenly balanced in the respect that much is said about Southwestern Europe (i.e., Spain). It would have presented a broader picture of the current challenges and experiences

relating to EMI, if other countries from various continents (e.g., monolingual ones) had been included in the volume.

Finally, the volume is reader-friendly and easy to follow both in terms of language flow and coherence of ideas. Above all, it opens new windows for further research, explicitly calling for further research on EMI-related issues and challenges in prospect. As a final remark, the editors and contributors have done a laudable job, and thus they all deserve to be thanked and recognized for their commendable works. As the reviewer, I would strongly recommend the book to all interested in EMI and the English language.

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