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EMI in Higher Education: Current Challenges

Abstract: English Medium Instruction (EMI) consists in delivering content in English to students who are non-native speakers of English. With English becoming a supranational and intercultural tool of professional and academic communication, EMI is being introduced by various entities in higher education at a rapid pace in different parts of the world. The focal point of the present research on EMI is the collection of data provided by teachers and students regarding their attitudes toward EMI. Along with the immediate spread, numerous doubts have emerged that need to be addressed in order to render EMI more effective and accessible. This paper presents the current literature on the subject of EMI in higher education, where it is primarily present, and aims to recognize and provide an overview of the challenges that teachers and students face in education in which EMI is incorporated. The challenges may be identified in three main areas, that is at the level of policy and social processes, at the level of teacher's agency, and finally at the level of students' perspective. Some of the challenges may be fixed with basic policy changes; however, others, such as the factor of translanguaging, the methodology of establishing linguistic standards, or the process of transition between particular stages of education, require more research into the subject of EMI.

Keywords: EMI, English, Englishization, translanguaging, higher education, native-speakerism

1. Introduction

English Medium Instruction (EMI) is a global, rapidly growing trend of introducing English to teach subjects, excluding English itself, in countries where English is not the first language for most of its residents (Macaro 2018). Richards and Pun (2022) furthermore propose alternative definitions of EMI that expand the role of EMI beyond academia, with the following one worth quoting: "The use of English in multilingual post-colonial societies, where it serves as an official language and

as an academic lingua franca in education and may also function as a community lingua franca alongside other local and official languages". As may be clearly seen, EMI may be considered from various points of view. Some limit its extent to a language as an educational tool, while others include the social consequences that EMI induces.

The greatest growth of this phenomenon may be seen especially in higher education. Regardless of various agendas, most universities worldwide aim to become more internationalized by attracting students from abroad and thus gain prestige or revitalize local demographics (Macaro et al. 2018). Among other general objectives, one may mention the lack of resources available in the local language (Bolton and Kuteeva 2012), national policies such as governmental subsidies, which incite the introduction of EMI (Bradford 2016) or an attempt to render the public universities compete with the private ones (Knight 2013). As the development of EMI is observed all over the world, it is obvious that its implementation is highly context-dependent. In many countries, EMI is favored because of the urge to enhance students' skills to an international level and thus standardize their qualifications. Another incentive is improving students' English language proficiency (Xu et al. 2021). Despite the lack of empirical studies on the consequences of introducing EMI in higher education, there is much confidence in the abundance of benefits that EMI holds. Questions then emerge about whether it is possible to teach a subject in a foreign language without hampering content comprehension, whether English should be the exclusive language in the classroom under any circumstances or whether the approach toward teaching should change when the language of instruction is not students' and teachers' mother tongue. Therefore, there are numerous doubts concerning the implementation of EMI in higher education that need to be taken into account (McKinley, Rose, and Curdt-Christiansen 2022). This paper provides an overview of the social processes and problematic policies induced by EMI as well as challenges that students and teachers face in education at universities that introduced EMI, both at the level of theoretical policies and at the level of classroom practices.

2. EMI in the context of society and policy

Internationalization of the universities most often amounts to Englishization, which is a process of replacing the local language with English. It regards not only lessons as such, but also curricula and administrative documents. Although current research on EMI is already focused on teachers' and students' views, one should not forget that Englishization concerns all the employees at the university, including administrative staff whose readiness to function in an increasingly English-oriented university is often overlooked (Block 2022).

With EMI being essentially born in Europe, it was also adopted in other parts

of the world. One of the concerns expressed by a teacher interviewed by Sah (2022) was the fact that the linguistic context in the Netherlands or Germany is far different from the one present in, for instance, Asian countries. As it is natural for the majority of Western European countries to possess an adequate command of English, it is not always the case in every single country that introduces EMI. Yet, the process of the implementation of EMI does not differ significantly in such countries as if linguistic barriers did not exist.

Dearden (2016) provided an accurate international picture of EMI, having investigated fifty-five countries that adopted EMI in education, with a particular focus on the imposed policies, comparisons between different levels of education, and public opinion about EMI. The study involved countries from five continents, with South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa represented by a balanced number of countries, and North America represented by one country, namely The United States of America. It is worth citing some of the observations to understand the processes behind implementing EMI at national and local levels, as they allow for a greater Englishization not only of the educational sector but also of other fields related to it. Firstly, in almost half of the investigated countries, there do not exist any policies on EMI whatsoever, while more than forty percent of the countries released no official statements as regards EMI, which makes it difficult to understand the government's stance. Out of the official statements and proposed policies, one may learn much about the multifariousness of linguistic and social backgrounds among the countries where EMI is present. In Malaysia, for instance, the already multicultural and polylingual nature of the country constitutes a great setting for EMI to be developed, as students and teachers tend to be at least bilingual. At the opposite pole is Sri Lanka, where, because of its colonial history, the English language has been for many years seen as the reason for the vanishing of the national bonds. Consequently, English was losing its relevance, and only recently the trends have turned around again making it possible to introduce EMI. Macedonian government notices the benefit of organizing student exchanges and, therefore, sees the necessity of boosting students' English skills by introducing EMI. By a similar token, governments in Hungary or Cyprus recognize the need for attracting international students. Japanese or Czech governments, in turn, see EMI as an opportunity to facilitate and make it possible for their own students to study abroad successfully. The need for enhancing the level of students' knowledge and increasing the competitiveness of the country on the international market through EMI is officially recognized by Pakistan and Indonesia. In some countries, however, such as India, despite existing policies as regards English in education, some more specific fields like EMI in higher education are not recognized by any documents at all. In Uzbekistan, EMI is very much welcome, as the official documents do not limit communication in English to be encouraged in education only, but other fields such as economics and politics are mentioned as well.

Another questionable phenomenon caused by the spread of EMI is the local

languages fading out in the educational context, which may impact not only students, but also other residents of a country, due to Englishization in progress. With higher education being taken over by English, other related fields such as academic activities or social landscape might be affected, at expense of the local language. As pointed out by Ntombela (2023), in countries in the Middle East, the perception of English may play a major role in diminishing the importance of local languages. Higher education is very often associated with social development and, what can be observed in countries like Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates, directly connected with a key to economic prosperity. Consequently, everyone finding themselves in the job market, would likely be affected by the changing attitudes toward shifting to a language that boosts professional prospects. In none of the aforementioned countries has the impact of the implementation of EMI on the image of the local language been considered beforehand. In the study conducted by R'boul (2022), despite generally enthusiastic attitudes toward the introduction of EMI in higher education, the interviewed teachers were well aware of how English would reduce the relevance of local languages, Tamazight and Arabic, in Morocco. All things considered, due to prevailing confidence in EMI benefitting the students on a global market, English seems to enjoy great endorsement there.

However, the need for some kind of protection of the local languages is not overlooked either. Especially in the European Union that had already used English as an educational tool in the form of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) long before EMI gained in popularity, the awareness of the kind of impact that English may have on the importance of a local language is quite high. CLIL was widely introduced in the EU in the 1990s, with its proponents hoping to facilitate intercultural communication and improve the general level of foreign language proficiency among students. By foreign language, in the overwhelming majority, they meant English even though the very word *English* was not present in the name of that phenomenon; therefore, the awareness of the striking effect of English on local matters is not new in many jurisdictions (Richards and Pun 2022). In some countries investigated in the study conducted by Dearden (2016), apart from incentives for the introduction of EMI, there have been officially expressed concerns about potential threats to local languages and cultures. In the Netherlands, for instance, where English is widely introduced since the early stages of education, the Foundation of Language Defence fought such policies using legal means, in an attempt to protect the Dutch language in the public education sector. In Estonian law, it is stipulated that the official language must be available in every curriculum at every level of education, with such provisions aiming to protect the Estonian language. In Bangladesh, in turn, the main concern is expressed with regard to the local culture and traditions losing relevance in favor of the Western culture, especially among students who educate themselves through EMI. Despite concerns, public opinion in most of the investigated countries still does seem to be

very much favorable toward the introduction of EMI in education.

The rapid expansion of EMI in higher education has caused English to become the basic language of resources, textbooks, and materials for students and teachers who are non-native speakers of English. With more and more resources being available exclusively in English, the process of Englishization seems natural. Even before the official introduction of EMI at their universities, some teachers dealt with the need for the translation of materials into their mother tongue for the sake of teaching. This has likely made the transition to teaching in English smoother for them (Nieto Moreno De Diezmas and Fernandez Barbera 2021). The decision to teach particular academic subjects in English also applies to fields that still may well be taught in the mother tongue of students and teachers (Macaro and Aizawa 2022). The Englishization of universities may be perceived as a product of the free market, as English has become the most useful global tool for scientific and intercultural communication that needs to be facilitated. Therefore, by adopting EMI, universities may compete at the international level (Qiu, Zheng, and Liu 2022). This, however, has left teachers who are non-native English speakers at a disadvantage.

Although the term *native-speakerism* was first used with regard to English language teachers, this bias has been carried on along with the development of EMI (Rose, Sahan, and Zhou 2022). It essentially means favoring native speakers of English over non-native speakers in terms of not only confidence in their linguistic abilities but also general trustworthiness. Native-speakerism hampers the professional growth of students and teachers who have to bear the burden of being non-native speakers and are thus discriminated against by authorities in charge of hiring staff. With native-speakerism being a theoretical notion, prejudice connected with it has taken its toll on the real lives of teachers who experienced engagement inequity as well as unfavorable self-perception (Lowe and Pinner 2016). The latter may result from students' beliefs. According to the study conducted by Moussu (2002) that investigated students' attitudes toward teachers who were non-native English users at an American university, the number of students who would recommend the course conducted by such teachers increased from barely more than a half of the students at the beginning of the course to three-fourths of the students giving their opinions at the end of the course. A similar conclusion may be drawn from other studies present in the subject literature, conducted for instance by Ling (2002), or Ling and Braine (2007), or Goto Butler (2007), which seem to have proven a kind of bias toward teachers for whom English is not the mother tongue. In the study conducted by Gundermann (2014) a vast majority of the interviewed students engaged in EMI programs favored native English over non-native English. This tendency applied to students regardless of their own English proficiency. They would mention, for instance, that a non-native speaker of English might worsen their own pronunciation, as they subconsciously try to adapt their speech to an interlocutor. On the other hand, students did not mind teachers

who were non-native speakers of English, yet the perception that a native-speaker is somewhat a guarantee of education that is trouble-free in terms of the language of instruction was prevalent.

Stemming from deeply-rooted misconceptions, native-speakerism poses a greater challenge for non-native English speakers to be hired as teachers at universities that offer programs in EMI, while native speakers enjoy preferential treatment in the recruitment process. An additional advantage, in the eyes of recruiters, is constituted by a candidate's hands-on experience or a diploma received in an Anglophone country. Exposure to English used by native speakers seems to overshadow the didactic abilities of the teachers at times. With no standards given as regards English competence, native speakers are then trusted instantly to possess a sufficient enough command of the language to teach content in English.

A study conducted by Fortanet-Gomez (2012) seems to put another perspective on this bias, as the investigated non-native English users who attended conferences had no difficulties in presenting their knowledge to other conference participants, yet struggled to deliver the same content in classrooms to students who possessed a lower level of English. It is not yet clear though whether methods used by native speakers, who rely entirely on the English language, are more successful than, for instance, translanguaging, which may only be incorporated by multilingual teachers (Rose, Sahan, and Zhou 2022).

A study conducted by An, Macaro, and Childs (2021) concluded that classes held by native speakers of English involved less student engagement than those conducted by non-native speakers. As the founding director of EMI Oxford Research Group, Macaro admits himself that interactions of students in classrooms where EMI is used need to be thoroughly investigated, as they are undoubtedly connected with teachers' skills and it is teachers' responsibility to strengthen classroom communication (Sahan 2021). A grave obstacle reported by teachers investigated by Nieto Moreno De Diezmas and Fernandez Barbera (2021) though, was that there were usually too many students in their classrooms, which made communication substantially more difficult.

As reported by students in numerous studies, communication in classrooms may prove to be challenging and the notion of native-speakerism hampers their self-confidence. One of the thirteen students inquired by Qiu, Zheng, and Liu (2022) said during a semi-structured interview: "We Chinese students are not willing to participate in classroom discussion. We generally think we are not as good as native speakers. So, we are a bit self-abased. As a non-English native speaker, I feel inferior. For example, if we read the same article, I am slower". A similar conclusion may be drawn from conversations with other students who were not confident enough in their linguistic skills to participate fully in classroom discussions held in EMI. Although there are no objective linguistic criteria that need to be met, some students tend to feel their English proficiency is not adequate. Students' beliefs investigated by Khan (2013) proved that even though students

had no difficulties with comprehension during lectures, they still were not eager to communicate in English.

As EMI is intended for global education, more and more effort is put through linguistic policies on rendering EMI more intercultural and supranational, as communication seems to be crucial and by far more important than native-like accent or Anglophone landscape orientation. Education that incorporates EMI is faced with the challenge of embracing international students of various backgrounds, in terms of economy, ethnicity, and politics as well as students possessing various levels of skills in the English language. Consequently, boosting students' confidence in using English at an international level seems to be possible by promoting the concept of English as a medium of instruction and communication rather than a perfect linguistic model to be achieved (Fang and Hu 2022). Although some universities pose official requirements for both teachers and students to possess a certain level of general English within Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, usually B2 or C1, many leave it up to stakeholders whether they consider themselves to speak English well enough to be able to enjoy an EMI course, which may contribute to the idea of English as an inclusive medium of communication (Lasagabaster 2022).

3. Teacher's agency

In many cases, the main driving force behind the introduction of EMI is policymakers, not teachers. In Cho's study (2012), more than half of the instructors said that their only motive for teaching in EMI was the fact that such a policy was introduced by their university. Such evidence does not mean, however, that teachers' and students' attitudes toward EMI are negative. On the contrary, the prevailing belief is that English, used as a *lingua franca*, may boost career prospects and the quality of education (Dearden and Macaro 2016; Earls 2016; Ellili-Cherif and Alkhateeb 2015).

However, with the EMI phenomenon being spread worldwide, the real use of EMI may differ considerably among particular universities, which in theory follow the same idea. That is all dependent on the context and teachers. In some cases, teachers may be even perceived as a resisting factor while implementing EMI, as the main theoretical assumption is that classes should be held exclusively in English. There are instances of teachers who implement translanguaging in the classroom against the recommendations made by policymakers. According to the case study conducted by Ali and Hamid (2018), which consisted in classroom observation and interviews, teachers were prone to stick to English terminology; however, they switched to their mother tongue for instance when a student was not able to answer a question or when there were implications that students may have not understood the content. Similar observations were made by Romanowski (2020), who

investigated the phenomenon of translanguaging present in the classrooms where the lessons were supposed to be held in EMI. The investigated teachers allowed their students to use their native language, for instance when their classmates did not understand the instructions. Among other comments made by these teachers, one may notice that they were favorably disposed to their students practicing translanguaging, especially when it was necessary for a freer discussion about a certain problem or when the students found it difficult to understand new content in English. It is also worth pointing out that the investigated students appreciated the possibility of using their mother tongue during the lessons and predominantly expressed a very positive attitude towards translanguaging although they were not familiar with the very term itself. On the other hand, according to the study conducted by Doiz and Lagabaster (2017), teachers instructed to use EMI usually preferred the monolingual policy over translanguaging. Therefore, the reception of the imposed policies may be dependent on teachers' personal standpoints.

Although there is a lack of scientific consensus on whether using EMI without any flexibility in language-switching is more beneficial than the incorporation of translanguaging, the tendency is that the theoretical picture drawn by policies is a classroom where English is an exclusive medium of instruction. In reality though, it is sometimes backed with different kinds of translanguaging practices. Despite programs introduced by universities that impose English as the only medium of instruction, practically more than one language is reported to be used in classroom settings in numerous studies (Rose 2021; Doiz and Lagabaster 2021). At some universities though, the authorities give more leeway by letting teachers be flexible as regards the monolingual or polylingual means. One such example is the practices exercised at the University of the Basque Country investigated by Muguruza, Cenoz and Gorter (2020). The University is in an unusual position, as it is located in a region where two languages, Spanish and Basque, both enjoy the official status and long before the introduction of EMI courses, there had been certain flexibility in terms of the language choice in classrooms. The policymakers, by implementing EMI, essentially added English to an already multilingual environment as the third language. Upon the consent of the University's authorities, the delivery of the content is kept within English, while discussions may be held in any of the three languages. With EMI rendering universities more international and instruction more standardized, there is still evidence that it may hamper students' communication and comprehension. For instance, in the study conducted by Cho (2012), only three-fifths of the Korean students declared they fully understood the lectures delivered in EMI. No such problems were reported by the students of the University of the Basque Country, who felt translanguaging helped them follow what was being taught during the lectures, while parts of the lessons held exclusively in English were more tiring. Then again, letting students use their mother tongue for discussions did not encourage them whatsoever to exercise English as a tool of international communication. Although the general idea of the

implementation of EMI is theoretically coherent, there are substantial differences in putting EMI into practice among particular entities that enforce it locally. With translanguaging still poorly researched, it is yet unclear which approach, mono- or polylingual, is more beneficial.

Enforcing the EMI policy on teachers seems apparent also at international levels. An example of this phenomenon could be observed in China, where the Ministry of Education has subsidized universities to promote EMI in the hope of internationalizing Chinese education, with EMI being seen as one of the staples of decent instruction philosophy (Shao and Rose 2022). Subsidies do not translate into training though, which is rarely given to teachers despite the prevailing belief among instructors, which was expressed in an international survey, that teaching style and methods should be adapted to the teaching environment where EMI is incorporated (Macaro, Akincioglu, and Han 2020). The study conducted by Costa and Coleman (2013) via questionnaires sent to various universities in Italy nationwide revealed that nearly four-fifths of instructors who were supposed to teach in EMI had received no training whatsoever beforehand. Fifteen percent were given some kind of linguistic training, while only eight percent of the teachers were provided with methodological training. Other studies seem to confirm the lack of interest in preparing teachers to start teaching in English (O'Dowd 2018; Sanchez-Perez 2020). That raises a question of teachers' readiness to effectively put EMI to use.

Another issue is that different subjects may require a different level of communicative skills, as it is a dubious decision to impose the same linguistic requirements for teaching humanities and exact sciences. As pointed out by Macaro (Sah 2022), there are certain disciplines where English is naturally ingrained, while in other fields English as an educational tool may be a less obvious choice. Yet, there is a dearth of comparative research as regards the use of EMI in different disciplines, as the focus in research has been put on the effectiveness of EMI in exact sciences such as science or maths, while there have been scarce comparisons made between these subjects and, for instance, humanities.

Prescinding from the native-speakerism bias, given no training, teachers often share similar concerns regarding their linguistic competencies in terms of incorporating EMI in classrooms. Even those teachers who find themselves possessing adequate Academic English skills may fear their communicative skills might not be good enough to engage in natural discussions with their students in English. With no objective standards as regards English proficiency, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is often followed by authorities. Some universities require teachers to hold B2 certificates, others recommend teachers to reach the C1 level, whereas there are also universities that pose no formal requirements in terms of general English proficiency. The lack of validation and standardization may cause anxiety among teachers regarding their preparedness to use EMI. Moreover, with a thin line between linguistic limits and methodological

limits, students may complain about teaching styles, yet it is not always clear whether the reported shortcomings are the result of a scarce general English vocabulary or the lack of effective teaching techniques. Whether there is a greater need for enhancing pedagogical abilities or linguistic abilities among instructors teaching in EMI remains to be further examined due to the current lack of empirical research (Lasagabaster 2022). The lack of self-confidence as regards their English proficiency does happen to be observed among instructors who are supposed to teach in EMI. As became apparent in the case of a highly experienced and generally respected teacher interviewed by Block (2022), the incentive for teachers to convert their lectures into English was a promise of professional promotion not backed with any support. The main reason for convincing teachers to employ EMI was the need for the internationalization of their university. The result of the interviewed teacher's consent was the feeling of insecurity stemming from the lack of adequate command of English. Not only could it cripple one's confidence in their general academic abilities, which seems to be a broad sociological issue, but it could also cause the feeling of injustice and a lack of agency within the workplace.

Curricula hardly ever include teacher development as part of the EMI introduction process. The need for personnel's growth as regards linguistic and methodological abilities is somewhat transferred from policymakers to teachers themselves, with hope that they will take care of their training on their own. As regards linguistic skills, the development should not be limited to English command only, as certain soft communicative abilities are crucial for preparing students for collaboration within academia, future industry, or community. Even though students are usually well aware that content is the paramount value to be learned, high linguistic abilities may boost teachers' relations with the students through natural communication which allows for more compassion or using a discourse that is more appropriate for the discussed subject. No such support is reported by instructors who often feel neglected by their university bodies as regards broadening competencies necessary for teaching in EMI (Nieto Moreno De Diezmas and Fernandez Barbera 2021).

4. Students' perspective

It would appear obvious that students should be a crucial factor taken into account in the process of the implementation of EMI; however, surprising as it may seem, it is not always the case, with the students' attitudes still needing further research (Li Jiang and Jun Zhang 2019). The importance of considering students' perspectives on learning might be reflected in the idea that self-motivation has a great influence on the end results. With self-motivation divided in the subject literature into internal and external, the external motivation might be triggered by outer incentives like better career prospects or academic recognition, while the internal one may be

constituted by one's own satisfaction and the feeling of growth. Undoubtedly, students' self-motivation might be boosted when education is adjusted to their needs. Consequently, in terms of EMI, such students would possibly be more prone to develop for instance their linguistic abilities on their own account (Tai and Zhao 2022). The study conducted by Sahan and Şahan (2021), which consisted in questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews, found that the main motivations for students to learn through EMI were both external and internal. Out of the external ones, the students mentioned more professional opportunities, a better outside perception of learning in English, or possibilities to be engaged in international academic activities. As regards internal motivations, the desire to improve English skills and being able to follow the newest trends within students' fields of interest were primarily recognized.

As receptive abilities are paramount for the students during a lecture, the level of linguistic skills, with a particular focus on listening abilities in English must be adequate so that content comprehension is not hampered. Yet, the difficulty many teachers face is different linguistic skills among students, with listening skills included. With no objective linguistic standards given, students have no chance beforehand to know whether they would understand the lecture. Not until they actually attend it, do they realize what their comprehension skills truly are. Demanding as it is, a classroom full of students with listening skills at different levels would require effective pedagogical means that teachers do not always possess. Moreover, the need for adjusting the lecture for students with a lower command of English does, at times, seem to be not even recognized by teachers (Siegel 2020). There have been studies that indicate students' linguistic progress made thanks to the very exposure to English at lectures conducted in EMI. Interestingly enough, the development of their English was reported as one of the main advantages of the introduction of EMI in the eyes of the students investigated in China (Huang and Curle 2021). Despite promising notes, linguistic difficulties were still well noticed. Therefore, one of the main threats caused by EMI mentioned by the students, was the concern that it might hamper content comprehension. Regardless of the doubts, another important benefit addressed by the students was a strong belief that education in EMI would greatly improve their career prospects.

However, the perspective on EMI might change over time, and beliefs before attending a course in EMI may well be different from the ones after graduation. Students investigated by Gu and Lee (2018) felt after completing a course that EMI caused them to learn content less thoroughly and learning in their mother tongue would most likely have led to a better understanding of particular subjects. One has to bear in mind though that such testimonies are highly subjective and context-dependent.

Students' past experiences may play a key role in the reception of courses in EMI and thus influence their perception. In the study conducted by Thompson, Takezawa and Rose (2022), one significant factor emerged that turned out to be

decisive as regards the level of content comprehension at lectures held in EMI. Namely, the students who had previously attended lectures abroad or participated in international academic activities experienced far fewer linguistic difficulties in comparison with the students who had neither. It goes without saying that English proficiency is reflected in a better understanding of content delivered in English, and furthermore hands-on experience gained in a foreign environment might be likewise beneficial.

Another aspect that contributes to a better reception of EMI by students might be their prior education, especially in terms of bilingual learning experiences, for instance the fact of being exposed to CLIL. Although there is a significant difference in the level of English used in secondary education compared with higher education, one may suspect that a student who studied through EMI, or at least CLIL, would find the transition to EMI at the level of higher education easier than someone with no such experience. Unfortunately, the question of the transition between secondary and tertiary education is highly underresearched (Macaro et al. 2018). One study conducted by Tai and Zhao (2022) suggested that past EMI experience from secondary education played virtually no role in students' performance at universities that offered programs in EMI. However, further research on the influence of the presence of EMI in secondary education on the reception of EMI among students in higher education is very much welcome. By the same token, research on the impact of the transition from CLIL in secondary education to EMI in tertiary education would likely be a great contribution to the understanding of students' struggles connected with EMI in higher education.

With EMI being undoubtedly a sociolinguistic phenomenon, the linguistic factor does seem to be a focal point of interest, yet the social factor remains underresearched, as pointed out in numerous interviews conducted by Sah (2022). Questions such as how EMI is reflected in social policies or whether students' economical background or linguistic identities may influence their future performance in education held in EMI are still not fully explored. If they are not examined thoroughly, a grave concern arises that in some contexts EMI would possibly be only reserved for students who come from the upper classes or are economically privileged. Having a wider perspective on the social determinants, there should be a way to avoid rendering EMI an elitist phenomenon.

5. Conclusions

Although, because of the subject of this paper itself, the scope of interest was narrowed down to the challenges connected with EMI, one should bear in mind that most of the concerns are contextual and intertwined with the major benefits that EMI holds. Generally, any doubts shared by students or teachers investigated in the presented literature are preceded by enthusiastic attitudes or at least hopeful

notes. As it is a relatively new scientific phenomenon, not every aspect of it has been sufficiently discussed, and thus there is much room for future consensus and standards. With the evidence about EMI being collected in various academic, political and social contexts, the overall picture of particular facets of it may still be blurry at times. However, some questions that have already emerged may be addressed in relation to the entirety of the phenomenon.

The spread of EMI is so extensive and immediate that it is uncertain whether every entity that adopts it, is truly well prepared for it. The unpreparedness may reveal itself in many different forms, such as insufficient staff competence, unthoroughly constructed curricula, or insufficient feedback gathered. With EMI being a trend that gains in popularity, one may not resist the urge to implement it as soon as possible; however, the research done so far has shown that EMI should ideally be adapted in some way to the place where it is introduced. One shall bear in mind that academia is inscribed in a wider social and political context; therefore, particular collective needs should be taken into account if a linguistic transition is enforced. In some countries of a bilingual or plurilingual nature, local languages may be on a brink of extinction, and with EMI being imposed carelessly, the consequences to linguistic landscapes and local identities might be grave. With no universal standards given, particular universities are free to implement EMI as they please, which may be beneficial in terms of addressing local needs. On the other hand, with one of the main goals of the introduction of EMI being the standardization of competencies, the lack of standardization already at the level of the implementation of EMI might hinder reaching this very goal.

Surely, EMI is not free of the bias of native-speakerism, which is hurtful and unjust, especially toward teachers who are non-native users of English. It stems from various reasons, such as the dominance of the western culture or uncertainty about the linguistic abilities of teachers for whom English is not the first language. The latter remains strengthened by the lack of universal and objective measures of the English skills required to teach in EMI. There still is a research gap to fill in as regards what kind of English proficiency one should possess to successfully teach or learn in EMI, including the unclear thin line between general English and academic English. It is instinctual to hire a teacher who is a native speaker of English, as the matter of their general English abilities is no longer a concern; however, studies have shown that successful teaching takes much more than a perfect command of general English. Besides, it is doubtful to perceive English only in terms of an Anglophone model, while in the context of EMI, English is a global tool that is used to standardize qualifications among students who are not native users of English and to improve intercultural and supranational communication. Exclusion and discrimination would be highly counterproductive given the aforementioned goals, yet they are paradoxically still part of the discussion about EMI. Boosting one's self-confidence in using the language even though it is not perfect, might be highly beneficial in improving communication, especially in

the classrooms where EMI is used. Taking a look at this issue from another angle, more professional training and support provided for teachers onsite could well be the answer to the lack of trust toward teachers who are non-native language users or to their lack of self-confidence.

According to most policies regarding EMI, it is assumed that English is the exclusive language of instruction, while practically teachers and students use various forms of translanguaging, which may stem from linguistic difficulties or insufficient terminological background, that is a low level in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or, in the case of academia, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), not adequate listening or speaking skills, or attempts to encourage a more vivid and natural communication. On the other hand, translanguaging does not fix the problem of not being able to express oneself clearly or study entirely in English, which is supposed to be an international tool of communication. Unfortunately, neither the impact of following strict EMI policies nor the consequences of using translanguaging have been sufficiently addressed, with a dearth of comparative research.

Finally, students need to be heard and taken into account while imposing EMI. Not only should one investigate the struggles reported by them but one should also try and explore the ways students use to deal with those struggles, since this may be truly invaluable information to consider for policymakers. Apart from the linguistic point of view, the social perspective ought not to be overlooked. With the inclusive nature of EMI kept in mind, it is paramount that no students are actually excluded because of their economic or political status. The process of transition between monolingual education at lower levels and EMI in higher education may very well depend on the aforementioned. Therefore, to properly introduce students to their new learning environment, it is beneficial to be aware of any factors that may put students in an unprivileged position even before beginning their higher education. It remains to be further investigated how prior education impacts students' performance in learning in EMI, especially with regards to past EMI experiences and whether they actually boost opportunities in higher education. It may turn out that to get the most out of EMI in higher education, it would be worth promoting EMI at earlier stages. However, at this very moment, there is not enough evidence to have a clear opinion on this.

As far as future research is concerned, it is highly recommendable that a few matters are further explored. Firstly, the unresolved issue of incorporating translanguaging into EMI should be addressed to decide in what ways using more than one language in the classroom is more beneficial than limiting oneself to English only. Thus, having more knowledge on this matter, policymakers could plan curricula more thoroughly beforehand. On the other hand, it may well turn out that EMI at its purest is more advantageous overall. Therefore, more research on this subject is more than welcome. Secondly, establishing objective standards as regards English proficiency would likely standardize education, even the playing field for students, and possibly beat the bias of native-speakerism. Moreover, it would be highly

beneficial to know what kind of language is required to teach and learn particular subjects. Thirdly, with the hope of boosting students' performance in higher education where EMI is incorporated, it is worth investigating the influence of their past educational experiences, with a focus on the transition between EMI used in secondary education and EMI used in tertiary education.

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