

# **English-Medium Instruction at Universities**

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# **English-Medium Instruction at Universities**

Global Challenges

Edited by

**Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster and  
Juan Manuel Sierra**

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# Contents

Contributors	vii
Glossary	xii
Foreword	xiii
Introduction	xvii
<i>Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster and Juan Manuel Sierra</i>	
<b>Part 1: The Development of English-Medium Instruction</b>	
1 English-Medium Instruction at a Dutch University: Challenges and Pitfalls	3
<i>Robert Wilkinson</i>	
<b>Part 2: Language Demands of English-Medium Instruction on the Stakeholders</b>	
2 Acknowledging Academic Biliteracy in Higher Education Assessment Strategies: A Tale of Two Trials	27
<i>Christa van der Walt and Martin Kidd</i>	
3 Language Demands and Support for English-Medium Instruction in Tertiary Education. Learning from a Specific Context	44
<i>Phil Ball and Diana Lindsay</i>	
<b>Part 3: Fostering Trilingual Education at Higher Education Institutions</b>	
4 Linguistic Hegemony or Linguistic Capital? Internationalization and English-Medium Instruction at the Chinese University of Hong Kong	65
<i>David C.S. Li</i>	

- 5 English as L3 at a Bilingual University in the Basque Country, Spain 84  
*Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster and Juan Manuel Sierra*
- 6 Introducing English-Medium Instruction at the University of Lleida, Spain: Intervention, Beliefs and Practices 106  
*Josep Maria Cots*

**Part 4: Institutional Policies at Higher Education Institutions**

- 7 Implicit Policy, Invisible Language: Policies and Practices of International Degree Programmes in Finnish Higher Education 131  
*Taina Saarinen and Tarja Nikula*
- 8 Englishization in an Israeli Teacher Education College: Taking the First Steps 151  
*Ofra Inbar-Lourie and Smadar Donitsa-Schmidt*
- 9 Educating International and Immigrant Students in US Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges 174  
*Ofelia García, Mercè Pujol-Ferran and Pooja Reddy*
- 10 A Critical Perspective on the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction at Universities 196  
*Elana Shohamy*

**Part 5: Final Considerations**

- 11 Future Challenges for English-Medium Instruction at the Tertiary Level 213  
*Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster and Juan Manuel Sierra*

# Contributors

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**David C.S. Li** obtained his BA in English in Hong Kong (1982), MA in Applied Linguistics in Besançon, France (1984), and PhD in Linguistics in Cologne, Germany (1991). Trained in general linguistics, he has since developed a keen interest in social aspects of language learning and use



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**Christa van der Walt** (Curriculum Studies, Stellenbosch University, South Africa) trains English language teachers and has introduced a module in multilingual education in the secondary school teacher certification programme. Her research interests are focused on the teaching and use of English in multilingual contexts, with specific focus on learning in bi- and

multilingual contexts and the role of teachers' and learners' code switching in classrooms. The development and use of bi- and multilingual teaching and learning materials flow logically from this interest. She is also interested in the emergence of South African varieties of English and their use in education.

**Robert Wilkinson** works as senior teacher at Maastricht University Language Centre (the Netherlands). He has been concerned with English-medium instruction since the mid-1980s. He organized the first conferences in Europe on Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education in 2003 and 2006, with a follow-up in 2013. He has given training courses in LSP in several countries, such as Spain, Greece, Hungary and Russia. Previously he worked in France, Scotland and the former Czechoslovakia.

# Glossary

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EMI	English-medium instruction
ESHE	European Space for Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LOTEs	Languages other than English
NS	Native Speaker
NNS	Non-Native Speaker
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

# Foreword

When I gave my first series of university lectures, on Albert Camus' *L'Étranger*, in Glasgow University in 1975, I did so in French. The decision had nothing to do with internationalisation: the five hundred students taking notes were all native English speakers, and nearly all born and bred in Scotland. Nor was there a university or departmental policy on the medium of instruction, still less a theoretically informed debate on why and how to teach through a foreign language: it was and remains a peculiarity of higher education teaching that so many practitioners are untrained in teaching, whatever the language. Simply, as Armstrong and Hare (1993) noted 20 years later, there was live discussion of whether 'the integration of language and content' brought 'improvement in the students' command of the practical language' which outweighed 'the perceived danger of diluting the intellectual level of the content study' (Armstrong & Hare, 1993: 114). Like many of my colleagues, I believed it did, and intuitively adopted many of the strategies (slow delivery, use of synonyms and periphrasis, repetition) which have now been codified.

The debate between language and content learning continues, although the challenge which then faced British Modern Language departments is now an issue across every discipline and every continent. But today the language of higher education is English. Across the world, the unifying effect of globalisation and the development of a competitive market in higher education have led universities to adopt policies of internationalisation, although, as Doiz *et al.* (this volume) show, policies and processes of internationalisation vary across national and institutional contexts. Within Europe, the Erasmus programme has achieved the *de facto* internationalisation of thousands of campuses across the continent, and, despite Europe's commitment to multilingualism, has probably, in tandem with the Bologna Process, accelerated Englishization.

And if, even today, some lecturers find themselves, as I did, relying on intuition rather than training as they deliver courses in a language which is neither their mother tongue, nor that of many of their listeners, nor yet the means of communication of the city and country beyond the campus gates, we now have a much firmer grasp of the phenomena which the pioneering Maastricht conferences have called Integrating Content and Language in

Higher Education or ICLHE, and which in cross-sector contexts is typically known as Content and Language Integrated Learning, or CLIL.

English-medium instruction or teaching is more than a subset of CLIL. There are powerful ideological, social, pedagogical and professional rationales for adopting almost any language as the vehicle of university instruction. But the spread of CLIL in schools, and the worldwide policy of English as a first foreign language at primary and secondary level, make its adoption in tertiary education the most cost- and hassle-free choice. Furthermore, the inexorable global dominance of English across a majority of linguistic domains makes it the inevitable preference in the specific and influential domain of academe.

The high social and intellectual status which is attached to university teaching and research, and participants' involvement in international networks, have led to fears of domain loss. In other words that, as English strengthens its hegemony over knowledge production and dissemination, local and national languages will become restricted to less prestigious contexts of use, and their very existence may be threatened.

Such concerns, and the inequities which they create, among others for non-native writers and for migrants, are appropriately voiced by several contributors to this book, but, as David Li (this volume) points out, they remain a worry, principally for academic linguists and language policy-makers, while students see English more fundamentally as 'an indispensable asset or tool for anyone aspiring toward upward and outward mobility'.

This fascinating collection of detailed studies from Africa, America, Asia and Europe focuses more on policy than on the linguistic details of English-medium university instruction. In so doing, it throws new light on the multiple reasons for adopting English, which the review by Wilkinson (this volume) identifies as increasingly economic. The drivers for embedding Englishization within a broader internationalisation policy range from institutional concern with world university rankings, where the proportion of international students and academic staff are both a direct criterion and an indirect measure of status, through a desire to participate in international exchanges, to a wish to provide graduates with the skills necessary for employment. Altruism has certainly not disappeared, but the impulse to help students from developing countries is hugely outweighed by the financial motive to recruit fee-paying students. The countries where higher education is available at a nominal fee are becoming ever fewer, as the cost of tuition moves from the tax-payer to the beneficiaries or their sponsors.

Two critical features of the rationales for implementing English-medium instruction emerge both from this book and from the burgeoning research

literature on Englishization of universities. One is competition – to attract fee-paying international students, gifted teachers and researchers, and the most talented postgraduates to enhance the university’s reputation and the country’s workforce. More than one chapter illustrates the fact that competition operates too at the national level, where a more ‘international’ institution or faculty can draw in more and better qualified recruits.

The second feature which emerges from a number of the closely-textured studies assembled here, and which bring a rare historical light to bear on decision-making and policy implementation, is that university Englishization is not the kind of imperialist global movement which the more extreme conspiracy theorists suggest. The societal changes instead reflect the cumulative impact of a myriad local discussions at departmental or faculty level, comprising false starts and experiential adaptation, and whose prime movers are motivated above all by local contexts and domestic concerns.

Whilst there are shared anxieties about training opportunities, professional identities or the quality of English-medium teaching, this collection also uses a range of methodologies to explore different geographical contexts, whether monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, and to bring out above all the diversity of the expanding phenomenon known as English-medium instruction.

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## Reference

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