The EMI ‘horse’ has bolted

EMI is a growing global phenomenon in all phases of education and educational settings (Dearden, 2015). The speed of its growth, however, is particularly notable in Higher Education (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014; Fenton-Smith, Humphries & Walkinshaw 2017 forthcoming).

so, following Ernesto Macaro 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
Is there any evidence that use of EMI improves students’ English language proficiency?

Is there any evidence that the use of EMI improves students’ content knowledge?

Is there any evidence that EMI is inimical to either EL language or content learning or both?

Possible questions for the study of EMI in Asian/ASEAN Universities

1) To provide an accurate and detailed analysis the spread of English-medium education in the ASEAN University Network
(2) To investigate the use of other languages and bilingual practices in English-medium programmes in such ASEAN universities;

[English only? MoI vs Classroom language?
Materials/assessment/tasks and assignments
Teacher evaluation
Language families – Indo-European vs Tibeto-Burman etc.
Parallel languages – cf HK, with Cantonese, Putonghua and English]

(3) To investigate the role of the English-medium education in staff and student mobility across the ASEAN University network.

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

Three Examples

1 Hong Kong
2 Malaysia
3 Myanmar
Hong Kong

6 out of the 8 government-funded universities are EMI
Why?

Chinese University of Hong Kong (established as Chinese medium) is increasing the number of EMI programmes
Why?

Washback effect of EMI at university level

Fine-tuning of MoI policy at secondary schools leading to more classes taught in English and fewer taught in Chinese

(Cantonese remains MoI in most primary schools)
HK government wants its people to be trilingual (Cantonese, Putonghua, English) and biliterate (Chinese and English)

Only HK U of Education (aka HKIEd) has a policy which aims to graduate its students as ‘functional trilinguals’

Some excerpts from the Language Policy (Xu 2014: 218 ff)

The MOI, to be adhered to strictly in all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, bears on the following: (a) the course outline, including synopsis, aims and objectives, main assigned readings, teaching and learning activities, and course intended learning outcomes; (b) formative assessment in writing, including major assignments and quizzes; and (c) summative assessment such as the final exam. Accordingly, all assessed activities of an EMI course should be in English, while those in a CMI course should be in Chinese.
‘Classroom language’ (CL) refers to the language of interaction between teacher and students and among students in the classroom (lectures, tutorials, labs and so on). While the CL of an EMI course is English by default, a CMI course may be conducted in Cantonese or Putonghua, subject to the teacher’s preference after considering all relevant factors, such as the students’ language backgrounds and abilities.

Subject to the moment-by-moment classroom learning and teaching needs, the teacher of a CMI or EMI course may find it necessary to switch to some other language(s). It should be noted that classroom code-switching, which is typically driven and justified by students’ enhanced learning outcomes, do not constitute a breach of the Institute’s new LLT policy.
Malaysia

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 MoI 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.
Myanmar

Myanmar is ‘unusual’ – more expanding and outer in Kachruvian terms, as, when U Ne Win took over in 1962 he isolated the country and Burmese became the official MoI 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.

Suggested policy for Myanmar therefore:

Basic Education

1. Where the children are L1 speakers of the Myanmar language, the early years of primary school should focus on the teaching of the language and the use of the Myanmar language as the language of instruction across the curriculum.
2. Where the children are L1 speakers of the Myanmar language, a course in the diversity of cultures, religions and languages of Myanmar should be offered.

3. Where the majority of children are L1 speakers of an ethnic language other than the Myanmar language, the first 4 years of primary school should be taught in the children’s home language, provided certain criteria are met.

4. Where the majority of children are L1 speakers of an ethnic language other than the Myanmar language, this language should be taught as a subject after the fourth grade, when ML becomes the language of instruction.

5. English should be introduced only when children are 11 years old, after 5 or 6 years of learning ML and/or the respective mother tongue.

6. The target for English learners should be to become functional multilinguals, able to use English successfully in international contexts.
Higher Education

1. The Myanmar language and English need to be seen as complementary languages of education and scholarship.

2. 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.
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; (see also Schaller-Schwaner 2015)

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 go back to the 6 questions raised at the beginning (slides 8 ff.)
• 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?

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