



Book Review

English Medium Instruction Programmes: Perspectives from South East Asian Universities, by R. Barnard & Z. Hasim (Eds.), Routledge, 2019, 130 pp., AUD \$77.99 (Paperback), ISBN: 9780367375867.

English Medium Instruction Programmes: Perspectives from South East Asian Universities is a valuable reference for educational researchers, language policy-makers, university lecturers, and English language teacher educators. It provides an insightful overview of the current situation of English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education (HE) in South East Asian (SEA) contexts, and several expert recommendations regarding the future development and practice of EMI.

With just over 100 pages, this little book of eight main chapters, a preface, a foreword, and a final afterword has managed to depict the landscape and topography of EMI policies and implementation issues in SEA universities with empirical evidence and critical, comparative analyses. Not only is this book practically beneficial, but it is also theoretically provocative as it raises several key research questions that need to be addressed by language researchers and educators both within and beyond Asian borders.

Following the preface that states the rationale for the book and summarizes chapter contents, the foreword brings an international outlook to the EMI issues in SEA, taking a European perspective. By describing the context for EMI implementation in Europe, Robert Phillipson tries to level out the heat around EMI in Asian countries by pointing to the fact that despite being the home of EMI, Europe is doing its best to maintain balanced multilingual policies to protect various national languages in this region. This, unfortunately, appears not to be the case in South East Asia.

The first chapter (*Setting the scene: EMI in Asian universities*) zooms in on Asia and lays the foundation for the later exploration and discussion of EMI issues in SEA by briefly recounting the history of EMI, its current situation and challenges to its effective adoption in Asian HE. Drawing on a large body of research in both Europe and Asia, Roger Barnard has tracked EMI from its commonly-agreed early forms (i.e., Content Based Teaching and Content and Language Integrated Learning) to its current format, and summarized their major features, successes and/or challenges. This chapter ends with a review of challenges to EMI in Asian settings, based on extractions from the survey results published recently by the British Council.

To elaborate on the issues in chapter 1, chapter 2 (*Voices from the field: Email interviews with applied linguists in Asia*) reports findings from email interviews with applied linguists from seven East and SEA polities. While several findings echo those in previous studies, this chapter also presents new issues, for example, the shrinking of English teacher education programs in some countries (as EMI is expanding) and the emotional difficulties of first-year students in EMI programs. Nevertheless, EMI remains largely approved of and is strongly believed to be a future trend in Asian HE.

While chapters 1 and 2 draw an overall picture of the EMI landscape in SEA, chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 complement them by adding details unique to certain areas. Through an investigation into EMI in one university in each place, i.e., Malaysia (chapter 3), Brunei (chapter 4), Indonesia (chapter 5), the EMI topography in each setting is depicted and the complex relationships between EMI policies and other socio-cultural and historical factors are revealed. Owing to their colonial history, Malaysia and Brunei

both had their education system functioning in English, whereas Indonesia has for long valued and promoted its national language. Therefore, the use of English in Indonesia, though increasingly recognized, comes with much concern regarding national identity, unity and equality. Similarly, Malaysia, since its independence, has experienced the same language tension, which results in its so far inconsistent and unsuccessful language policies. Brunei, however, has maintained a bilingual education system (with both Malay and English) and has endorsed British educational standards at the secondary level. This paves the way for Brunei to become the most successful of the three countries in EMI implementation.

Taking the students' perspective, chapter 6 (*EMI in Malaysia: Student voices*) highlights the implementation side of EMI, particularly the use of students' first languages in EMI and its effect on students' learning experiences. This issue is intriguing in multi-lingual countries like Malaysia, where education is provided in three languages (i.e., Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Tamil). The survey reveals students' preference for the inclusion of their first languages in EMI classes to facilitate and accelerate their learning. However, code-switching in class might not always be possible because of teachers' and students' different linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, a concern is raised over the potential conflict between students' national identity and their global identity with the increased use of English. The question of how to tackle this issue appropriately remains open to Malaysian educational stakeholders.

The main text of the book ends with chapters 7 and 8, which, in my view, would be most valuable to educational researchers. Chapter 7 (*The spread of English Medium Instruction programmes: Educational and research implications*) raises three critical but under-researched issues of EMI, i.e., the integration of language support into content teaching, the pedagogical content knowledge of EMI teachers, and the role of familiar local languages and resources in EMI. Each of these issues is discussed in detail with related ideas and concepts, which serve as a useful orientation for future research. Additionally, chapter 8 (*Market English as medium of instruction: Education in neoliberal times*) discusses ideological issues underlying the adoption and implementation of EMI in Asian HE to explain some of its current implementation problems.

The book concludes with an afterword by Kirkpatrick, who restates the challenges for Asian learners of English due to the typological differences between English and many languages in East and SEA. Because EMI seems to be an irreversible trend, Kirkpatrick proposes a cautious multilingual approach to EMI and five criteria to assess EMI implementation. The criteria could be considered guidelines for achieving a multilingual approach to EMI.

Retrospectively, the common view that EMI originates from Content-Based Teaching and Content and Language Integrated Learning might just fit European contexts. In South East Asia, the colonial background of some countries (e.g., Malaysia) means that EMI had begun in the region long before the start of EMI in Europe in the 1980s. The complex nature of EMI adoption and implementation in SEA, therefore, should be discussed against the region's historical, political and socio-economic contexts, which somehow have not been depicted clearly in the first chapter.

Nevertheless, this compact book remains an important addition to the growing EMI literature thanks to its wide coverage of critical aspects of EMI in Asian HE. The proposed plurilingualism approach to EMI, which respects students' native languages and promotes students' intercultural competencies, might be a solution to mitigate many socio-cultural problems that EMI presents to non-English speaking countries in SEA.

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