English Medium Instruction in Scandinavian Higher education: issues and controversies

Conference Item

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English-Medium Instruction in Scandinavian Higher Education: Issues and Controversies

Dr. Anna Kristina Hultgren
The Open University

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Department of Education, University of Oxford

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Outline

- Definition of EMI
- EMI in European higher education
- Scandinavia: the EMI debate
- Conclusions: problems and solutions?
Definitions of EMI
EMI programs

Official language use

Mono/bilingual

De facto language use

Multilingual

Exogenous

Endogenous

(Söderlundh 2012; Hultgren et al. 2014; Preece and Martin 2009)
EMI programs

Official language use

De facto language use

Mono/bilingual

Multilingual
EMI programs

Official language use

De facto language use

EMI operationalised as:

1. Proportion of HEI offering English-taught programs
2. Proportion of English-taught programs
3. Proportion of students enrolled in English-taught programs

(Wächter and Maiworm 2014)
EMI in European higher education
EMI in European higher education

(Wächter and Maiworm 2014)
North-south divide in EMI

(Wächter and Maiworm 2014)
Scandinavia: the EMI debate
Scandinavia: the linguistic context

• Officially monolingual: Swedish, Danish, Norwegian
• English first foreign language
• English proficiency levels high

(European Commission 2012)
North-south divide in EMI

(Nöchter and Maiworm 2014)
EMI debate in Scandinavia

Pro-national language

• Ministry of Culture
• Language Councils
• Intellectual left
• Far-right politicians
• Some researchers

Pro-English

• Ministry of Science and Education
• University administrators
• Right-wing and centre politicians
• Some researchers
EMI debate in Scandinavia

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• The affected?

(Jensen and Thøgersen 2011; Dimova et al. 2014; Hultgren et al. 2014)
Pro-national language policies

Central to the solution to the challenges faced by universities is the concept of parallellingualism. The purpose of a parallellingual strategy is to ensure the opportunity for researchers, graduates and students to operate internationally, while continuing to develop a scientific language and terminology in all areas, which is usable in a Danish-medium context.

(Danish Ministry of Culture 2008: 47, my translation)
Pro-national language policies

The parallel use of language refers to the concurrent use of several languages within one or more areas. None of the languages abolishes or replaces the other; they are used in parallel.

(Nordic Council 2007: 93)
EMI debate in Scandinavia

Pro-national language

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"Pro-English" policies: key words

**Knowledge-Based Economy**

**Human Capital**

**Competition**

**Innovation**

**Internationalization**

(Holborrow 2013)
"Pro-English" policies: key words

Knowledge-Based Economy
Human Capital
Competition
Innovation
Internationalization

(Holborrow 2013)
"Pro-English" policies: trickle down

Supranational
- OECD

National
- Ministry of Education

Institutional
- Internationalization strategies

(Holborrow 2013)
"Pro-English" policies

Deliberate EMI
Norway  (Ljosland 2015)

Non-deliberate EMI
Denmark  (Hultgren 2014)

(Costa and Coleman 2012; Hultgren 2014; Piller and Cho 2013)
Growth of EMI in European higher education

$239\%$ growth
(Wächter and Maiworm 2014)
Conclusion: is EMI a problem?

Yes
EMI is a ‘pandemic’
(Phillipson 2009)

Neutral
EMI is ‘still a rare option for the student population as a whole’
(Wächter and Maiworm 2014)

No
‘The international services must be strengthened’
(University of Copenhagen 2012)

The jury is still out…
…and don’t wait for it to come in!
Conclusion: solutions to EMI?

Pain relief        Cure
Conclusion: solutions to EMI?

Pain relief

- ‘Translanguaging’
- English language support
- Better preparation

Cure

- What education systems do we want?
- What is its role in the nation state and in the globalized society?
- What role should rankings and other performance indicators play?
- How can change be brought about in a globally interconnected system?

(Thøgersen et al. 2014; Klaassen 2010; Garcia and Wei 2013)  
(Piller and Cho 2013; Ricento 2012; Block et al. 2012)
Thank you!
Selected References


