

7 Englishization in Danish higher education

From critical to constructive conceptualizations

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Abstract

This chapter offers a longitudinal overview of Englishization in Danish higher education, tracing its conceptualization from critical to constructive. In the initial stages, English was viewed sceptically, with concerns over domain loss, equity, quality of education, and consequences for the national language and culture. Such concerns led to a joint Nordic language policy promoting *parallel language use*, that is, a balanced use of English and the national language. In Denmark, this concept has been particularly salient, with all Danish universities having some sort of parallel language policy (Hultgren, 2014b). Recently, more constructive stances have replaced the concerns, perhaps recognizing that the continued expansion of Englishization is inevitable. Today, numerous Danish initiatives advance practical solutions to secure a smooth implementation of English medium of instruction.

Keywords: Denmark, higher education, multilingual universities, Englishization, English-medium instruction

1 Introduction

Concerns about Englishization, here understood as an increasing role of the English language in non-English-dominant contexts, have been pervasive in Denmark. Some concerns have centred on the perceived threat of lexical borrowings to the national language (Östman & Thøgersen, 2010; Hultgren, 2013), whilst others have focused on a wholesale language shift in

Wilkinson, Robert, and René Gabriëls (eds), *The Englishization of Higher Education in Europe*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press 2021

DOI: 10.5117/9789463727358_CH07

transnational domains, primarily corporations (Lønsmann & Mortensen, 2018) and academia (Gregersen, 2014). Within academia, our focus in this chapter, Englishization permeates both research and teaching. In research, whilst there is considerable disciplinary variation, 83% of the total scientific output at Danish universities is in English (Gregersen, 2014; Hultgren, Gregersen, & Thøgersen, 2014). In teaching, Denmark is second in Europe, just after the Netherlands, in the provision of English-medium instruction (EMI) in higher education (Dimova et al., 2015; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). Figures from a Nordic survey suggest that in 2009, 20% of programmes at Danish universities were delivered in English, with 26% at master's level and 6% at bachelor level (Gregersen, 2014; Hultgren et al., 2014, based on Danish Evaluation Institute, 2010). Only eight years later, these percentages had doubled, with 48% at master's level and 13% at bachelor university level (Ahlers, 2018), although it should be noted that comparisons across studies are often difficult given different methodological approaches. According to Statistics Denmark, in 2017, 43% of all master's and 8% of all bachelor's students in Denmark studied in English (Danmarks Statistik, 2018).

Englishization of Danish higher education is not only evident in the expansion of EMI programmes, but also in the use of English reading materials in Danish-medium programmes (Thøgersen et al., 2014). It should be noted, however, that inclusion of foreign language educational material in higher education is not new in Denmark (Haberland & Mortensen, 2012). In the (late) 20th century, it was possible to use texts in languages other than Danish (e.g., English, German, French, and the other Scandinavian languages) because upper secondary school graduates were assumed to be capable of reading texts in these languages. Whilst reading materials in other languages are still used, the decline of students' French and German proficiency, coupled with the increasing market share of English-language publications, means that most texts used in Danish higher education are now in English (Holmen, 2018).

Against this documented presence of English language at Danish universities, it must be borne in mind that practices are often considerably more multilingual than surveys allow us to capture. Observational and ethnographically inspired research on classroom and other practices has shown interactants drawing on a range of linguistic and semiotic resources to enable communication (Hultgren et al., 2014; Mortensen, 2014; Söderlundh, 2012). In the EMI literature, this is reflected in a conceptual shift, notably in the introduction of the term EMEMUS – English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings – to recognize multilingualism as intrinsic to EMI (Dafouz & Smit, 2016, 2020). Multilingualism may manifest itself in

various ways. For example, students in groupwork in EMI courses in the natural sciences may shift from English to Danish to facilitate both academic and social interplay (Kiil, 2011). The scaffolding resulting from the stakeholders drawing on their linguistic repertoires facilitates comprehension of content in English, while reinforcing both conceptual and comparative understanding in Danish. This acceptance and co-existence of English and Danish, as well as additional shared languages in the EMI context, supports English as a lingua franca (ELF) and, at the same time, enables and perpetuates multilingual communication (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018).

In this chapter, we adopt a longitudinal view and consider how debates about Englishization in Danish higher education have shifted over time. Whilst the development should not be seen as linear, we argue that around the turn of the millennium, debates tended to be highly critical, but that this criticism gradually died down, giving way to more constructive approaches that sought to address Englishization pragmatically. This is not to say, of course, that critical and constructivist approaches cannot and do not co-exist. We should clarify from the outset that whilst we do not dispute the increasing prevalence, status, and importance of English in Denmark and other countries across the world, we do not regard Englishization solely or even primarily as an empirical phenomenon. In this sense, our theoretical starting point aligns with American linguistic anthropology and much of contemporary sociolinguistics, which view debates about language as proxies for underlying social, economic, and political anxieties. As Mufwene puts it, ‘language is often only an epiphenomenon of a problem that is fundamentally non-linguistic’ (2010, p. 921). We see merit in recent sociolinguistic developments that have sought to move beyond debates about language displacement and language threat by shifting focus to the fluid linguistic practices in which multilingual language users engage (García & Wei, 2014; Pennycook, 2016). At the same time, we are cognizant that languages in a delineable sense continue to exist at the ideological level and serve important functions for identity, ethnic, political, and other reasons (Hultgren et al., 2014).

We also need to clarify that by viewing Englishization as primarily an ideological construct, we do not thereby condone the underlying factors that drive it. On the contrary, we would argue that by moving the gaze away from *language* as a threat, we are given the headspace to ponder and tackle the underlying factors – some of which are deeply problematic – of which Englishization is but an epiphenomenon. For instance, it is widely accepted that Englishization in higher education is driven by the emergence of a highly competitive global higher education market and a commodification

of scientific knowledge in which institutions seek to obtain the greatest possible return from education and research (Hultgren et al., 2015; Marginson, 2006). Many countries across the world offer EMI in order to compete with English-dominant countries and to advance on world university ranking lists (Hultgren, 2014a). In Europe, the implementation of harmonized degree structures as part of the Bologna agreement has also attracted international students and scholars to Denmark and further fuelled the use of EMI in classrooms and lecture halls. Denmark ranks in the top 10 European destinations for higher education exchange programmes (Universitas21, 2020). Likewise, internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum is on the rise, in efforts to prepare Danish and guest students for a global labour market and for navigating a complex, globalized world (Kling et al., 2017; Lauridsen, 2020). All these are factors that explicitly or implicitly drive Englishization. Whilst they can and should be subjected to proper analysis and debate, this is not our aim in this chapter. Here we consider how debates about Englishization of higher education have played out in Denmark.

2 Early critical voices on Englishization

In Denmark, Englishization started to become a talked-about phenomenon around the turn of the millennium (Danish Ministry of Culture, 2003, 2008; Davidsen-Nielsen, 2009; Harder, 2009). Concerns were voiced about *domain loss*, the idea that, as a result of the rise of English within a particular domain, the national language would cease to develop, gradually lose status, and eventually not be used at all (Jarvad, 2001; Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011; Thøgersen & Airey, 2011). Commentators often portrayed domain loss as having consequences for the nation state. One argument was that the widespread use of English in teaching would hamper the ability of new university graduates to communicate effectively with members of the public when taking up employment in Danish society. The example of veterinarians not being able to communicate with their farmer clients was often invoked. Another argument was framed in terms of threats to equality and the democratization of knowledge, on the logic that if scientific knowledge is mainly disseminated in English, then how will the general public, some of whom do not have sufficiently high levels of English language proficiency, be able to access it? Other arguments centred on threats to Danish cultural heritage and the idea that, faced with language shift, the works of Hans Christian Andersen and other national treasures

would become inaccessible to future generations (see also Hultgren, 2014b; Hultgren, 2016).

In contrast to what may have been the case in other countries, in Denmark, the main actors in the domain loss debate were members of the intellectual elite, mainly of whom were employed at universities, the Danish Language Council, and other cultural institutions. Robert Phillipson's work on *linguistic imperialism* (1992) is likely to have been influential too, given that he worked and lived in Denmark. Denmark is a small country with tight networks, which made it possible for domain loss to be placed on the national political agenda. Some of those who had voiced concerns about domain loss served as consultants on key government policy documents that sought to curb the perceived threat of English to the national language (Danish Ministry of Culture, 2003, 2004, 2008; Gregersen, 2014; Gregersen et al., 2018). The domain loss debate was also hijacked by the political far right. Domain loss was the main argument that the Danish nationalist party posed in the parliament in 2006 in order to pass a language law that would guarantee the use of the Danish language at the universities in the country. This proposition led to a heated debate between political blocs on the left and the right in parliament, which lasted until the beginning of 2009. In that period, the debate was largely represented in the media, and the major national newspapers published a number of articles that discussed Englishization both as an opportunity and a threat (Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011).

In the middle of the public debate, a large survey was conducted at the University of Copenhagen to gauge lecturers' opinions about the positive and negative impact of Danish university Englishization. Results from the survey suggested that the university lecturers' views were not as polarized as expected. Lecturers showed awareness of both sides of the issue: while they saw the importance of English for internationalization, they were aware of the possible impact on teaching and learning (Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011). Some lecturers with limited English proficiency resisted EMI because of the changes it entailed, such as added scrutiny of their English and threats to their professional identities (Henriksen et al., 2018). Lecturers were also concerned about the extra work and time required to reconceptualize and plan the teaching in a different language. Such concerns are expressed regardless of whether the medium of instruction changes from Danish to English or from English to Danish. For example, Chopin (2015) found that when a faculty at a Danish university established a new language policy that required all bachelor courses to be taught in Danish and all master's courses in English, a number of Danish lecturers, who had taught in the bachelor EMI programmes for a number of years, resisted returning to

teaching in Danish even though it was their first language (L1). In addition to time and workload, the Danish-speaking lecturers were concerned that the policy would relegate them to teaching mostly bachelor courses whilst leaving the more attractive master's level courses to the non-Danish speaking international lecturers and PhD students. These findings indicate that attitudes to Englishization are complex and not reducible to a simple question of whether you are for or against.

3 Constructive responses

In this section, we discuss some responses to the intensified Englishization of Danish universities. These reflect the more constructive and pragmatic approach that has characterized recent time. They include:

- 1 Parallel language use policy;
- 2 EMI lecturer certification;
- 3 English language requirements and support for students.

3.1 Parallel language use policy

In Denmark, a string of policy initiatives has been taken to mitigate the rise of EMI (Danish Ministry of Culture, 2003, 2004, 2008; Gregersen, 2014; Gregersen et al., 2018). Such policy initiatives, which have been part of wider Nordic initiatives, have centred on the idea of *parallel language use*, that is, a balanced use of English and the national language without the former encroaching on the latter. Whilst parallel language use serves an important symbolic function, its vague and imprecise nature has left it open to a range of interpretations in terms of its implementation (Holmen, 2020; Preisler, 2009; Tange, 2012). Hultgren (2014b), for instance, has shown how state institutions have interpreted it as meaning *more* Danish, whereas universities have tended to use it to legitimize an increase in the use of English through intensified international recruitment and other internationalization strategies (see also Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012). Nevertheless, despite its fuzzy meaning, the concept has had considerable impetus, and all eight of Denmark's universities have some sort of official parallel language policy in use (Hultgren, 2014b).

Whilst parallel language use may intuitively suggest bi- rather than multilingualism, more recent interpretations view its potential in promoting and normalizing the presence of multiple languages (not only Danish and English) in higher education (Holmen, 2012, 2020). This responds to concerns

that parallel language use has downgraded the position of other foreign, heritage, and minority languages in higher education (Daryai-Hansen & Kirilova, 2019; Holmen, 2012). The introduction of English as a language of instruction allows for the recruitment of international students with a range of different first language backgrounds. There are also large numbers of domestic students with minority language backgrounds. This offers opportunities for a more strategic inclusion of other languages beyond English and the national language in higher education. In the EMI literature, translanguaging has often been hailed as a viable way forward (García & Wei, 2014) because it offers students linguistic tools to draw on to scaffold and support comprehension. However, it should be noted that translanguaging can also exclude some students from participating if they do not share the linguistic resources being drawn on (Kuteeva et al., 2020). Lecturers are also afforded opportunities to draw on students' linguistic repertoires to develop disciplinary knowledge and multilingual proficiency, as well as cross-cultural perspectives that have previously been obscured (Nissen, 2019).

In Denmark, supporting and including additional languages has become part of a national agenda. Examples include specialized study programmes that directly link content instruction to foreign languages (FLs) other than English, such as Roskilde University's *Language Profiles* and Copenhagen Business School's degree programmes in Business, Language and Culture (*SPRØK*). These academic programmes are designed from the outset to promote plurilingual teaching and learning. This focused agenda has given rise to the establishment of The Danish National Centre for Foreign Languages (NCFE), a national centre aimed to promote and enhance FL education in more languages than English (NCFE, 2020).

A similar initiative has been taken by the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use (CIP), established in 2008, at the University of Copenhagen (UCPH). CIP's mission is to acknowledge multilingualism in the university setting and to assist with the development of staff's and students' proficiency not only in English and Danish, but also in other languages (CIP, n.d.; Dimova & Kling, 2015; Jürna, 2014; Kling, 2016; Kling & Stæhr, 2011). As part of this wider mission, CIP developed and administered a five-year, university-wide initiative at the UCPH entitled *The Language Strategy: More Languages for More Students*. The purpose of this initiative was to identify and address students' FL needs through large student surveys, meetings with academic study boards, and funding for content teachers to conduct pilot projects that addressed students' language needs (Holmen, 2020). The common goal of the pilot projects was development

of sustainable models for addressing the language needs of students in a specific academic environment. The five-year initiative resulted in a catalogue of innovative approaches designed to support the integration of content and FL in higher education. The FLs covered with this initiative included English, German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Danish as a second language, as well as Latin and Ancient Greek. The purpose of the courses was not to develop general language proficiency, but to offer targeted language domain learning, such as the development of Spanish for fieldwork, the development of German and French reading comprehension strategies, and the integration of support for academic English at Animal Science. The initiative involved around 4,500 students and 170 lecturers across all faculties at the university (Holmen, 2020). NCFE has recently funded a project that furthers the investigation of models of teaching and developing language as an additional competence (i.e., language as integrated in disciplinary learning) in higher education in Denmark (NCFE, 2020). A large percentage of the pilot projects undertaken under the Language Strategy at the University of Copenhagen project focused on meeting the increased EMI academic literacy demands of students at UCPH. Several of these EMI focused projects resulted in raising content lecturers' awareness of the role of language in disciplinary learning, as well as developing students' reading and writing strategies in both Danish and English, also at the undergraduate level in Danish medium courses (Kling et al., 2017).

3.2 EMI lecturer certification

In response to concerns about lecturers' ability to teach in English, English certification requirements for EMI lecturers have been implemented at some Danish universities. Certification results are typically used to make decisions regarding the adequacy of lecturers' proficiency to teach in EMI classes (Bazo et al., 2017; O'Dowd, 2018; Verguts & De Moor, 2019). The lecturers who are not certified may not be allowed to teach until they reach the appropriate proficiency level (see, e.g., van Splunder, this volume). Such a punitive use of EMI lecturer certification may easily lead to power imbalance at the workplace (Dimova, 2020c), and some lecturers who lack proficiency in the local language or do not have a permanent position at the university may feel that their positions in the department are threatened (Dimova, 2017).

In the certification procedures at most Danish universities, lecturers' English proficiency levels do not overshadow their broad academic profiles and professional and disciplinary competences. While there is no national policy for language certification of academic staff, there is great interest in

supporting English language proficiency development for teachers across the country. Although half of the Danish universities have developed and used certification models (see Dimova & Kling, 2018), technical manuals and quality analyses are available for only one certification procedure, which is the Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff (TOEPAS). TOEPAS was developed by CIP in 2009 and is currently used for EMI lecturer certification at the University of Copenhagen and at Roskilde University. Unlike other certification procedures developed for this purpose, from its inception, TOEPAS serves a formative purpose and provides test takers with feedback that could be used for competence development. In developing TOEPAS, all stakeholder groups (e.g., heads of departments, faculty representatives, and even union representatives) were present to support teachers and ensure that implementation of an assessment scheme would address the lecturers' needs (Henriksen et al., 2018). Therefore, TOEPAS was designed to represent a certification model that recognizes content lecturers' competences, professional identities, and educational culture. Its purpose is to:

- identify the lecturers who may need language support to teach EMI courses;
- raise EMI lecturers' awareness about their own English language strengths and weaknesses through an extensive written and oral formative feedback report accompanied by a video recording of their own performance.

TOEPAS is in the form of a simulated lecture, which allows for elicitation of classroom-related language in a controlled setting. The formative feedback is provided in relation to the EMI classroom, which represents the communicative domains of language use. In other words, the formative feedback focuses on the pedagogical functions of language in EMI rather than the grammatical and phonological correctness of lecturers' speech (Dimova, 2020b). Based on a rigorous standard-setting procedure with an international panel, the threshold proficiency needed to teach in EMI was set at B2+ level from the Common European Framework of Reference (Dimova, 2019, 2021). In the newest version of TOEPAS, the native-speaker norm was removed from the assessment scale, and the emphasis was placed on the pragmatic aspects of English language use in an English as a lingua franca setting, where most participants are L2 speakers of English (Dimova, 2020b). Pedagogy is not part of the assessed construct because lecturers who teach in their L1s, including native English speakers, are not scrutinized in this manner for their teaching abilities. Inclusion of pedagogy would thus create inequality.

At Danish universities, the use of English for teaching is supported by both language experts and pedagogical consultants. Unlike other European countries, where EMI implementation is associated with pedagogical shifts, national requirements for pedagogical competence development training for academic staff in Denmark has been implemented through ‘Teaching and Learning in Higher Education’ programmes (*universitetpædagogikum*) and is offered to all lecturers regardless of the medium of instruction they use. For that reason, discussions about pedagogy are not associated with EMI and are not as strongly considered synonymous with Englishization of education in Denmark.

Given the existing strategies for pedagogical training of lecturers, this push to alter pedagogical behaviours has been limited. To what degree the pedagogical approaches change depends on the course structure and participants. In courses where the student population has remained the same (i.e., enrolment comprises mainly Danish L1 speakers), Danish L1 lecturers often only change the language of instruction to English, but may rely on explanations in Danish to support content instruction (Hultgren, 2013). As noted above, in these situations, student discussions and project work may be conducted in English and/or Danish. Coming from the Danish educational system, the students attending courses are familiar with the educational culture and academic expectations and requirements. However, in courses comprising international students with limited Danish proficiency, and/or courses where the lecturers are themselves L1 speakers of other languages, English use becomes more dominant, the curriculum may need to be internationalized, and explicit guidance through the course assignments, exams, and requirements may need to be implemented (Kling, 2017).

3.3 English language requirements and support for students

When EMI programmes are implemented at universities in regions where English is not the dominant language, concerns are often raised about the students’ English proficiency levels and their ability to learn content material in a foreign language. Danish universities require that domestic and Nordic applicants have completed English B level in upper secondary school for admission to EMI programs (Dimova, 2020a). According to the admission policies outlined in the ministerial orders BEK nr. 107 from 12 February 2018, and BEK nr. 106 from 12 February 2018, domestic students can, but are not required to take international academic English language tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL, Pearson), which is usually a requirement that applies to international students (Ministry of Higher Education and

Science, 2020). Given the challenges that some students face when learning in English, discussions at national, institutional, and departmental levels focus on whether the English language requirements should be adjusted to follow those at British, American, and Australian universities in order to select only the students with adequate English proficiency for admission in EMI programmes, regardless of students' origin. Such discussions assume that established English language proficiency tests would be more valid predictors for academic success than documentation of English proficiency through school-leaving certificates.

Dimova (2020a) explored various political, economic, sociocultural, and academic dimensions within a Danish EMI context in order to build an argument for or against use of international academic English test scores for admission of domestic students in Danish universities. The findings suggested that requiring commercial test scores are a quick solution that may have positive short-term effects, such as cutting down the institution's costs associated with providing language support for students and pedagogical training for teachers. However, imposing additional test score requirements for admission in EMI would have negative long-term societal effects by widening the gap between the students who get access to EMI and those who do not. It may also conflict with institutional policies to increase student intakes. With such extensive EMI course offerings in tertiary education in Denmark, one could also expect that commercial English test preparatory courses would flourish and influence teaching in learning in upper secondary schools.

In principle, this agenda has been sidestepped through government-mandated English language instruction at the primary and secondary levels. Essentially, if the government allows public universities to implement EMI degree programmes, then it has the responsibility to ensure that the citizens are given the possibility to participate in these degree programmes by offering support (e.g., establishing instruction that integrates content and language) or by changing the English as a foreign language curricula at elementary and high school levels to focus more on preparing students (i.e., help students develop academic English proficiency) for their tertiary education in English. Students enrolling in higher education must rely on English proficiency acquired through mandatory English language instruction that begins in primary school (from grade 1) and continues through upper secondary school (at both vocational and academic institutions). Equal opportunity to receive quality English foreign language instruction is meant to diminish or minimize gaps in accessibility and opportunities in the national educational system. Conceivably, all students are already

equipped with a threshold level of English language proficiency necessary for academic programmes. Thus, Danish residents are eligible for admission to higher education, and deemed proficient in English for academic purposes, after successful completion of 12 years of formal education (or the equivalent). Without this supposition, some students could feasibly miss out on the opportunity to study in their preferred field because the degree programme may only be available in English even though they have the academic ability to study in the particular field (e.g., master's degree programmes in the Faculty of Science at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark's Technical University, and Copenhagen Business School).

Instead of admission policies based on English screening tests, Danish universities have considered establishing purposeful bridge initiatives to integrate content and language instruction (Kling et al., 2017; Larsen & Jensen, 2020; Swerts & Westbrook, 2013). Although the key motivation to implement EMI at national and institutional levels is internationalization through recruitment of international students and lecturers and access to international research (Carroll-Boegh, 2005; Cortes et al., 2016; Hellekjær & Westergaard, 2003; Thøgersen, 2013), grassroots initiatives have stressed the need to support the teaching and learning through the establishment of courses that integrate content and language, as well as courses in English for academic purposes and English for specific purposes (Dimova & Kling, 2020; Henriksen et al., 2018; Tange, 2010). These initiatives focus directly on academic literacy skills development such as discipline specific critical reading skills and academic writing for EMI, often linked directly to Danish medium instruction at the bachelor level. These training schemes seek to assist students in recognizing and strengthening competencies developed in Danish medium instruction and emphasize *transformation* (Larsen-Freeman, 2013, in Hirvela, 2016) of these skills for success in future EMI contexts.

4 Conclusion

Reflecting on Englishization in Danish higher education, we have shown how initial reactions were marked with critical discussion regarding domain loss and the consequences for students and teachers of using English as a medium of instruction. As we said at the start, such debates are often linked to underlying tensions about the role of the nation state in our globalized society. We also showed that many of the initial concerns have been or are being addressed through both grassroots initiatives and top-down strategies.

Early recognition of the need for constructive approaches to mitigate some of the perceived challenges posed by EMI has shifted perceptions of English as a threat to Danish education to the opportunities multilingualism affords society at large. The creation of an academic culture that supports linguistic competence development (i.e., for English, Danish, and other languages) allows for, and in a sense commands, continuous reflection and discussion. The parallel language use strategy in Denmark reflects a context where citizens can mediate and negotiate information in multiple languages. In Denmark, English links strongly to this small country's participating in the global knowledge economy and the development of globally minded graduates who are capable of working across sectors and disciplines in both their first and other languages. For a small nation such as Denmark, these longitudinal goals are non-negotiable. That said, universities continue to be committed to support the needs of the nation state and as such, there continues to be a need to keep the discussion about the balance between languages across the educational system on the agenda. There are also discussions to be had, we believe, about the underlying factors that drive Englishization, whether this is increased competition in the higher education system, international alignment, or commodification of knowledge. These underlying issues are ultimately decisions about what role and function higher education should serve in contemporary policies and societies across the world.

Funding

Anna Kristina Hultgren acknowledges financial support from UK Research and Innovation (Grant reference: MR/To21500/1).

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for comments and advice from reviewers and editors.

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