**“We are not the language police”: comparing multilingual EMI programmes in Europe and Asia**

**Abstract**

English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education has rapidly increased over the last decade in Europe and Asia. However, this expansion has far outstripped research and many key questions remain unanswered. This study addresses a number of those questions related to roles and conceptualisations of English and other languages in multilingual university settings. Data is presented from an exploratory mixed-methods (121 questionnaire responses and 12 interviews with lecturers and students), comparative study of higher education institutes in the UK, Austria and Thailand. Findings showed a move from monolingual orientations at management level, mixed responses to multilingualism in ideologies and beliefs, to extensive multilingualism and complexity in practices. Furthermore, unexpected similarities between the UK and Thailand as regards language proficiency and content learning were found.

**Keywords:** English medium instruction, Internationalisation, English as an academic lingua franca

**Introduction**

The rapid rise in EMI (English medium instruction) programmes in higher education is now well-documented (Dearden 2014) and this has been especially true of the two regions in this study, Europe (Wächter and Maiworm 2014) and Asia (Macaro et al. 2018). Much of this drive for EMI comes from the link between internationalisation and English in higher education (Jenkins 2014; Liddicoat 2016) in which programmes offered in English are perceived as ‘higher’ status and thus more attractive to increasingly mobile student populations (OECD 2014). However, the pace of expansion in EMI has far outstripped research in this area and, while research has increased significantly over the last decade, many key issues remain unresolved (Dafouz 2014; Dearden 2014; Macaro et al. 2018). This study focuses on a number of those issues including definitions of EMI itself, roles and conceptualisations of English and other languages in multilingual university settings and the need for comparative studies across contexts. The paper begins with an overview of current research as regards EMI and multilingualism which is then linked to an extended language policy framework that forms the theoretical orientation of this study. Data is presented from an exploratory mixed-methods, comparative study of postgraduate business and engineering programmes in higher education institutes (HEI) in the UK, Austria and Thailand; disciplines, level of study and settings which have a long history and deep engagement with EMI programmes. The focus is on linguistic issues at the levels of language management, ideology and beliefs, and linguistic practices. Finally, emergent themes around conceptions of English, multilingualism and the relationship between linguistic proficiency, disciplinary language and content knowledge are discussed. The value of comparative studies is also highlighted together with implications for education, training and support for lecturers and students in EMI programmes.

**EMI, multilingualism and extended language policy**

EMI is defined by Macaro et al. (2018: 37) as “The use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English.” This definition has the advantage of apparent simplicity and emphasises that the focus is on teaching academic subjects not English language, thus distinguishing it from other forms of bilingual education. However, no mention is made of the level at which academic subjects are taught in EMI and Macaro et al. (2018) go on to discuss EMI from primary to tertiary education. More commonly, however, EMI has been associated with “the specific and influential domain of academe’ (Coleman 2013: xiv) and distinguished from approaches such as bilingual education and CLIL at secondary and primary level (e.g. Smit and Dafouz 2012; Guarda and Helm 2017). Indeed, given the wide variety of approaches to EMI reported in the literature, in which the distinction between content and language becomes blurred, it may be that what is most distinctive about EMI is the higher education domain in which it occurs.

A further issue with Macaro et al.’s (2018) definition is the specification of countries or jurisdictions where English is not the first language of the majority of the population. This is potentially problematic as it excludes Anglophone international universities. As will be shown in this study, international universities in Anglophone settings share many features and issues with other international universities globally. At postgraduate level, especially, it is likely that a significant proportion, if not the majority, of students and staff will not have English as their first language (UKISA 2017) and hence concerns about linguistic proficiency, language practices and their influences on learning and teaching are as significant here as in non-Anglophone settings (Jenkins 2014; Liddicoat 2016). Furthermore, the setting of many Anglophone international universities in superdiverse urban centres means that students are more likely to be surrounded by multilingualism than a single dominant L1. Lastly, excluding Anglophone HEI from discussions of EMI contributes to continuing problems with their ‘exceptional’ status, furthering monolingual, standard language ideology around English in academia and potentially disadvantaging multilingual international students (Jenkins 2014; Jenkins and Mauranen, In press; Liddicoat 2016).

An alternative conception of EMI is offered in Dafouz and Smit’s (2016) EMEMUS (English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings). While it “focuses on English-medium education because of the particular role that English plays both as an academic language of teaching and learning as well as a means of international communication” (Dafouz and Smit 2016: 399), it also recognises the multilingual nature of higher education and the range of settings and approaches to pedagogy and language this can entail. As Dafouz and Smit argue, “[t]his label is semantically wider, as it does not specify any particular pedagogical approach or research agenda” (2016: 399) so is well-suited to the comparative study in different settings described here. A nascent body of research has investigated the multilingual nature of EMI; however, findings have been very mixed with different levels of recognition from stakeholders as well as both positive and negative responses and further research is needed (e.g. Dafouz et al. 2016; Mortensen 2014; Doiz et al. 2014; Earls 2016).

Accompanying debates around the role of different languages in EMI settings have been discussions of the variable use of English itself within academic settings. This is most strongly represented through ELFA (English as a lingua franca in academic settings) research which has illustrated the dynamic and adaptable ways that English is used to achieve effective communication and learning in academia (e.g. Mauranen 2012; Björkman 2013). ELFA researchers have argued for an ideological shift which legitimises this variable English use, rather than adherence to a single ‘Anglophone’ standard, as well as according equal status to all proficient users of English in academia regardless of ‘nativeness’ (Jenkins 2014). Recent studies in this area have given greater emphasis to the multilingual nature of ELFA in which English is viewed as part of a multilingual repertoire that is used in conjunction with a range of linguistic resources (Jenkins 2015: Jenkins and Mauranen in press). However, the extent to which this multilingual perspective on English is adopted by university stakeholders is less clear, with a monolingual or bilingual (English alongside a local language) orientation still most common (Liddicoat 2016).

The final major research gap that this study aims to address is the lack of comparative studies of EMEMUS settings, especially from more in-depth qualitative perspectives. . Indeed, apart from the large scale statistical surveys reported in the introduction, there is an “almost total absence of any comparative studies amongst institutions and/or amongst countries” (Macaro et al. 2018: 64). This is beginning to change with a number of recent publications (Dearden & Macaro 2016; Dafouz et al. 2017; Jenkins and Mauranen In press) offering more in-depth comparisons between EMI settings, at a range of levels from classroom practices, to stakeholder perceptions, and management policy. However, given the current paucity of data, no firm conclusions on either overarching issues or the relationships between different local concerns can be drawn and further research is needed.

To provide a theoretical anchor to the discussion of the variety of EMI policies and practices at a range of levels and EMEMUS settings Spolsky’s (2009) extended language policy model will be used. Spolsky (2009) identifies three interrelated aspects or levels of language policy. Firstly, language practices are “the observable behaviors and choices – what people actually do” (Spolsky 2009: 4) and they are the fundamental element of the framework as without these there can be no language model for beliefs or management. Secondly, for Spolsky language beliefs are “the values or statuses assigned to named languages, varieties, and features” (2009: 4). These are important for understanding how ‘named’ varieties of language are given different recognition and status at the other levels of language policy. Lastly, language management is “the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs” (Spolsky 2009: 4). This may include laws, governmental policies, institutional rules (e.g. university entry requirements), and official guidelines, (e.g. those outlined in HEI websites), all of which influences language choices and may lead to modification of beliefs and practices. Following Spolsky’s tripartite model the research presented here aims to document the extended language policies in multilingual EMI programmes in three higher education institutions in the UK, Austria and Thailand.

**The study**

The project aim described above was divided into the following research questions to guide the analysis and presentation of data in this paper.

1. What is the extended language policy in these settings as regards:
	1. management,
	2. beliefs and ideology,
	3. practices?

2. What differences and similarities in these areas can be observed according to context?

To answer these questions this exploratory study investigated established EMI programmes in prestigious international HEIs in the UK, Austria and Thailand. These three countries were chosen as the researchers’ experiences of teaching and researching in these settings allowed for access and insider perspectives crucial for qualitative research. Furthermore, while Austria and Thailand have a long history of, and extensive, EMI programmes (Unterberger 2012; https://studyinthailand.org/), there are currently only a handful of studies in these settings at tertiary (Macaro et al. 2018). Postgraduate study in business and science was chosen as these are levels and subject areas at which internationalisation and EMI have had the greatest impact (Wächter and Maiworm 2014: 66-67). By selecting prestigious and established EMI programmes meaningful comparisons could be made and also any issues experienced in well-funded, reputable programmes were more likely to be issues across the sector. A mixed-methods research approach (Dörnyei 2007) was adopted primarily involving questionnaires with students and interviews with lectures and students and this will be the focus of the data presented (table 1). The topics covered were experiences of learning and using English, the use of English and other languages on the programme, and views of studying/teaching on the programme. This was supported by documentary analyses of official language policy, mainly through the institutes websites, classroom observations and linguistic landscaping. Through multiple data sources it was hoped that a rich, multilevel, holistic representation of these EMI programmes would be constructed (Dafouz and Smit 2016).

**Table 1**

The research team consisted of the authors of this paper, who were staff at the UK setting, and conducted the data collection in conjunction with local staff members at the Austrian and Thai sites. The use of staff members at each institution enabled insider perspectives, while the presence of the authors allowed for consistency in data collection and more emic perspectives. Ethical procedures for each of the institutions were followed. Although the single setting in each country and limited number of participants mean that no claims to generalisability are attempted, the holistic and multilevel descriptions of the settings and participants from a range of sources will hopefully be transferable to other related EMI contexts.

Data analysis of the questionnaire involved a mixture of descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS. The qualitative data was analysed through content analysis based on top-down and emergent coding (Miles et al. 2014). The top down coding drew on Dafouz and Smit’s (2016) ROADMAPPING framework which attempts to capture the multiple dimensions and stakeholders present in EMEMUS settings (see authors 2017 for a more detailed explanation of coding). Following this approach, discourse, in the wider sense, is seen as the main point of access as well as the means of constructing much EMI practice (Dafouz and Smit 2016). In this study that consisted of the discourse of lecturers and students as well as policy documents. In the final stage, and to address the focus of this paper on language policy, the codes established were then organised into three broad themes linked to the extended language policy framework (Spolsky 2009): language management, language ideology and beliefs, and language practices.

**Findings**

**Language management**

One overt manifestation of HEI language policies is their websites (Jenkins 2014). These can be viewed as officially produced texts which serve the dual functions of information for the institution’s members, and information and marketing for an ‘outside’ audience and as such they are typically tightly controlled by HEI management. All three institutions in this study make clear their international orientation with explicit references such as, “One of the leading institutions worldwide…international perspective and a global reach” (Austria), “an international graduate education and research school” (Thailand) and “World leading… one of the best places in the world… internationally excellent” (UK), with the UK website also containing extensive links and information pages for international students. The role of language in this international outlook is not explicitly stated, beyond noting that programmes are offered in English, but the websites are all in English. While expected in the UK, it is clearly of more significance in the Austrian and Thai settings, equating international with the use of English. Furthermore, while the Austrian website is fully bilingual, providing pages in English and German, the Thai site is only offered in English, excluding the local language.

Entry requirements stated on the websites offer further evidence of the official language policies with all institutions requiring that students pass an English examination before entry. These are standardised international English tests such as IETLS and TOEFL, or similar local equivalent exams, with only the Austrian site permitting the completion a Bachelor’s degree through English as sufficient evidence of required language proficiency. Generally, these Anglophone exams demonstrate the conflation of standard English with Anglophone native English (e.g. see Jenkins 2014). Native speakers of English are unsurprisingly exempted from these exams; although, one might question how much knowledge native English speakers would have of the specific disciplinary languages required at post-graduate level. Little reference, if any, is made to language requirements during study at the Austrian or UK sites; although, the UK site does suggest that students may want to attend in-sessional language support. The Thai site has more extensive information, stating under advice for thesis preparation that the writing ‘must conform to international standards’ but then providing references to a number of American text books for academic writing, suggesting again a conflation of international standards with Anglophone English. This orientation to Anglophone English is further reinforced by the more detailed guidelines which require theses to be proofread by a native English speaker before submission.

Overall, all three institutions explicitly state an orientation to internationalisation in their official policy as represented on the websites. While not overtly acknowledged, this is associated with English both through the language of the websites themselves and through the stated medium of instruction. Moreover, entry requirements and the little advice given on language use during study suggest a clear preference for Anglophone English, which is somewhat at odds with the international outlook claimed. Additionally, there is very little evidence of recognition of the multilingual nature of the institutions and their staff and students. With the exception of the bilingual Austrian website, no reference is made to other languages either for entry or study.

**Language ideology and beliefs**

The extent to which the lecturers and students themselves aligned with the monolingual, Anglophone English orientation of the official language policies was much more variable. Responses from the students’ questionnaire (Table 2) illustrated a preference for standard English language policy in the UK and Thailand but a mixed response in Austria with a split between standard English and any kind of English and ELF.

**Table 2**

Amongst the lecturers there are similarly mixed attitudes and beliefs. In Thailand lecturers claimed that there was no official language policy and that they did not believe there should be one (extract 1).

Extract 1[[1]](#endnote-1)

TL2: {I just want everybody to be able to communicate if there is a policy it might cause people to be more worried}

Likewise in the UK the lecturer was unaware of any official policy or guidelines, stating that “we don’t’ have anything … explicit”. Only the Austrian lecturer was aware of an official policy for US English but claimed that in practice, “{it is up to every teacher how he or she herself does it so from the university there are no regulations}” and that for her intelligibility was the key for English language use, rather than ‘enforcing’ university policy (extract 2).

Extract 2

ATL: {as long as it is easily intelligible i think that is the main thing…

I: And do you find this comfortable that the language policy is quite relaxed

ATL: oh yes (.) in Austria you can’t do anything else @We’re not the language police@}

Students and lecturers beliefs about language use on these programmes also illustrates a complex range of responses but an overall preference for intelligibility over ‘nativeness’. A factor analysis of the students’ questionnaire responses (Table 3) highlighted generally negative responses to statements suggesting students and lecturers used native like English and generally positive responses to statements prioritising intelligibility and local adapted uses of English; although, agreement was not especially strong.

**Table 3**

These somewhat mixed sets of beliefs about language use were also reflected in the interview data. So, for example, in keeping with their responses to language policies, the lecturers generally felt that native speaker English was not necessary and factors such as intelligibility (extract 2) and content knowledge were more important (extract 3).

Extract 3

TL2: {yes the knowledge in the subject is more important than English I think everybody

can improve their English especially when we use English with Asian people we can

understand each other we don’t talk with native speakers we might make mistakes like

grammar mistakes but we should choose people who are knowledgeable about the

subject…we need people who can teach and help students to be knowledgeable and

successful in fact all native speakers can speak English but I’d ask if they can –

I: -I agree they might not have enough knowledge to teach

TL2: that’s right}

Indeed, as suggested in extract 3 there is even a rejection of the appropriateness of native speaker English and this is explicated stated by one of the Thai lecturers (extract 4).

Extract 4

TL1: {For some classes I’m sometimes invited to teach in international programs of other

departments where all students are Thai it’s not necessary they will be confused if you

speak like a native speaker as they are familiar with Thai-accent English when they meet

native speakers they even don’t understand them}

This lecturer, however, goes on to clarify that for a more international group ‘Thai-accent English’ will be inappropriate (extract 5) and later emphasises the importance of variety and adaptation (extract 6).

Extract 5

TL1: {there are foreigners in the second semester in the first semester there are only

Thai students but as our program is international and we’ve signed MOU with many

universities we have students from our neighbouring countries like India Vietnam and

Laos but in the second semester there are American students if we use {Thai-accent

English} they won’t understand they will raise their hands and ask what you are talking

about}

Extract 6

TL1: {I think it depends on the context where we speak or use English …if we learn only

one type of English (.) it might be difficult to switch}

A similar point is made by the UK lecturer who as a native speaker of English has recognised the need to adjust his language for international audiences (extract 7, see Authors 2017).

Extract 7

UKL: I think something I struggled with to begin with was that I would say something in

my natural style without thinking about how easy it is for a non-native English speaker

to-to comprehend …I sort of learnt which phrases are easier to understand and how to

emphasize certain aspects of the things I’m saying so that they make more sense

However, these beliefs were not necessarily shared by students who often indicated a preference of native English at all three sites “for sure the native speaker is better” (TS1), “I think it’s important to to really talk in the British way”(UKS1), “using correct, native-like English is a matter of honour” (ATS3). Nonetheless, while many students expressed an attachment to the prestige of native like English, they also recognised the importance of intelligibility, frequently juxtaposing both views simultaneously, as illustrated by the response from a Chinese student at the UK site (extract 8).

Extract 8

UKS2: I try to learn the native talk but um it’s okay if you can understand other people’s words if you are okay you can speak (in) a clear way that is good it is quite good it’s good to speak like a native

In relation to the use of languages other than English and multilingualism at all three sites, students reported generally negative views on using other languages in teaching and learning.

Extract 9

ATS2: yes I am in an English speaking master so (.) I would actually oppose to that if

 something was in German I speak German but not that well

In Thailand similarly negative views were expressed by lecturers.

Extract 10

TL1: {if you speak only Thai in class in the evaluation form students will say that this

lecturer use only Thai in class and this is something we’re worried about}

However, there was more variety in the responses from Thai participants with some students seemingly comfortable with bilingualism on their part, although, not from their lectures.

Extract 11

TS1: umm of course err this school is the international school so the lecturer teach in

English only but sometimes I talk to my friends in Thai @

Despite these seemingly negative views of multilingualism, participants at all three sites reported considerable multilingual language use in practice, especially outside of classes. This suggests more complexity as regards multilingualism than these overtly articulated beliefs indicate.

**Language practices**

It should be noted that much of the data here comes from participants’ reports of practices, rather than actual practices, but, nevertheless, offers a valuable insight into participants’ interpretations and beliefs about their own practices. Firstly, students reports support the official management level monolingual English orientation to programme delivery in confirming that English was used for all aspects of their programme (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 - Use of English language**

However, answers to specific questions about other language use, while supporting the monolingual orientation to programme delivery from lectures in Austria and the UK, suggest that other language use is present in Thailand. Moreover, students report a much higher degree of other language use among themselves, indicating that multilingualism is present but not overtly recognised (Table 4).

**Table 4**

As noted in the section on beliefs and ideology, the reported preference of lectures, and to a lesser extent students, for ‘English only’ in teaching was not necessarily adhered to in practice, especially in Thailand, as reported by both lectures (extract 12) and students (extract 13).

Extract 12

TL1: {but in my opinion if there are {only Thai students} in some classes or some sessions

and no matter how clearly I explain and I have to use Thai …only keywords}

Extract 13

TS1: err some of them use only English but some of lecturers speak Thai … when Thai

students cannot understand him

Going beyond lecturers’ use of other languages, participants at all sites reported multilingual language use in other types of academic activities such as, group and pair work (extract 14 and 15), in side-talk during lectures and workshops, as well as more social settings (extracts 16 and 17). This practice is seemingly endorsed by the lecturer in extract 14 and can include both students’ L1 and the local language (extract 15 and 17). Given the role peers and group work pay in learning and the importance of networking and connections during postgraduate study these are significant areas of academic life that students are reporting as multilingual.

Extract 14

UKL: we do have students working in pairs um on the labs um and yeah often and

they’ll speak in their native language if it if that happens to be the same … we feel like you know if that if that means it’s easier for you guys to to learn with each other

Extract 15

ATS1: sometimes yeah the biggest problem is that sometimes there are some tasks

who which really require (.)the German (.) uh: knowledge (in) you know like as a

native and (we) have to:(.) conduct a questionnaire or to (xxx) and so on and the

because we will get more respondents if it is in German than yeah it’s kind of though

sometimes it’s problematic and then we have to take eh to do the double work if (in this

team) because first we decide what will the questions be and that’s in English and then

team mates translate it into German

Extract 16

TS2: in in university it’s normally normally I speak Thai with Thai friends but foreign

foreign er student I speak English with him yeah how often er (.) every time that I see @

yes @

I: @ and in one day err in terms of percent percentage

TS2: uhu maybe around around fifty fifty

Extract 17

AS2: yeah professors mainly speak English with some minor exceptions maybe like

given examples or something (.) um students yeah depends on the [context]

I: [ok] ok and so uh when students say they chat in a break or something so would they

chat in German or English or a mixture or

ATS2: well mixture is most common I’d say depends on who is on the group

The complexity of language use and the need to balance the different linguistic needs and preferences of speakers in a range of different situations in these multilingual universities is vividly illustrated in extract 18 in which an Austrian lecturer describes departmental linguistic practices.

Extract 18

ATL: {In the department … it is clear that if we have a meeting and there is somebody

who does not speak German, we speak English … and if there are only German speakers, we speak German (.) easy at faculty level it is not that easy as there is a preference from administration and from colleagues (.) a little subject-specific (.) historians and sociologists prefer the German language (.) so we have the rule that all who want to speak English speak English and those who want to answer in German answer in German (.) and if we notice that somebody is at the meeting who does not know German we translate quickly and quietly}

A theme that emerged strongly from the data in relation to linguistic practices was the role of perceived language proficiency in students’ experiences of these programmes. Figure2 shows that students in the Austrian site self-assess higher in all four skills. T-tests between individual site pairs shows that the UK and Thailand generally have similar scores without statistical difference between them, whereas there are statically significant differences (p=.001) between Austria (with higher ratings) and the other two sites in all 4 areas.

**Figure 2 Self-assessed language proficiency varies between sites**

This is perhaps not surprising given the higher language entry requirements for the Austrian programme, and also the fact that there were no native-speakers, with whom students might be comparing themselves.

However, of more concern is that a factor analysis (Table 5) showed the importance of perceptions of language proficiency (and lack of) for explaining students responses in the questionnaires. Perceived language proficiency correlated with the most items (10) related to participation in the programme such as understanding lecturers, other students and asking questions, suggesting that perceived English proficiency makes a key difference to perceived ease and success in studying.

**Table 5**

Interview extracts support this with the Austrian participants expressing confidence in their level of English “I am happy about that so I can say that I am quite confident” (ATS2), while participants at the English and Thai site were less sure of their abilities, “yeah I don’t think it’s enough because some terminology is really hard” (UKS2), “I think it is I- (.) it’s not enough umm some umm some (meeting) umm student cannot umm explain to explain in English” (TS2). However, this lack of confidence was mixed; while participants in the UK and Thailand wanted to improve their level of English, they also felt they were generally able to cope with the programme (extracts 19 and 20).

Extract 19

TS1: I think my skill is fair or good but not very good @ …

I: do you feel your English knowledge will serve you needs for studying here

TS1: sure @

Extract 20

UKS1:just er to write ok for me to study in the course (.) my vocabulary is not not enough (xxx) vocabulary I don’t think sometimes I cannot follow but only occasionally most of the time I can understand

Additionally, participants in Thailand discussed changes and improvements in their English proficiency over the course of the programme (extract 21); a view echoed by the lecturers (extract 22).

Extract 21

TS2: er I think it's the easily easily than (.) than the beginning (.) I think I I have the

confidence … {you get more than just what you come to study you also get English}

Extract 22

TL1: {because the students (.) have to start studying the courses in the program and

improve their English at the same time so at the beginning their English might not be

good enough but their English keeps improving while they are studying here we

don’t choose only those who are good at English to study here but with the method

we use to teach when they graduate they will be good at English}

Language proficiency was perhaps most significant in relation to assessment. Students felt that language was a major factor in assessment in the UK and Thailand and that native speakers of English were at an advantage (Figures 3 and 4). A non-parametric ANOVA (Independent samples Kruskal- Wallis test) revealed statistically significant (p=.001) differences between the sites. Follow-up independent sample t-test showed significant differences (p=.05) between Austria and the other two sites but no differences between the UK and Thailand. Again this may be partly explained by the higher English proficiency level of Austrian students, and that no native English speakers are present.

**Figure 3 Language proficiency and grades**

**Figure 4 – Grades and ‘nativeness’**

The relation between English nativeness and grades achieved was also the area where there were the greatest differences between the lecturers and students perspectives. The lecturers stated, in contrast to the students, that language was not something they assessed, for example, “that {language}’s not the criteria that we necessarily mark on” (UKL), and “{we don’t evaluate English}” (ATL) (see authors 2017). However, the Thai lectures and English lecturer all mention the role of English proficiency in exams and graduating from programmes and the importance of ‘good’ or ‘clear’ communication in a wide range of areas (extracts 23 and 24). This suggests that the relationship between linguistic proficiency and assessment is more complex than the lecturers are consciously aware of, offering some support to the students’ perspectives.

Extract 23

TL1: {they have to be qualified to study here their English must be in intermediate

level they must be able to read write and speak master’s degree students have to

give presentations it’s a requirement they have to write a proposal in English

present and write their theses in English and before their graduation they’re

required to give a talk in a seminar for people outside university so their English

skills listening speaking reading and writing must be good enough to communicate

but it will be more difficult for PhD candidates as they have to get at least two of

their papers published }

Extract 24

UKL: I would say that their marks are not directly (.) related to their English proficiency but I can (.) I can see that there would might be an indirect effect um so if if they’re: (.) not very um capable at writing for example then they won’t be able to communicate their ideas so clearly and then they would lose marks (.) for that

Furthermore, the role of and relationship between content knowledge, disciplinary language and linguistic proficiency is far from simple with clear distinctions between each difficult to achieve, adding another dimension of complexity to linguistic practices. Indeed, as suggested in extract 25, at times all three concepts appear conflated and this is further complicated by what appears to be the dominant role of English in these particular disciplines.

Extract 25

TL2: {From my teaching experience the students don’t have problems in English

because they study science and a lot of technical terms are used… for example when

we talk about some terms, they are technical terms there won’t be any problems in

English because English is just a tool when we talk about any subjects students

understand them well }

**Discussion**

In answer to the first research question “What is the extended language policy in these settings?” at the level of language management website analyses indicates an equation of English with internationalisation. Furthermore, the policy is orientated towards a monolingual standard English ideology, often conflated with Anglophone English, especially through entry requirements, in-sessional support and graduation in the Thai setting. Such monolingual, standard English ideology in official policy in international EMI programmes confirms other reports in the literature (e.g. Dippold 2015; Doiz et al 2013; Jenkins 2014; Liddicoat 2016).

However, the extent to which this carried through to participants’ ideologies and beliefs was mixed. There was some preference for the perceived prestige of standard English in the UK and Thailand from students, but less so in Austria where other conceptions of English, such as ELF, were equally present. Yet, in all three sites the lecturers appeared to reject such an orientation favouring intelligibility and content knowledge over any particular ‘variety’ of English. Indeed, in some cases the lecturers clearly articulated the need to be adaptable and variable in the manner in which English was used depending on audience, demonstrating sophisticated beliefs about appropriate language use and commensurable with perspectives from ELFA research (e.g. Mauranen 2012; Björkman 2013; Jenkins 2014). The interview data from the students revealed a more diverse picture with Anglophone English viewed as prestigious but equal importance given to intelligibility and content knowledge, reflecting similarly varied students beliefs reported in much of the EMI literature (e.g. Jenkins 2014; Macaro et al. 2018; Jenkins and Mauranen In press). Nonetheless, despite the range of beliefs and general tolerance of variability in English language use there was very little in the participants’ beliefs concerning multilingual language use and what little there was, was mixed. Thus, although participants did not appear to follow the standard language ideology of the management policy in their English language beliefs, they did adhere more closely to the monolingual orientation. This would suggest that further research into EMI stakeholders’ beliefs and practices around not just standard language but also multilingualism would be beneficial.

At the level of practice the dominant role of English in all aspects of these EMI programmes was confirmed. However, similar to Mortensen’s (2014) study in Denmark and Earls (2016) in Germany, there was much more multilingualism reported than seemingly consciously recognised by the participants, particularly in group work, side-talk and socialising (all important aspects of academic life). This included the use of participants L1 as well as the local L1 where it was different to the participants L1 and English. In keeping with many studies of EMI (Macaro et al. 2018), perceived English language proficiency emerged as a major theme; however, in this study it was also a significant difference between sites, as well as between perspectives of lecturers and students. Students in the UK and Thailand believed proficiency in English affected the studying experience and most importantly final assessment. As in previous studies (e.g. Aguilar 2017) lecturers generally disputed this, arguing that content knowledge was the key to assessment, but their responses suggest that linguistic proficiency, disciplinary language and content knowledge are not easily separated. Furthermore, in the Thai and UK sites students felt at a disadvantage to native English speakers, corroborating Jenkins (2014) findings. However, this was not the case at the Austrian site which was likely related to both the higher entry requirements but also the lack of native English speakers here. The learning of English and improvements in English alongside gains in content knowledge emerged as a key theme in teaching and learning practices at the Thai site, again blurring the distinction between content knowledge and linguistic proficiency, EMI and CLIL (Smit and Dafouz 2012).

As regards the second research question, “What differences and similarities in these areas can be observed according to context?” a number of important points emerge. Firstly, at all sites there was a move from the monolingual standard language ideologies of management policy, through to the increasing recognition of variability in English language use in participants’ beliefs and ideologies, and finally to the highly variable, complex and multilingual nature of linguistic practices. Thus, as reported in much of the literature on EMI policy (e.g. Hamid et al. 2013; Liddicoat 2016), there is a mismatch between somewhat simplistic monolingual official policy and the more open and diverse practices and attitudes of lecturers and students. However, as previously noted, the extent to which the multilingual practices are recognised, or legitimatised, by lectures and students in less clear. Therefore, further research into both practices and perceptions of multilingualism in EMI programmes would be beneficial in gaining a deeper understanding of extended language policy. Secondly, as discussed above, the relationship between perceived proficiency and programme experiences and outcomes was a notable difference between Austria and the other two sites. This raises interesting issues about the appropriate level of English proficiency needed for EMI study (Macaro et al. 2018) as well as the perceived advantages that native English speakers may be given in EMI programmes (Jenkins 2014). Thirdly, the data from all three sites indicates the difficulty of distinguishing between content knowledge, disciplinary language and general linguistic proficiency. This was particularly apparent in the UK and Thailand, and in Thailand appeared to be recognised by lecturers and students. Again, this highlights the significance of linguistic issues, especially as regards disciplinary language, in EMI programmes and their role in learning and knowledge construction. The study confirms research suggesting that discourse- and genre-related aspects of disciplinary language are not conceptualised as part of ‘language’ by content teachers and thus, unlike terminology, not made the target of explicit language instruction (Hüttner and Smit 2017).

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of comparative studies in identifying common themes which may be widespread in EMI programmes, such as monolingual management policies vs. multilingual practices, as well as potentially significant differences, such as linguistic proficiency and the extent to which language learning is a goal, explicit or otherwise. Of particular interest in this study was that instead of the expected similarities between the non-Anglophone EMI settings (Austria and Thailand) or the European settings (UK and Austria), many similarities emerged between the UK and Thailand with Austria most different. This suggests that further investigations of the role of English language proficiency are needed and also that the presence (or lack of) English native speakers might be a potentially important factor. Given the shared findings between the UK and Thailand, separating Anglophone international universities from other international EMI programmes, as for example Macaro et al. (2018) do, appears unhelpful (see Liddicoat 2016 and Jenkins and Mauranen In press for alternative perspectives). This would also indicate that further thought needs to be given to conceptualisations and definitions of EMI, so as not to make assumptions and shut down potential avenues of research by excluding Anglophone settings.

This research also has implications for the growing discussions of training, education and support needs for different settings and stakeholders in EMI (e.g. Guarda & Helm 2017 for lecturers in Europe and Chang et al. 2017 for students in East Asia). Comparisons demonstrate that the settings have different needs in terms of training and support. In relation to student needs, in Austria the high level of English proficiency on entry and responses from the students suggest that additional linguistic support is not desired or appropriate and that improvement in English is not a goal of the programme. At the other end of the spectrum in Thailand with lower proficiency at entry, increased English proficiency is a recognised target by lectures and students (although not in official policy) and extensive support is offered. In the UK support for English is also needed by students and offered at the university. However, the degree to which this is recognised by lecturers and incorporated into programme aims in the same way as in Thailand is less clear. In relation to lecturers, and unlike, for example, Guarda and Helms’s (2017) study, none of the participants in this study indicated the need for further linguistic support. However, at none of institutions was the role of multilingualism widely recognised although it was a de-facto practice in all. This would suggest that even when lecturers feel their English proficiency is adequate, they would benefit from greater awareness of and training in multilingual educational practices (e.g. Barnard and McLellan 2013).

**Conclusion**

With a relatively small sample size[[2]](#endnote-2) and one setting in each country, generalisations to all EMI programmes clearly cannot be drawn from this study. Nonetheless, this exploratory study makes an important contribution to EMI research in multilingual settings by highlighting emerging themes from a comparative perspective. At all sites there was a move from a standard English language monolingual ideology in management policy, to more flexible beliefs about English language use from lectures and students, to considerable complexity, variation and multilingualism in linguistic practices. However, the tolerant attitudes from students and lecturers towards English use did not always extend to other languages and multilingualism appeared marginalised at times. Frequently, we observed a tension between ideologies of language ‘purity’ and those of functional intelligibility in both students and lecturers. Linguistic proficiency emerged as a major theme from the data and also a significant difference between sites with diverse entry requirements and the presence, or lack of, native English speakers as potentially key differences. Proficiency was also an important difference between participants’ perspectives, with lecturers, in contrast to students, believing it had little effect on outcomes. Yet, responses from lecturers suggested a blurring of linguistic proficiency, disciplinary language and content knowledge. Related to this, the learning of English alongside content knowledge was also shown to be an important difference between sites with different provisions and expectations in terms of support and outcomes. Finally, there were a number of important similarities between the Thai and UK site in relation to linguistic proficiency and the role of English as a target which distinguished it from the Austrian site. Given the somewhat unexpected similarities in findings between the UK and Thai settings, which we have suggested may be related to the presence of native English speakers and the similar language entry requirements, further research into these two factors may prove fruitful in increasing our understanding of extended language policy in EMI. Furthermore, this would suggest that to fully understand EMI and EMEMUS future research needs to be open to a wide variety of settings including Anglophone ones.

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 **Table 1 Research sites and participants**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **University/Programme** | **Questionnaire responses** | **Lecturer interviews** | **Student interviews** |
| Thai Graduate School in Energy and Environmental Engineering  | 25 Thai, 4 international students of 3 different nationalities | 2 Thai L1  | 3 Thai L1  |
| Austrian University of business and management /MSc Marketing  | 40 Austrian, 19 international students of 9 different nationalities  | 1 Austrian German L1  | 1 Austrian German L1 2 Russian L1  |
| UK University/ MSc Wireless Communications  | 27 Chinese and 5 other nationalities  | 1 English L1  | 2 Mandarin Chinese L1  |
| Total | 121 | 4 | 8 |

**Table 2 Students beliefs on the most appropriate English language policy (adapted from authors 2017)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Research Site | Most appropriate LEP | Total |
| No Policy | Standard English should be used | Native English (e.g. UK/US) should be used | International English (English as a lingua franca) should be used | Locally relevant English should be used | A mixture of English and other languages should be used | Any kind of English can be used |
|  | Austria | 8 | 18 | 3 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 16 | 56 |
| Thailand | 1 | 15 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 27 |
| UK | 6 | 17 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 32 |
| Total | 15 | 50 | 10 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 23 | 115 |

**Table 3 - Mean scores and factor analysis of language beliefs (adapted from authors 2017)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Factor | Items | Factor loading | Mean  |
| Standard/Native like English      | It is important that the lecturers speak standard English | 0.813 | 2.18 |
| It is important for me to speak standard English | 0.849 | 2.28 |
| When I speak in English I try to sound like a native speaker | 0.230 | 2.63 |
| When I write in English I try to write like a native speaker of English. | 0.561 | 2.28 |
| I like my lecturers to be native speakers of English. | 0.853 | 2.14 |
| I like my lecturers to use native speaker English. | 0.846 | 2.08 |
| Intelligibility  | It does not matter what my English sounds like as long as others can understand me. | 0.848 | 2.92 |
| When I write in English I don't care if I write like a native speaker as long as I can be understood. | 0.764 | 3.47 |
| Local language use  | I like it when the lecturer uses English and other languages (for example local languages where English is not the local language). | 0.736 | 3.19 |
| I like my lecturers to use locally based English. | 0.793 | 3.01 |

1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

|  |
| --- |
| **Table 4 - Use of English and other languages**  |
| Research Site | Do your lecturers ever use languages other than English in classes?  | Do your fellow students ever use languages other than English in classes?  |
| Austria | Mean | 1.85 | 2.71 |
| SD | .715 | 1.018 |
| Thailand | Mean | 2.48 | 3.11 |
| SD | 1.252 | 1.188 |
| UK | Mean | 1.47 | 3.19 |
| SD | .950 | 1.061 |
| Total | Mean | 1.89 | 2.93 |
| SD | .985 | 1.084 |

1=never, 5 =always

**Table 5 Factor analysis of key factor in student questionnaire responses**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **No of items** | **% of variance\*** | **Cumulative %** |
| **English proficiency** | 10 | 26.288 | 26.288 |
| **Standard/Native like English** | 6 | 13.492 | 39.780 |
| **Lack of English proficiency** | 5 | 8.243 | 48.023 |
| **English language and content** | 4 | 5.649 | 53.672 |

**Figure 1 - Use of English language**

**Figure 2 - Self-assessed language proficiency**

**Figure 3 - Language proficiency and grades**

**Figure 4 – Grades and ‘nativeness’**

1. Participants are identified by country and role, ATL = Austrian lecturer, if there is more than one participant a number is given, TS2 = Thai student two, I = interviewer. Other transcription conventions are: (.) : pause, [ ] : overlapping speech, – : abrupt cut-off, (word) : unsure transcription, (xxx) : unable to transcribe, @: laughter, … : omitted section of the transcription, { } : for translation gloss and for extra information [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Another limitation of the sample is that only lecturers and students took part in this study. Data from university administrators and management would also be valuable for future studies given that they are also major agents in language policy. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)