The 2020 International Symposia on English Medium Higher Education (EMHE)

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Symposium 3 –

Support Systems for English Medium Higher Education

16 December 2020

Contents

This symposium was organised in partnership with the Chinese Education Association for International Exchange and was supported by the Chinese Association for ESP and the China EAP Association.

KEY MESSAGES

- Students in EMHE courses need monitoring and support in English language, especially when they are below advanced level.

- The English language proficiency of students should be known to the institution and teachers.

- The approach to English support to students should be English for Academic purposes (EAP)

- Most ELT teachers in universities require professional development in EAP.

- Many EMHE subject teachers need assistance with their English proficiency, again through a EAP approach.

- Many development courses for EMHE content teachers should include pedagogy.

- Collaboration between subject teachers and English teachers is essential for the best course design and support for EMHE students.

- The use of students first language and other languages through a multilingual approach can be a useful way to support students.

- The physical and social environment of EMHE contexts can be improved by the use of English in signage, announcements, posters, and use outside the classroom (the linguistic landscape).

Report and Reflections on the symposium
John Knagg FAcSS

Over 200 people attended this third 2020 online symposium. The aim was to raise awareness of English medium education in higher education (EMHE), often called English medium instruction (EMI), or English-taught courses (ETCs), and in particular systems and environments to support students, teachers, and other stakeholders.

English language support for EMHE students. When we learn through a language that is not our first or is not a completely familiar language then our learning will be less efficient than learning in our first language. This inefficient learning through an additional language can be manifested in two ways. Firstly the student may learn less; secondly the student may learn as much but in a longer time, or with greater effort.

So the question is how to reduce the inefficiency and make the learning as efficient as possible. Clearly one important factor in answering this question is the language proficiency of the individual student. A recent study co-authored by one of our distinguished presenters, Gene Thompson (see below) in Japan confirms the common-sense view that a higher level of English proficiency leads to a greater chance of success in EMHE programmes. The researchers found it impossible however to identify a clear cut-off level of proficiency. The general consensus of educationalists and applied linguists working in this area is that an advanced level of C1 English proficiency on the CEFR is sufficient for students to learn at university level in English medium, and that an intermediate level of B1 is an insufficient level of proficiency. It must be stressed that this is a simplification. It does not mean that advanced level students (C1) do not need help with their English, and it does not mean that intermediate (B1) level students cannot usefully learn some things through English if the right support and methodologies are in place.

Models of EMHE. Ernesto Macaro, in his book "English Medium Instruction", usefully categorises EMI (or EMHE) according to how students are supported in their English proficiency. His models of EMI are as follows:

1. Preselection of students. The English language proficiency of students is evaluated before the EMI course, and only the students who reach a certain standard are admitted to the course.

2. A preparatory year of English for students. There is a period of student for students in which they focus wholly or mainly on English language improvement led by English teachers. The aim is that by the end of the preparatory period (which may be an academic year, or less, or even more) the student's English will be good enough to follow their discipline in English.

3. On-going in-course support for students. English teachers give extra classes to students, ideally based on individual needs, and ideally in collaboration with subject teachers.

4. A multilingual approach. Students and teachers are allowed and encouraged to use their first language (or other languages) in addition to English to achieve their learning objectives. This can be referred to as the translanguaging approach, and can be used alongside any of the three models above.

Approaches to English teaching: EGP, EGAP, and ESAP. Whichever model, or combination of models, is selected, the university will then decide what English skills should be taught and what methodology should be used. This seminar drew attention to three kinds of English teaching:

1. English for General Purposes. Often uses general English text-books. The content is not related to university-level subjects.

2. English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP). The focus is on the skills most often needed for university study. Students from different disciplines receive the same content.

3. English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). Content is taken from the students' specialist discipline and takes account of what specific skills they will need to develop to be successful in their course. This requires English teachers to gain an understanding of the terminology and discourse of the specialist subject (eg chemistry or marketing), and will benefit from collaboration between English teachers and subject teachers.

Seminar participants were clear that English support in EMHE contexts needed to be English for Academic Purposes (EAP – models 2 and 3 in the paragraph above), and that English for general purposes would be of less value. The most effective support for EMHE students will be model 3 above – ESAP.

Support for English teachers in EMHE contexts. The reality is that most English teachers around the world use a EGP approach, and have little or no experience of EAP. This may even be the case in most universities. This is not surprising as before the growth of EMI, there was little need for EAP teaching in non-Anglophone countries, with the exception of teaching students who were going to study overseas in UK, Australia, USA etc.

So teachers in EMHE contexts will often need to reorient their practice from EGP to EAP to deal with EMHE students. The symposium included the Chair and an inspector from BALEAP (www.baleap.org), a global forum of EAP professionals, which accredits universities and individual teachers, publishes the Journal of English for Academic Purposes, and hosts a regular conference and other events including a forthcoming collaboration with Liverpool-Xi'an Jiaotong University Suzhou. The accreditation system for universities looks at institutional context, course management, course design, teaching & learning, and assessment, evaluation & progression. BALEAP has also developed a teacher competency framework for EAP (https://www.baleap.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/teap-competency-framework.pdf). The Chair of the BALEAP accreditation scheme (BAS) highlighted that the good EAP teacher shows awareness of the destination of students, their intended disciplines and what is required of them on their subject courses. This reinforced the message that the growth of EMHE increases the need for training and professional development for English teachers in universities. The best

development experiences for teachers will equip them to conduct needs analyses of their students, and then design appropriate activities, and would include classroom observation.

Support for EMHE content teachers - teacher competences.

The presence of L2 students in a university EMHE setting sets a new challenge for university teachers. The students may perform less effectively in their listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks because of their limited English proficiency. University content teachers who care about individual students will need to be able to identify students who are having these linguistic difficulties, so that the teachers can take action themselves or refer the problem to language specialists.

However, this does require a commitment on the part of the subject teachers to take some responsibility for the learning of individual students. And here is a fundamental question that the symposium panel addressed: **to what extent is the university teacher required to have pedagogical skills**? We noted that in many countries school systems require teachers to be trained and qualified in pedagogy, whereas universities have no such requirement (or a much less onerous requirement). This is partly due to the varied responsibilities of university teachers, where, especially in the more prestigious universities, faculty staff might see research as a more central part of their job and often more prestigious. In designing development courses for content teachers in EMHE, we would need to ask in each context, whether the desired outcome is merely an improvement in English proficiency in specific skill areas, or on the other hand whether one explicit development outcome is to develop pedagogical skills in order to be able to diagnose and possibly treat language-related learning issues in their students.

The speakers from China agreed that training for EMI teachers would include pedagogical skills. The training at Nankai University includes the promotion of in-class interaction and the improvement of "EMI methodology", and its Centre for Faculty Development focuses on teaching methods, for example.

The symposium highlighted the necessity of educational systems and institutions having a shared understanding of teacher competencies and standards. In the UK AdvanceHE (previously HEA – the Higher Education Academy) has developed the UK Professional Framework Standards (UKPFS) to improve teaching and learning in universities. 125,000 university staff in 90 countries have had their individual teaching practice recognised through a Fellowship scheme based on the PFS. The framework has 3 dimensions, as seen below.

The dimensions of the UK Professional Framework Standards (for university teachers)

Areas of Activity

- Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study

- Teach and/or support learning

- Assess and give feedback to learners

- Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance

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- Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practice

Core Knowledge

- The subject material

- Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme

- How students learn, both generally and within their subject/ disciplinary area(s)

- The use and value of appropriate learning technologies

- Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching

- The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching

Professional Values

- Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities

- Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners

- Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development

- Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice

As well as improved pedagogical skills, EMHE content teachers will in many cases benefit from improved English language proficiency. This will make their teaching more efficient, and less stressful, thus improving workload. This language training for university content teachers should follow the same principles as the English training for students. It should be English for specific academic purposes based on an analysis of the needs of the individual or group of teachers, and the local context in which they are operating.

The impact of the move to online teaching and learning. The year 2020 has posed particular challenges globally due to the COVID pandemic and its consequences. The symposium addressed this, with a presentation that presented COVID-19 as the catalyst that has helped prepare the HE world globally for the future by speeding up digitalisation of teaching and learning significantly. While online learning might open up opportunities for some students, others will be disadvantaged by less access to classmates and lecturers and to on-site facilities like libraries. There are also issues of time zone and technology which will effect some more than others. Providers have had to develop new online curricula so quickly that trade-offs have to be made with the quality assurance procedures applicable in normal times, which means that

a greater degree of risk has had to be accepted initially and balanced with a mitigation of the risks over time. Student assessment was seen to be a particularly difficult issue. If the delivery mode is completely different, why should assessment be the same as before? University managers and staff need to look for new assessment methods to test learning outcomes, and these might be different for different students. Differentiated assessment involves teachers considering different types of assessment strategies and ways students can demonstrate their understanding to cater for different learning needs, interests and abilities.

Collaboration. Once again, as in the first 2 symposia, collaboration was a recurring theme. There is clearly opportunity for international sharing of good (and bad) practice in university English teaching for staff and students, and in teacher development. The key collaboration issue that arose in many contexts was the need for content teachers and language specialists to work together in EMHE contexts for the benefit of their students.

Overview of the presentations

All presentation slides and speaker biographies can be seen here

1. Du Yujin. Nankai University. EMI curriculum construction supported by Teacher Development Centre: A case study of Nankai University." The driver for EMHE is the recruitment of overseas students. Thus the number of EMI courses has increased substantially over the last five years. The courses offered to EMHE faculty focus on pedagogical issues including class interaction and student assessment. As well as offering new technical pedagogical approaches, the development activities are also designed to nurture faculty, to aid motivation, and relieve the burden of teaching in another language. Slides from the presentation are available here

2. Gene Thomson. Rikkyo University, Japan. "Preparing students for EMI study: a case-study from the Global Business Department". A Bilingual Business Leader programme has been established to prepare for the department where 70% of specialist courses are taught in English in the upper years. A preparatory year of EAP-based English teaching is followed by a year where content is introduced gradually. EAP courses also run alongside business courses, with collaboration between content and language specialists, leading to the same texts being used for both classes. A notable element of the programme is the use of senior students to act as a resource for both EAP teachers and students. Gene Thompson is the co-author of "Beyond the threshold: Exploring English language proficiency, linguistic challenges, and academic language skills of Japanese students in an English Medium Instruction programme" in Language Teaching Research October 2020. Slides from the presentation are available here

3. Stuart Perrin. XJTLU Entrepreneur College (Taicang) Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. "Covid-19 And Rapid Digitalisation of Education – Quality Assurance Issues

and Solutions in a Sino-foreign Higher Education Institution". While Covid-19 has brought challenges, especially the need for a rapid shift to online teaching and learning, it has also brought the opportunity to re-think and re-design higher education to retain its relevance in the future. Online learning brings different benefits and disadvantages to different groups of students, and these should be taken into account especially in designing suitable assessment methods, which are unlikely to be the same as in traditional face-to-face teaching. See the section in the report above on the move to online teaching. Slides from the presentation are available here

4. Conrad Heyns. Goldsmiths, London University. "BALEAP Accreditation Scheme: BAS". BALEAP is the global forum for EAP professionals, focussed on professional development. The scheme to accredit universities looks at institutional context, the management and design of courses, teaching and learning, and assessment, evaluation, and progress (www.baleap.org/accreditation). Good EAP teaching requires a full understanding of the individual and student context, including knowing what students will be required to do in the specialist subject study, as well as the ability to align learning outcomes, course content, and assessment. Slides from the presentation are available here

5. Carole McDiarmid. Glasgow University. "Developing English for Academic Purposes courses and EAP teachers". Needs analysis is important in the development of EGAP and especially ESAP courses, and in Glasgow uses input from content lecturers, from observation of content classes, from document collection and also from the students themselves. EAP teachers are inducted and developed using classroom observations, group planning, and mentoring. The BALEAP TEAP fellowship scheme is based on compiling a portfolio of evidence related to EAP teacher competences including academic practices, student needs and learning, course delivery, programme development, and professional development, research and scholarship. Slides from the presentation are available here

6. Wu Ge. Jiangnan University. Mr Wu Ge contributed to the panel discussion with valuable insights from his perspective as Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Office, Jiangnan University. As Professor of Econometrics, Trade and Environment courses, and responsible for practical teaching management, he introduced the practice of Jiangnan University in curriculum construction, resource development and quality assurance, with a special focus on online education.

John Knagg FAcSS

Recent British Council publications on English medium education in HE

1. "*English in higher education – English medium. Part 1: literature review*". Edited by Nicola Galloway. British Council 2020.
   www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/L020_English_HE_lit_review_FINAL.pdf

2. "*Investigating policy and implementation of English-medium instruction in higher education institutes in China*". A review by the EMI Oxford Research Group in association with the British Council in China. Heath Rose, Jim McKinley, Xin Xu, Sihan Zhou. British Council with Oxford University Department of Education 2020.
   www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/investigating-policy-implementation-english-medium-instruction-higher-education-0

3. "*2019 International Symposium on EMI for Higher Education in the New Era: Selected Proceedings*". Edited by Deborah Bullock. British Council 2020. This publication brings together selected proceedings shared at the '2019 International Symposium on EMI for Higher Education in the New Era', Beijing.

   https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/2019-international-symposium-emi-higher-education-new-era-selected-proceedings

The 2020 International Symposia on Quality Assurance of English Medium Higher Education (EMHE)

Website: https://www.britishcouncil.cn/en/teach/oct20-sym

You may refer to the symposium report(s), speaker biographies, and speaking PPTs online.