

Reviewed by Samantha M. Curle (University of Bath, United Kingdom)

Kumiko Murata’s book provides a timely contribution to the rapidly expanding literature on English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education (HE). EMI is the use of English to teach and learn academic subjects in contexts where English is not the majority language of the population (Macaro et al, 2018). In such contexts, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is used; that is, the use of English to communicate between speakers with different first languages. This is relevant to an EMI context where lecturers and students may not share the same first language, and therefore rely on English to communicate.

This book is part of the Routledge Research in Language Education series which aims to provide a platform for scholars at any career stage to discuss key issues in Language Education. This series is recommended for a wide variety of stakeholders; students, teachers, teacher educators, teaching material designers, applied linguists, as well as policymakers. This edited volume is divided into three sections each containing five chapters between 12 and 24 pages long. The first section focuses on the Macro level (government, policy, and institute), the second a Micro level (classroom practices, lecturer and student voices), and the third a mixed bag: Macro (policy), Meso (curriculum design), and Micro levels (language testing). While lacking a truly global perspective (eight out of fifteen chapters focus on the
Japanese context), the volume as a whole makes exceedingly valuable contributions connecting EMI and ELF research.

Chapter 1 (Kumiko Murata) outlines the main aim of the volume as to further our understanding of the meaning of ELF research, particularly in terms of real-world implications in EMI HE contexts. As the volume largely focuses on contexts in Asia, the EMI situation in Japan is then described in detail. A comprehensive overview of each chapter is then provided.

In Chapter 2 Jennifer Jenkins explores universities’ degree of internationalisation by analysing websites, lecturer questionnaires, and student interviews. Findings presented largely from East Asian contexts showed a ‘relentless remedial discourse to non-native academic English’ (p. 27). Jenkins concludes by providing excellent suggestions for directions of future research.

Chapter 3 (Clarissa Menezes Jordão) focuses on the unique context of Brazil where a course was run for EMI university lecturers to promote more equalitarian practices around English: moving from EMI to EMD (English as a medium for discussion). It provides practical suggestions of how to move away from the ‘ideal’ concept of ‘native speaker’ by exercising agency and taking ownership of the English language, focusing more on intelligibility than an imagined ideal.

In Chapter 4 Maria Kuteeva reviews the wealth of research conducted on various topics of EMI in Sweden. This chapter is of particular relevance to ELF practitioners, researchers, and policymakers as it maps out successful examples of EMI language policy and practice. Finally, it valuably maps suggestions for future research onto Dafouz and Smit’s (2016) Dynamic Conceptual Framework, providing clear gaps in the research that need to be filled.

Chapter 5 (Joo-Kyung Park) analyses the current state of EMI in Korea from an ELF perspective. First covering the expansion of EMI in Korea, critical analysis is then given of how effective EMI is (or in fact, isn’t) in Korea. The use of code-switching is then discussed with an undertone of encouragement. Final conclusions support the education of HE lecturers to the diversification of English and support for acceptance of them as equally legitimate.

Chapter 6 (Masakazu Iino) is the first of eight chapters in this volume that explores the Japanese HE context. Iino sets the scene by providing a detailed summary of EMI policy change in Japan, touching on broad topics such as modernisation, economic policy, and HE competition. Critical discussion of university
admission tests and their ‘washback effect’ then ensues, advocating a model of teaching ‘usable’ English rather than promoting an American native English model.

Chapter 7 (Ute Smit), by far the longest (24 pages), switches to the European continent and explores EMI from an ELF perspective in Austria. Smit presents ‘thick’, longitudinal data collected from a specialist (tourism) college. Taking a discourse analytic as well as a quantification approach, in-class translanguaging (defined as the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system, p. 101) and code-switching (drawing on multilingual resources to shift the frame/focus of a current linguistic interaction, p. 101) practices are examined. By classifying these different types of ‘translanguaging’ episodes, Smit provides an excellent framework that future EMI-ELF researchers might adopt and explore in other similar contexts around the globe, thereby bridging the divide between these two concepts.

Bar Chapter 12, Chapters 8 to 15 all focus on Japan. In Chapter 8, Patrick Ng explores his student’s attitudes towards him as a ‘non-native’ teacher. He then provides an autoethnography of his own identity formation in the Japanese EMI context. His insights provide invaluable guidance for EMI practitioners on how to create a pedagogical space for an ELF-informed EMI curriculum.

Chapter 9 (Jaroslaw Kriukow and Nicola Galloway) makes a more methodological rather than theoretical contribution to this volume, lacking an explicit connection to ELF. It is rather a prime example of how to conduct narrative analysis. Three interviews with PhD students and their supervisors are analysed, examining their conceptualisations of EMI. Discussion focuses on the benefits and challenges facing these stakeholders when implementing EMI in Japan.

Chapter 10 (Mayu Konakahara, Kumiko Murata and Masakazu Iino) explores the attitudes of lecturers and students in the Japanese context towards EMI from an ELF perspective. Rich qualitative data from open-ended questionnaires showed that both students and lecturers are fairly positive towards, and support EMI. Differences were evident in that lecturers prioritised students mastering academic content, whereas students were more focused on improving their English language proficiency. Students also prioritised communicative effectiveness over ‘correctness’ or ‘native’-like accents. Implications of this study for EMI pedagogy and implementation include creating more diverse environments where students and staff are exposed to more varied Englishes, thereby also developing students’ global
perspectives. This chapter provides valued insight into how to enhance EMI curriculum design from an ELF perspective.

Chapter 11 (Yoko Nogami), also Japan-focused, explores ELF users’ attitudes and identity formation in communicating while taking EMI courses. This chapter contributes to this volume both in terms of content and methodology; demonstrating the use of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) questionnaire in a pragmatics study. This is a tool used to elicit speech acts through role play. Findings showed that depending on a participant’s lingua-cultural background, choice of expression differed.

In Chapter 12, Ying Wang explores the role of English in educational policy and practice in China. By analysing official documents, lecturer narratives, and international students’ classroom experiences, results revealed a university ethos of inclusiveness towards different Englishes. Suggestions for pedagogy include creating greater awareness across campus about English used in EMI contexts, as well as providing lecturers with language support as necessary.

Chapter 13 (Nobuyuki Hino) is one of the most unique chapters of the volume; offering a new theoretical conceptualisation combining ELF, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and EMI, suggesting rather: Content and ELF integrated learning (CELFIL). Hino explores this new pedagogy in the Japanese context, offering practical suggestions of curriculum design to integrate ELF in EMI courses: mainly advocating that EMI practitioners conduct action research and practice reflective teaching.

In Chapter 14, James D’Angelo continues the focus on Japan by exploring longitudinal data of qualitative surveys as filled out by graduate students from a university ‘Department of World Englishes’ over a 10-year period. Findings showed that the ‘native-speaker’ view of English is outdated and irrelevant in this context. However, as this university had a department named as such, these findings are somewhat expected and may be thrown into doubt with regard to how generalizable these are across Japan (refer back to Chapter 6). Nevertheless, this chapter makes an exceptional, practical contribution by providing in an appendix, the narrative inquiry questionnaire (i.e. research instrument) used in the study, which might be easily adopted by researchers in the field.

The final Japan-focused chapter is Chapter 15. Here, Masaki Oda describes the challenges faced by a department to transform an English as a Foreign
Language programme to an ELF programme. While the Editor (p. 7) exaggeratedly claims this chapter ‘may revolutionise ‘English’ language education and drastically change people’s awareness of ELF’, this is by far the shortest chapter (12 pages) of the volume, sparking very little revolution with its lack of in-depth discussion of the weighty issues under scrutiny. Nevertheless, some insight is certainly provided into the challenges and difficulties faced by institutions to create a more inclusive environment in relation to transition between general ELF courses to more content-orientated EMI courses.

The final chapter (Chapter 16 by Elana Shohamy) focuses on the Israeli context. A highly under-explored context, this chapter provides treasured insight into current definitions of ‘English language proficiency’, and how it is assessed and measured. Shohamy demonstrates the current absence in language assessment methods of taking into account the bi / multi-linguality of real-world language users, highlighting a persistent native-speaker norm. Of great value are the questions posed by Shohamy about the topic; a valuable resource of future research on this highly complex matter.

Overall, this volume, although Asia-centric, provides valuable insight into how ELF research may cross into and be explored in EMI contexts. This unique merging of two research fields is a key contribution to the advancement to further intertwine these fields of research, to expand scholarly discussion, conduct further research, and provide real-world examples of implications for pedagogy.

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References


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