

# English Language Education

## Volume 8

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Wenli Tsou • Shin-Mei Kao  
Editors

# English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education

Implementations and Classroom Practices  
in Taiwan

 Springer

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# Foreword

One of the most significant developments in higher education in modern times has been the rise of English as a medium of instruction (EMI), as a burgeoning literature on the topic demonstrates (Macaro, Seiter, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2017). The rapid growth in EMI has been documented and commented upon elsewhere and need not be elaborated here. The qualitative aspects of EMI—its outcomes and consequences and effective means of preparing for it and delivering and assessing it—are still in need of study, and that is the undertaking of this volume.

This book gathers selected papers from the 2016 Conference on EMI Practices in Higher Education held at the National Cheng Kung University in Tainan, Taiwan. Seen individually, each paper in this volume offers an investigation of an important area of EMI practice in Taiwan, for example, the kind of interactions found in the EMI classroom (Chap. 4), assessment practices in EMI (Chap. 11), or preparing university teachers for the challenges of teaching in an EMI setting (Chap. 10). Taken as a whole, these papers underscore several themes which resonate with the literature on EMI from other geographical contexts.

One such theme is the great ambivalence toward EMI which many participants feel. On one hand, both students and teachers are often very positive about the benefits which they hope it can deliver, including richer opportunities for internationalization and improvements in their English language proficiency. On the other hand, the costs of EMI, including its time-consuming nature and the threat that academic content is taught and learned less effectively, are also felt. A number of the chapters in this volume express the widespread perception that EMI is very much a double-edged sword in Taiwan, as elsewhere (e.g., Maricic, Pecorari, & Hommerberg, 2017).

Another resonance is the great difficulty of disambiguating participants' language skills from disciplinary knowledge and pedagogy (e.g., Dimova & Kling, in preparation). No certainty exists about the extent to which good pedagogical practices can compensate for a lecturer's insecurity in English or whether students' understanding (or lack thereof) of discipline-specific terminology is a matter of vocabulary or content knowledge. But perhaps a blurred boundary between these

domains, rather than being problematic, can be positive and prompt tertiary institutions to strive to excel in both.

A third theme which this book illustrates is that geography both does and does not matter. The details (such as participants' proficiency levels, the specifics of higher educational policy, and the nature of the pressures toward internationalization) make a difference to how EMI is carried out and experienced. This volume provides detail which readers who are less familiar with the Taiwanese context will find extremely useful. At the same time, in terms of the drivers for EMI, the constraints, and the participants' responses to it, Taiwan is seen to have much in common with the rest of the globe.

In other words, one of the lessons of this book is that with EMI, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. The more EMI changes the higher education landscape, the more we will continue to need to understand how best to implement it for the benefit of all participants. This volume makes a useful contribution to addressing that need.

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