CIHE Perspectives No. 10

Language of Instruction in Higher Education:

Na a P ce a d eR e fE

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CIHE Perspectives

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powerful language with a global presence through colonialism, is heavily invested in the French language as a symbol for national identity and unity, and is interested in seeing the success of Francophone universities worldwide.

All five countries have variously complicated relationships with English in the trajectory of their nation building efforts and in the development of their higher education institutions and systems. For each of the countries examined in this report, the approach taken is to provide information and analysis across the following three areas of consideration:

- Relevant historical and sociolinguistic context
- Language policy framework
- Role of English in higher education

Given the considerable differences across all five countries presented here, there is considerable variation across these three dimensions in terms of content and relevance. Examples of specific programs or institution are detailed as appropriate to provide further insight into the various national contexts and experiences.

Organizational Context

This research was undertaken on behalf of the International Association of Universities (IAU), supervised by the Manager of Higher Education and

("IAU - International Association of Universities," n.d.). English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is an aspect of relevance to the phenomenon of internationalization of higher education, as the global academic community has de facto used English as the lingua franca in academic and scientific publishing for decades (Bamgbose, 2003). The research present in this report is of interest to IAU in light of the fact that EMI has been a relatively recent development in many national contexts, but is spreading very rapidly and carrying with it deep implications. This report serves as a pilot study for

of knowledge production (Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012). One of the signature strategies of internationalization has been incorporating the use of English, and more recently, English as a medium of instruction (Bamgbose, 2003). This literature review aims to explore this facet of internationalization of higher education through, first, a consideration of language policies that are relevant to education and, secondly, an examination of how the English as a medium of instruction (EMI) phenomenon has grown around the world.

Language policies are often charged with high tension and may have wide-ranging consequences. Tsui and Tollefson (2003) go so far as to argue that language of instruction policies need to be constructed as sociopolitical processes on a broad scale, rather than playing out on an individual or institu-

ternational student market has grown substantially in recent years, with institutions wanting to make themselves accessible to international students; offering courses in English is helping to expand this market (Ota & Horiuchi, 2018). However, in more recent decades, resistance has grown internationally, as language death is occurring at unprecedented rates and people recognize the spread of English as having played a major role in that process (Coleman, 2006). Decisions about medium of instruction further create implications with respect to individuals' rights to their language and culture, thus raising ethical questions. On the other hand, higher education institutions are increasingly being run like corporations and there is a pursuit of high rankings, high levels of student mobility, and international relevance that propels forward the use of English for their survival and growth (Coleman, 2006).

In Europe, specifically, the main drivers for EMI have been the Bologna Process, culminating in the creation of the European Higher Education Area to improve degree recognition and student mobility among the participating European nations (Sin & Saunders, 2014), as well as the Erasmus program—Europe's signature student exchange program, created by the European Commission in 1987 (European Commission, n.d.). According to Coleman (2006), in countries with national languages that are rarely taught or spoken elsewhere, EMI has become the most common way to make bilateral exchange of mobile students possible. English further facilitates international research opportunities and collaborations, and successful partnerships lead to higher prestige and rankings. From the teaching perspective, students with English proficiency are generally considered to be more employable, which boosts university rankings, as well (Coleman, 2006). For these reasons, it is no wonder why the move toward English is occurring at unprecedented scale and speed. But there is real variation across national contexts. Individual countries are at different points of transitioning to EMI or debating its values and risks. The five countries profiled in this study reflect a range of such realities.

SOUTH AFRICA

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South Africa suffered from centuries of Western colonial rule and, as a result, colonial languages have remained the languages of instruction in higher education. On one hand, colonialism and the apartheid regime have left strong imprints on what languages are de facto socially dominant in South African society today. On the other hand, the government is also hyperconscious of neocolonialism and strives to help its historically marginalized communities regain power and dignity. Thus, the promotion of multilingualism has become a vehicle of these efforts. However, complexities and challenges remain in a context where progressive policies in favor of multilingualism, practical realities at universities impacted by a history of oppression, and the opportunities and imperatives of modern-day glo-

African War, also known as the Boer War, that ended ended in 1902, when people began to identify it with local culture and values. It became recognized as an official language in 1925, over a hundred years after its original emergence. Afrikaans thus replaced Dutch in the South African context and was on par with English (Mesthrie, 2002).

The second significant wave of settlers was the

heavily in practice on student mobility in Europe, is putting these bilingual institutions in a precarious trilingualization process in which English is also taking a strong role.

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Hernandez-Nanclares and Jimenez-Munoz (2017) conducted an outcome-based comparative research project at the University of Oviedo over a two-year period, in a course called “World Economics.” The University of Oviedo offered bilingual tracks in the Department of Business Administration, Economics, Accountancy and Finance beginning in 2010 and for this research, only first-year students were recruited. A hundred and seventy-two students were taking the class in English compared with 482 Spanish-taught students.

While the eventual result of content learning did not differ tremendously and the English-taught students even outperformed the other group overall, the start of the program was considerably more challenging for the English-taught students. On average, students overestimated their English level both before and after the course. The difficulty and complexity of English-medium instruction (EMI) exceeded students’ expectations. However, the researchers were confident that both groups would graduate with similar competency and the English-taught students are projected to move closer to having English as an academic asset instead of a hindrance to learning (Hernandez-Nanclares & Jimenez-Munoz, 2017).

While this research shows positive results, in the sense that using English does not necessarily impede learning for Spanish-speaking students, it is important to keeto stu[illegible]

na's strategy of excellence states: "[UB] promotes knowledge and use of international languages" for a variety of purposes (Universitat de Barcelona, 2009). The website does not provide a definition for what qualifies as an international language but it seems that the University of Barcelona is very conscious of the wording that promotes use of multilingualism instead of use of English, at least in the discourse of the policy. It is a stark contrast to the institutional examples provided in South Africa.

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Spain is not typically known as a multilingual country because of the strong political dominance of the national language, Castilian, or Spanish. However, the fierce promotion of Catalan and Basque in their respective regions has brought attention to the autonomous regions where the national language and regional language are leveling in power and usage. Significant sentiments and pride are tied to the use of regional languages, as they were historically oppressed. These regions evidence an acute awareness of the prominence of English globally, but are delicately balancing efforts to both protect localization and advance internationalization, as English is often seen as a threat to the regional language (Lasagabaster, 2017).

English proficiency in Spain is still among the lowest in the European context even though an Education Reform Act was passed in 1993 establishing the teaching of English in schools from age 8 (Lasagabaster, 2017). Ensuring that students and teachers acquire a level of English proficiency appropriate for effective teaching and learning is essential to incorporating EMI into an educational system. Spanish higher education operates under the larger umbrella of the v2017).

Spain is a developed country with a well-developed higher education system where the society and people can afford to protect their linguistic diversity for its own sake. This stands in contrast to the case in South Africa, where there are many other competing demands in need of resources and attention; in that context, development of local languages cannot be prioritized in the same way. However, the recent political tensions within Spain, namely, the Catalonia independence movement, are sure to impact lan-

up to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the monarch of the country, who holds extensive powers). Today, the Malay language is to be the sole medium of instruction in public universities and it serves as an essential tool for the cohesion and unity of the country (Commision of Law Revision, Malaysia, 2006).

Since the National Language Policy act, several

ethnic groups and 76% thought Malay strengthened university unity. While this study did not address the role of English directly, and is limited in scope, it demonstrates a strong commitment from the students to Malay's immense cultural and sociopolitical value, upholding its position at the institution, which may not have to be in complete opposition to introducing or using English academically.

Gill (2008) described that although 2005 was supposed to be the first year that students had their courses in English following PPSMI, which was a large-scale switch to English in very little time, blog posts and other public opinion pieces written by parents showed that implementation did not actually reflect the policy (Gill, 2008).

national unity, eventually took strong hold after some ethnic conflicts.

As Bahasa Malay settled in to be the dominant language in education, globalization of the business sector created incentives for English to be of high utility and importance again. Sentiments towards English have changed from resenting it as a colonial tongue to appreciating it as a skill that increases employability and mobility. On the policy level, EMI is being embraced and promoted. However, in implementation, resources are still lacking to make it a reality at the institutional level. Furthermore, social class differences determine who has access to English language learning opportunities, which in turn has implications for being better prepared for success in higher education programs that incorporate EMI. As such, this presents a threat to equity.

Overall, Bahasa Malay as the national language or language of instruction does not appear to be overly threatened by English at this moment in time. The bigger concern is how to effectively incorporate English in ways that would boost Malaysian higher education on the international stage.

requirement or responsibility of public education. Foreign language education occupies an insignificant space in the curriculum. Therefore, private English as a Second Language (ESL) courses are only accessible to those of a higher social class who can afford them. Given the limited reach of English language proficiency in the country, the acquisition of English elevates the employability or international mobility of those who speak it, further privileging social elites in the country. The stratification of social classes is reinforced through the lack of English for those who can only afford public schooling (Massini-Cagliari, 2004).

La g age P lic F a e k

The dominance of Brazilian Portuguese guarantees that it is the language of higher education in Brazil. Although EMI has become increasingly common in Europe since the late 20th century, similar practices did not emerge in Brazil until a few decades later. The most comprehensive studies of EMI in Brazil are as recent as 2010 (Martinez, 2016). The policies relating to language reflect a divide within the education sector. Foreign language education is enforced starting in primary school, whereby students must study a foreign language from 5th grade on. However, it is up to the individual school to decide which foreign language to teach. The Brazilian Law of Education, on one hand, wrote that schools are free to choose the language of their foreign language education, but, on the other hand, explicitly encouraged the teaching of Spanish as an example (K. R. Finardi, 2016). More schools are moving toward teaching English, but it is still conceptualized as a foreign language instead of an international language (Massini-Cagliari, 2004). However, in higher education, the status of English is undoubtedly more elevated than any other foreign language. The government is more invested in the acquisition of an international language such as English, than a foreign language, but the discrepancies in policy between basic education and higher education create divergence instead of convergence (Finardi et al., 2016).

There is also a divide between public and private universities, as the student populations enrolled in these sectors come from very different backgrounds. Public universities have free tuition but only admit the top quarter of students. Therefore, the majority of students attends private universities. Finardi (2016) makes the case for difference in motivations between the two sectors: public universities are motivated to participate globally in academic communities and gain international recognition, whereas private universities are more interested in economic gain. And since there is no shortage of recruitment from among domestic students in Brazil, private universities are not as interested in recruiting globally. As such, private universities are not very engaged with the question of English language usage.

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The government of Brazil created the program of Science Without Borders in 2011 as a purposeful internationalization effort. Although first suspended in 2015 and definitely ended in 2017, this was a program that provided scholarships for Brazilian students of science and technology to study abroad. Outbound mobility increased because of this program but it became evident that students lacked the language skills to succeed in English-speaking contexts, which undermined the success of the program as a whole (K. R. Finardi, 2016). As a response to this problem, almost exactly a year later in December 2012, the government launched the program English Without Borders to aid the development of English proficiency. Specific actions include private English lessons for university staff, professors, and students; online English courses; and access to a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) proficiency test, all free of charge (Finardi, 2016). English appears to be at the center of internationalization efforts in Brazil, which is boosting outbound possibilities for students, increasing their numbers and success. Class issues continue to be a problem as mentioned above, however. These dynamics prevent the system from generating large numbers of students who are proficient enough in English to make more widespread EMI in higher education feasible. On the other hand, Finardi (2016) also concluded that both EMI programs in Brazil and Portuguese language education worldwide need to grow in order

to boost the inbound mobility of international students to Brazil.

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Brazil has fully embraced Brazilian Portuguese as its national language and many Brazilians think of their country as deeply monolingual. This attitude has discouraged the recognition of indigenous languages in the country, and undermined adequate acquisition of Spanish or the acquisition of English as an international language. Learning English is seen as an extra-curricular activity, accessible only to those with financial resources, which is similar to the class issues evidenced in Malaysia.

In general, higher education in Brazil is in its infancy stage in terms of incorporating English, but the uptake of English is growing quickly (Martinez, 2016). It is important that the government identify the problem at its roots and undertake reform with the entire system (including basic education) in mind, instead of attending only to problems at the surface. Facilitating mobility without the tools to succeed will not yield fruitful results. Programs like Science Without Borders and English Without Borders are pioneers that have exposed some major problems, on the basis of which the government has begun to grapple with the complexity of internationalization in important ways. Recognizing a multilingual reality might help create a discussion on access and increase the population's openness toward the presence of more languages and cultures.

FRANCE

Rele a Hi ical a d S ci li g i ic C e

Historically, there have been multiple languages and dialects in the country of France and influence by other tongues of neighboring countries. As early as 1790, the need for a unified language became an important agenda emerging through the French Revolution. The patois, variants of French, and other languages with presence were eradicated because "a language of the free people must be one and the same for all" (Bell, 1995, p. 1405). Nationalism and the cultural fact of language became inseparable concepts. Language was seen as the "sign of full assimilation into a community created based on political will" (Bell, 1995, p. 1406). This ideology of nationalism carried on to influence many other nationalist movements that have focused on the identity of speakers rather than on questions of geography or citizenship. It is no wonder that the colonies of

[illegible] cause they were considered by the French government to be French.

sensitive, given its history as a colonial language. Much of the research involving French as a language of instruction discusses its role in the context of other, postcolonial French-speaking countries. Thirdly, the fierce monolingual ideology of French nationalism has also minimized the presence of other languages in the French education system. Higher education is among the first sectors to feel the wave of change. Lastly, the researcher does not have the capacity to conduct research in the French language to uncover literature and additional sources of information written in French to understand a broader perspective. Hopefully, the impulse of internationalization and the ongoing dynamics of immigration will inspire more research into the reality of linguistic diversity in France.

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France has historically occupied a significant political space on the international stage and has left long-lasting impacts through colonialism in many regions of the world. In addition, the ideology of French nationalism places special focus on the role of the French language, thus creating a very strong tie between language and identity. The existence of the Académie française is also evidence that the French language,nguaewU

First, they are former colonies, which is a major reason for their current state of economic development. Local languages could be pushed to the periphery if the presence of English is further elevated, with all of the benefits it brings. In South Africa and Malaysia, English is not a brand new factor. In fact, the populations in these countries may have known English more as the norm than other languages in use in the society. The struggle lies in whether it is a good idea for the system as a whole to accept the potential traumatic baggage that comes with a colonial language, while recognizing that the colonial language offers linguistic advantage in the world today. Figuring out how to leverage the benefits of the colonial language, while not sacrificing processes focused on indigenizing and reclaiming a culture and a social order that was lost, is complex and politically fraught. Furthermore, whether it is possible for change to happen at all within a structure where English is the status quo is a key question.

Secondly, developing countries are faced with a higher level of social inequality. Especially in cases like Brazil and Malaysia, where public foreign language education is less than adequate, the wealthy can afford English lessons and succeed in university or the job market. Social inequality is thus perpetuated. The interaction between class and race is magnified in South Africa, given an apartheid history and differing language skills between races.

There are no simple solutions to any of these obstacles. Furthermore, the incorporation of EMI always needs to be reviewed with a critical eye for its potentially long-lasting impacts on the higher education and knowledge system. Each national context comes with a unique set of historical and societal factors that can influence stakeholders within the system differently. At the same time, there is still value in global comparative research on this topic to

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