

# Cross-fertilisation, not bifurcation, of EMI and EAP

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*The article responds to Wingate and Hakim's paper, where they criticise English Medium Instruction (EMI) research for not drawing on research and practices from EAP. We concur that this cross-fertilisation of knowledge is beneficial for both fields but emphasise the breadth of the current EMI research agenda, which explores several issues beyond English language and academic preparedness. We also counter their claims of a lack of awareness by highlighting several examples of knowledge exchange, much of which has been driven by EMI scholars working within EAP contexts, and vice versa. Finally, we urge caution in recommendations to uncritically adopt EAP practices from Anglophone university settings into EMI settings, due to the complexities associated with EMI growth and provision, where the challenges raised are not necessarily identical. Overall, we agree with the authors that EAP and EMI have much to gain from each other in their shared endeavours and welcome their calls for future research collaboration.*

**Key words:** English medium instruction, EAP, English language, higher education

## Introduction

In their article's title, [Wingate and Hakim \(2022\)](#) refer to moving beyond 'infancy' and towards a cross-fertilisation between English Medium Instruction (EMI) and EAP scholarship, which immediately captured our attention as a position that closely aligned with our own. We share a joint agenda to encourage a cross-fertilisation between EMI and EAP to ensure that EMI policy implementation is informed by EAP scholarship, and vice versa. This was one of our main goals in our article that discussed the impact of growing EMI provision on the ELT practitioner, where we specifically call for consultation with ELT specialists, many of whom come from a rich experience of teaching EAP. We agree with Wingate and Hakim that EMI and EAP are 'close relatives' in terms of the research on student support, collaboration and teacher education. We welcome this opportunity to expand on this joint agenda but also to clarify some points

## Importance of EAP scholarship for EMI research

raised in the article such as the questioning over whether EMI is at a 'level of infancy' with regard to research into language-related support, teacher education and fostering collaboration between EMI and ELT practitioners, as well as the amount of EAP scholarship utilised by EMI researchers. We also welcome the opportunity to delve deeper into several issues touched on by Wingate and Hakim.

In our article, and elsewhere, we highlight the value of EAP scholarship; thus, we found it worrying that in response to our own article Wingate and Hakim are critical of the growing community of EMI scholars, who they criticise for not drawing on research and practices from EAP. They refer to a 'lack of knowledge exchange between the two domains, as evidenced in the relative absence of EAP sources in the reference lists of EMI publications, and vice versa'. However, this perspective stands in contradiction to seminal work at the junction of EMI and language teaching, which was historically conducted by EAP instructors working in EMI contexts. See, for example, the body of work by Stephen Evans in post-handover Hong Kong, including his paper, 'Why EAP is Necessary' (Evans and Green 2007). The connections between EAP and EMI are also strongly evident in research today, such as a grant call dedicated to EMI research by British Council Turkey in 2020, where representation from BALEAP was sought in decision-making. We would argue against the assertion that EMI researchers are attempting to 'reinvent the wheel' with regard to support for teachers and students in EMI contexts. Several EMI researchers do draw on 'research findings, principles and practices' from EAP. Such findings are certainly 'applicable to EMI' as Wingate and Hakim rightly point out.

EMI scholars such as ourselves, who are also former EAP instructors, aim to publish in EAP journals (see Galloway and Ruegg 2020; Kamasak, Sahan, and Rose 2021) and engage with the wider community via EAP conference presentations (see BALEAP 2021 recordings for a talk by Galloway as one example). We have also recommended EAP scholars to The Department for International Trade and The British Council organised events on EMI. We currently liaise with EAP professional organisations (e.g. BALEAP) as key advisories on our EMI research projects, and collaboratively apply for research funding with EAP scholars (Galloway is currently developing a MOOC for EMI and EAP teacher training in Indonesia with several EAP scholars), to ensure our work in this field is indeed informed by EAP scholarship. In short, our very identity as EMI researchers (like many others within the EMI community) is so wedded to our identities as language teachers that we find it surprising that the authors claim there is a lack of 'knowledge exchange' between EMI and EAP researchers.

This being said, EMI research certainly entails much more than language support and language development, so we recognise that there may be large cohorts in the EMI community who do not draw on EAP scholarship. Much of EMI research in emerging contexts (i.e. in regions where teaching through English at the current scale is a new phenomenon) explores topics such as impact on content learning, educational outcomes, employability, internationalisation policy, drivers, student mobility, teacher identity, and interaction, for which EAP research may be of more peripheral importance.

EMI scholars also look at issues related to linguistic imperialism, educational inequality, and educational access.

It is for this reason that while we agree EMI and EAP are ‘close relatives’ *where academic English needs are of concern*, they can also be considered as ‘separate disciplines’ given the wider research agenda in the field of EMI. This is because many domains of EMI research, as outlined above, fall outside of the remit of language; that is, EMI is not in itself an applied linguistics field of study. While EMI may be predominantly researched by applied linguists, it is published in a range of journals such as *Higher Education*, *Journal of Education for Business*, and *Nurse Education*, highlighting that it is multi-disciplinary in nature (Macaro and Aizawa 2022), insofar as some EMI research might not focus on language issues at all. However, in terms of research exploring collaboration, teacher education and academic language support in EMI, we fully concur with Wingate and Hakim that a knowledge of EAP scholarship and approaches is of fundamental importance and we, too, would like to see more ‘knowledge exchange between the two domains’, something we are actively encouraging and reporting in our research projects on EMI.

### Importance of EMI scholarship for EAP research

We agree that our calls for more discipline-specific language ‘has a strong convergence with EAP’ and we call for more researchers to continue with this much needed research, particularly given that the expansion of EMI into new educational contexts continues to outpace empirical research. Critical of our use of the term ‘infancy’ when referring to how to address students’ academic and language-related challenges in EMI settings, we hope readers see that our original article focuses on the implications of EMI policy provision in emerging contexts, which are indeed in nascent stages. As an evolving field, it is also vital to not shut down opportunities to explore implications of EMI for EAP research.

In our original article, we drew on our own research that reveals varying (and often a lack of) discipline-specific support, and a lack of collaboration between ELT and content specialists, identified to be a major challenge to successful EMI policy implementation. We disagree that EMI researchers do not acknowledge that the benefits of discipline-specific instruction have been recognised in the field of EAP. We are in complete agreement that much can be learnt from the field of EAP, and we had hoped that our original article made clear that this branch of scholarship is fundamental to EMI policy implementation. We assumed it would be obvious that our call for consultation with ELT experts included EAP specialists who could draw on the wide range of EAP scholarship to which Wingate and Hakim refer.

We and other EMI scholars are further criticised for failing to acknowledge that discipline-specific approaches to academic literacy and collaboration between EAP specialists and content lecturers has been discussed in the EAP literature for years. While this may be true of certain papers that focus on *how* EMI policy is being implemented, we (and others) have consistently argued the importance of needs analysis research in EMI contexts, and it is concerning that scholars may not see the value of new research within the field of EMI to add to a body of

knowledge in EAP. As a growing global phenomenon, we welcome the fact that a new field of research has emerged, and see it as an opportunity to add to EAP scholarship, not replace it or replicate it. We certainly did not claim that the need for discipline-specific support or collaboration between teachers is a new insight, but rather the phenomenon of EMI has compounded academic challenges, and research in *this area* is at a stage of infancy. However, our reference to the nascency of a field should not be interpreted as disregarding important lessons that can be gleaned from *comparable* English medium contexts, and highly relevant EAP scholarship.

It is somewhat unhelpful to be dismissive of calls for discipline-specific support, teacher education and student support in EMI on the grounds that the same claims have been made elsewhere. Indeed, a large body of work has been conducted in Anglophone contexts, but this should not discourage EMI researchers from exploring such topics in newly emerging EMI contexts around the globe. We should welcome a growing evidence base to consolidate knowledge, nurture comparative studies, and encourage research. We concur with Wingate and Hakim that the ‘discipline of EAP has a decades-long tradition of theory-building, research and development of instructional approaches as well as a wealth of publications’ and that ‘EAP’s practice of discourse analysis as well as the examples of discipline-specific provision could potentially offer useful information for EMI policymakers and course designers’. However, collaboration, teacher education and student support do remain under-researched in emerging EMI contexts. The claim that EMI policymakers and course designers ‘may pay little attention to EAP practices or see them as irrelevant as a result of the clear distinction drawn between the two domains’ is not reflective in the EAP practices we have seen in our own EMI research, especially in Japan. Regardless of our current views on EMI research, it is nonetheless comforting that Wingate and Hakim’s article is calling for what we both seem to want to achieve; that is, a cross-fertilisation between EMI and EAP scholarship, rather than a unidirectional relationship.

## Defining EMI

In their examples of EAP scholarship, Wingate and Hakim refer to a body of work that has been conducted in rather different contexts to what we have termed *emerging* EMI contexts. These contexts include the UK, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Australia. While we certainly agree that ‘these examples can offer useful information for EMI policymakers and course designers’, we would nonetheless urge caution in adopting a view that encourages an Anglo-centric approach, where practices are uncritically adopted from higher education contexts that have long been English medium (i.e. the Anglosphere, including postcolonial contexts). Wingate and Hakim point out that EAP has ‘traditionally provided English language teaching for L2 students studying in Anglophone contexts or post-colonial regions where English has long been the medium of instruction’. The use of ‘traditional’ evokes synonyms such as ‘conventional’ or ‘usual’, which enforces a centre-periphery hierarchy that underpins notions that emerging contexts need to learn from approaches in Anglophone educational regions to improve their practices. The authors also suggest that a ‘distinction between the two domains has been drawn

by [Macaro \*et al.\*'s \(2018: 19\)](#) definition of EMI', yet there is no mention of EAP as a field of study in Macaro's definition. It would appear that the authors, not Macaro himself, take this definition to set 'EMI apart from EAP'. We agree that the distinction is not so 'clear cut', but we doubt that it was Macaro's intention to definitionally 'impede' the 'cross-fertilisation' of the two fields.

This confusion highlights the complexity of defining EMI, which we problematised in our original article. Our use of Macaro's definition aims to highlight that EMI does not refer to many of the contexts referred to by Wingate and Hakim above. These 'traditional' EAP contexts may not be entirely functionally comparable to EMI contexts. These contexts may differ vastly in terms of students' needs, backgrounds, proficiency, educational models, and educational policies (see [Richards and Pun 2021](#) for further elaboration on the complexities of categorising EMI for comparative research).

Challenging the notion of 'identical' challenges

We would also like to challenge Wingate and Hakim's claim that students in these contexts experience 'identical' challenges given that 'English language support is largely offered from outside the disciplines whilst subject lecturers take little responsibility for helping students with what they perceive as language problems'. We would argue against this claim for the following reasons. First, in emerging EMI contexts, EMI policy is strongly associated with top-down goals to improve English proficiency, so EMI subject lecturers have been shown to have a vested interest in language learning outcomes of their students. Second, several EMI programmes have no language entrance requirements or have admissions benchmarks as low as IELTS 4.5 ([Sahan \*et al.\* 2020](#)), unlike Anglophone universities where IELTS 6.5 is typically needed, and so students' language support needs may be very different. Third, EMI programmes have differing models of educational structures, such as the multilingual or bilingual programs, in contrast to Anglophone settings which tend to have pre- or in-sessional EAP to accompany monolingual pedagogies in university classrooms. Fourth, challenges surrounding the language competencies of EMI instructors is a much more noted issue in EMI compared to Anglophone contexts. Of course, some EMI settings may share several similarities to 'traditional' EAP settings, but overall it cannot be said that students in a majority of emerging EMI contexts experience identical challenges, nor that the exploration of challenges in these emerging contexts is not of value. The point we wish to make here is that contexts differ, students' challenges differ, and we disagree that 'ELT practitioners beginning to work in Anglophone universities face exactly the same challenges'. Yes, they may also find the transition from English language teaching to teaching EAP challenging, given that it 'requires additional knowledge and expertise' and even 'more knowledge' if they move into discipline-specific EAP. However, these contexts are 'not exactly the same'.

Collaborative, discipline-specific provision

EMI scholarship has numerous examples of successful discipline-specific collaborations (see the ample body of work from EMI colleagues such as Antzane Doiz and David Lasagabaster in the Basque Country, Joyce Kling and Slobodanka Dimova in Denmark, and Gene Thompson in Japan for just some examples). The authors are critical of [Lasagabaster \(2018: 412\)](#) for

claiming that ‘studies on collaborative work are still in their infancy’ and also that that ‘collaboration between language and content instructors is practically non-existent at tertiary level’ (ibid.: 402). Wingate and Hakim are critical of such calls for more collaboration, noting that it has been discussed in the field of EAP for a long time, yet observations that collaboration is lacking in contexts such as Spain should not be interpreted as a belief that general discussion *about* collaboration is lacking. While not all EMI papers on collaboration may cite ‘concrete proposals for the implementation of collaborative activities’ (e.g. [Dudley-Evans and St John 1998](#)) nor reports of successful implementation from the ‘traditional EAP settings’ they refer to, the EMI literature does indeed draw on these concepts (e.g. [Schmidt-Unterberger 2018](#)). In order to inform such curriculum design, we are in full agreement that ‘discipline-specific language and literacy instruction relies on the information that language specialists receive from discipline insiders and on consequent collaborative activities which turn this information into teaching and learning resources’. This was the very reason for our unified calls for increased collaboration.

Wingate and Hakim suggests that [Yuan’s \(2021: 4\)](#) claim that ‘EMI teacher education is still in its infancy’ demonstrates an ‘insufficient awareness of research and educational practices from beyond the boundaries of the EMI domain’. Wingate refers to her own work on how language specialists can help subject lecturers ‘integrate a focus on academic literacy development into their regular teaching and assessment practices’ and refers to the collaborative and curriculum-embedded approach in Australia. While we agree that much can be learnt from these exemplars of successful collaboration, and while we agree that subject lecturers may need to understand academic literacies, we feel it is more complicated in EMI settings where subject lecturers are often suddenly told to switch to English, where they may deal with classrooms of impoverished L2 abilities, and may draw on plurilingual pedagogies as standard practice. These complexities may be why, as Wingate and Hakim note, ‘[T]he education of the “EMI teacher” has received more attention in the EMI literature than that of the language teacher’.

Challenging an ‘unawareness’: our approaches to EAP/ESAP curriculum design (2007–2012)

Our commitment to cross-fertilisation of EAP and EMI is not only an academic endeavour, but also stems from our own professional experiences. These professional experiences may often be obscured in constrained forms of academic publishing, so we want to finish this paper with a transparent overview of our own experiences at the intersection of EMI and EAP. After working as EAP teachers for several years in Japan and Australia, our earliest interests in EMI stemmed from a period in the 2000s where we both were working as EAP instructors within one of Japan’s first bilingual business degree programs, which offered two-thirds of its elective courses through the medium of English. During this time, the EAP-informed methods espoused in Wingate and Hakim (e.g. genre approaches, increasing genre awareness, and collaboration with content specialists) were part and parcel of our everyday professional practices, which we elaborate on later. From 2007 to 2012 we drew on EAP scholarship to create a bespoke program inclusive of General EAP, Specialised EAP, and ESP programs to support students on Japan’s first

bilingual business program. Some of the features of this curriculum design process are outlined below:

- From the outset, our curriculum was designed in collaboration and consultation with content professors (i.e. ‘discipline insiders’) who discussed the types of linguistic tasks the students would be required to complete, such as writing business reports, executive summaries, reading business cases, and presenting business proposals.
- Analysis of the genres of these texts centred on exemplars (provided by the business professors), transformation of text exemplars into teaching/ learning materials. In this process we naturally drew on John’s (2008) notion of ‘genre awareness’, which entails recognition of a genre’s context, communicative purpose and the associated textual features. For example, through this process we trained ourselves on the key features of business reports, executive summaries, and marketing presentations.
- We organised learning around subject-specific, purposeful activities in much the same way as recommended in EAP literature such as [Dudley-Evans and St John 1998](#). For example, the main business textbook for one course was dissected into teachable units for intensive reading, student-centred activities and vocabulary-focused tasks. Exemplar business reports formed the basis of our academic writing lessons, which focused on key features of the genre.
- We were cognizant of the difficulty of discipline-specific vocabulary, so using corpus tools we analysed the business texts to extract frequently used disciplinary vocabulary that was not covered in high-frequency general word lists and academic word lists.
- We also met collaboratively with our EAP colleagues to examine how to move from generic teaching to the discipline- and genre-specific, collaborative approach. Our team of EAP teachers were highly experienced at teaching argumentative essays and intensive reading but needed to develop their knowledge to teach business reports, marketing presentations and business cases, thus heightening our own awareness of the target genres.
- Collaboration with business professors occurred throughout the curriculum design cycle, and feedback was collected each year from lecturers and students to tweak the curriculum. This collaboration was not typified by a relationship where EAP tutors worked ‘for rather than with subject specialists’ ([Hyland and Hamp-Lyons 2002](#): 3). The EAP instructors were colleagues within the same department, and the business lecturers regularly sought EAP experts’ advice on how to support students in their own teaching and learning.

We, thus, agree with Wingate and Hakim that ‘[g]enre-based models can provide ELT practitioners direct access to a teaching methodology that has been shown to be successful by empirical research’ and our overview of previous approaches to curriculum design is illustrative of this. The aim of calls for discipline-specific instruction is to highlight that these are also issues in emerging EMI contexts that need to be further researched, addressed, and—importantly—reported on. Wingate and Hakim claim that ‘Whilst genre approaches to both teacher education and student support have been widely recommended by EAP scholars and are being used in EAP settings around the world, they have, as far as we can see, not been

## Concluding thoughts

considered in much of the EMI literature'. We hope that our example here illuminates how we, as practitioners, and also as EMI researchers, do value approaches espoused within EAP scholarship, and make a call to our EAP/EMI scholars to report on such practices to increase visibility. Many of our fellow EMI researchers not only lobby the value of collaboration in their research but also work tirelessly from within EMI programs to forge discipline-specific and research-informed EAP curricula. In sum, research that reports on a lack or need for discipline-specific provision in EMI should not be interpreted as a lack of understanding of their established value on part of the authors, even if this is not always transparent in published papers.

We hope this counterpoint has shed light on the shared agenda of increasing synergies between the two fields. This discussion highlights the complexity surrounding EMI and we call for further research on how we can learn from established EAP approaches, cognizant of the similarities and differences across contexts. The EAP scholarship exemplified in Wingate and Hakim's article is invaluable and there is a wealth of further existing published findings to supplement this.

However, we re-iterate our statement of EMI research being in a state of infancy regarding how to confront students' academic and language-related challenges. While we fully acknowledge that EAP has long established that discipline-specific instruction is more beneficial for students, we disagree that there is lack of awareness of EAP scholarship amongst EMI researchers. Wingate and Hakim claim that this is a 'shared mutual lack of awareness' amongst EAP and EMI researchers but this may also be unfair to EAP scholars who have always worked and researched within EMI contexts. Wingate and Hakim themselves argue that '[t]o change university managers' mindsets and convince them to invest in discipline-specific EAP, strong evidence of the benefits of this approach must be gathered'. We concur, but think it is unhelpful to suggest that EMI scholars are attempting to re-invent the wheel and we would encourage further research in this area by scholars in both fields. The impact of our research for policy and practice cannot be achieved by drawing solely on research knowledge garnered from 'traditional EAP contexts', nor solely 'EMI research'. Our own attempt at 'joining forces' with EAP scholars in our own projects and our establishment of an online community of practice (<https://globalenglishes-emi.network/emi/>) to encourage collaboration between EAP practitioners and subject lecturers and researchers and practitioners is our attempt to bridge this gap.

Wingate and Hakim also refer to a lack of performance data, noting that 'Systematic accounts of enhanced student performance and positive perceptions by students and lecturers have not sufficiently been delivered by EAP'. We would agree that a stronger evidence base is needed but would argue that 'mutual awareness and cross-fertilisation of research and practices between EMI and EAP' is already happening. Calls for cross-fertilisation between the fields will not achieve this by being dismissive of calls for more research and change in EMI, nor will it be achieved via a lack of acknowledgement (whether intentional or not) of the important contributions of EAP. To do so may have the opposite effect of bifurcation of two fields of study that have much to gain from each other in their shared endeavours.

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