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English-medium instruction at a Chinese University: rhetoric and reality

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Abstract This article reports a case study of an undergraduate English-medium program at a major university in mainland China. The study critically examines the language ideology, language management, and language practices revolving around the focal program. The data sources included national and institutional policy documents related to English-medium instruction and interviews with both professors and students in the English-medium program and its parallel Chinese-medium program. Drawing upon Spolsky's language policy framework for "sensitizing concepts", qualitative analyses of the data revealed gaps between policy rhetoric and ground-level reality in the implementation of the focal program. Notably, institutional measures intended to enhance the quality of English-medium instruction were found to function as gate-keepers of access to English and potential benefits accruing from English proficiency. These findings add to our understanding of how medium-of-instruction policies in higher education are complicit in perpetuating and accentuating inequalities in Chinese society.

Keywords English as a foreign language · English-medium instruction · Language policy · Language ideology · Language practice · Language management · Medium of instruction

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Introduction

Deepening globalization has entrenched the hold of English as the world lingua franca in the last few decades (Graddol 2006; Van Parijs 2011). Against this backdrop, the recent intensifying internationalization and marketization of higher education worldwide (Doiz et al. in press) have seen English increasingly adopted as a medium of instruction for non-language subjects at universities in traditionally English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) countries around the globe (Björkman 2011; Wilkinson 2005). As a result, Brumfit (2004) argued that "for the first time in recorded history *all* the known world has a shared second language of advanced education" (p. 166, italics in original). While his characterization of English as a universal *second* language is debatable, the general import of Brumfit's argument is borne out by the spread of English-medium higher education programs in such diverse EFL countries as Japan (Tsuneyoshi 2005), South Korea (Park 2007), and Turkey (Sert 2008). In particular, English-medium instruction (EMI) has been gathering momentum in European countries (Wächter and Maiworm 2008), for example, Denmark (Jensen and Thøgersen 2011), Sweden (Björkman 2008), and the Netherlands (Wilkinson 2013).

Compared with many European countries, China is a newcomer to higher education EMI. The official promulgation of EMI started only a decade ago as one of the Ministry of Education's (2001) 12 key policy initiatives for improving the quality of undergraduate programs in Chinese universities. To ensure the implementation of the policy initiative at the ground level, the Ministry of Education has made the number of English-taught courses an important criterion for assessing institutions of higher learning (Hu and McKay 2012). Many universities have also provided various benefits and incentives to encourage their faculties to teach in English (Tong and Shi 2012). These national and institutional policies have led to a rapid growth of EMI in Chinese higher education. A survey (Wu et al. 2010) of 135 universities across mainland China revealed that 132 had run EMI courses/programs by 2006, with an average of 44 courses per university. The spread of EMI in mainland China, however, preceded empirical research on its feasibility and effectiveness. A comprehensive review (Zhu and Yu 2010) of existing research in China has revealed that although many theoretical discussions or descriptions of EMI program characteristics existed, there have been few empirical investigations into what actually transpires in the classroom or what effects EMI has on students' disciplinary and language learning in the Chinese context.

There are various driving forces behind the adoption of EMI in higher education around the world (Coleman 2006). This instructional approach is often viewed by national governments as an important strategy to gain access to cutting-edge knowledge and enhance national competitiveness in innovation and knowledge production (Hu 2007). EMI has also been promoted as a means of facilitating the internationalization of higher education to compete for students and/or academics and open up new sources of revenue (Wilkinson 2013). Furthermore, many universities have adopted EMI to enhance the employability of their graduates in the domestic and global markets (Björkman 2008; Pecorari et al. 2011). Still another driving force is the crucial role this form of language provision can play in raising

the prestige/rankings of universities (Piller and Cho 2013; Unterberger 2012). Despite the extensive literature on the driving forces behind EMI, not many studies have focused on the ground-level (mis)alignment between EMI as policy and the actual experiences of key stakeholders, namely students and faculty.

Much of existing international research has focused on how effective EMI is in improving students' English proficiency, whether students' and teachers' language command is adequate for learning and teaching through English, and what attitudes they hold toward EMI. Positive effects on language learning were reported in several studies (e.g., Aguilar and Rodríguez 2012; Park 2007; Tatzl 2011; Wilkinson 2005). The beneficial effects were attributable to a favorable language learning environment created by EMI, for example, extensive exposure to English in naturalistic settings (Pecorari et al. 2011; Tatzl 2011), meaningful use of the vehicular language for genuine communication (Park 2007), affordances of focus-on-form (Costa 2012; Hynninen 2012), and more varied opportunities for student interaction than available in first language (L1) classrooms (Smit 2010). Other studies reported that the great majority of students and teachers involved in EMI rated their proficiency in English as adequate for EMI (Unterberger 2012; Wilkinson 2005). Such findings suggested that EMI potentially might have little negative effect on disciplinary learning. Indeed, several studies (e.g., Aguilar and Rodríguez 2012; Park 2007) even reported positive effects on content learning. The lack of negative effects on content learning was probably due to opportunities for meaning negotiation and the use of various pragmatic strategies in EMI (Björkman 2008, 2010; Dafouz Milne et al. 2007). Finally, many studies (e.g., Aguilar and Rodríguez 2012; Costa and Coleman 2013; Doiz et al. in press; Jensen and Thøgersen 2011; Pecorari et al. 2011; Tong and Shi 2012) documented overwhelmingly positive faculty and/or student attitudes toward EMI.

In contrast to the affirming findings reviewed above, other investigations and some afore-mentioned studies have also reported various problems with EMI. One recurrent issue is the self-perceived and/or other-rated insufficient command of English by teachers (Doiz et al. in press; Jensen and Thøgersen 2011; Wilkinson 2013). The perceived lack of facility with English was found to result in much pressure on teachers (Tange 2012), a preference for L1-medium instruction (Sert 2008), reduced competence to interact, elaborate and improvise (Vinke et al. 1998; Sert 2008), impoverished classroom discourse (Pecorari et al. 2011; Tange 2012), and extra time needed for preparation/instruction when compared with L1-medium teaching (Thøgersen and Airey 2011; Vinke et al. 1998). It also compelled teachers to adopt such accommodation strategies as relying more on contextual support (Björkman 2008; Wilkinson 2005), taking a transmissive approach (Webb 2002), speaking more slowly (Vinke et al. 1998), and simplifying disciplinary content (Beckett and Li 2012). Similarly, students' inadequate English proficiency was identified as a major impediment to successful EMI in numerous studies (e.g., Beckett and Li 2012; Doiz et al. 2013; Tong and Shi 2012; Webb 2002). Because of their insufficient productive command of English, students were found to participate less in classroom interaction (Webb 2002), have serious difficulty understanding lectures (Hellekjær 2010; Tsuneyoshi 2005) or using English to communicate disciplinary content (Airey 2010, 2011), take more time to complete their courses

(Tsuneyoshi 2005), and show resistance to EMI (Doiz et al. 2013; Tange 2012). Students were also observed to adopt various strategies to cope with the linguistic demands of EMI, for example, capitalizing on pragmatic strategies (Björkman 2010), asking/answering fewer questions (Airey 2011), and codeswitching when there were lexical gaps (Airey and Linder 2006). Although such accommodation strategies can facilitate communication, teaching/learning through an insufficiently mastered language may have a detrimental effect on disciplinary learning. Such a detrimental effect was indeed reported in several studies (Beckett and Li 2012; Hellekjær 2010; Webb 2002).

The preceding literature review has revealed that the overwhelming bulk of EMI research is based in Europe and that little research has examined EMI in the Chinese context. Currently, it is not clear to what extent the Europe-based findings, including the mixed/contradictory ones about the effectiveness of EMI in disciplinary and language learning, can be extrapolated to non-European contexts. Given the myriad sociocultural, linguistic, and educational differences between China and Europe, it is important to research EMI in the Chinese context to find out how universal the existing findings are. Therefore, the present case study set out to examine how students and faculty engaged with EMI in a Business Administration program at a mainland Chinese university (hereafter "the focal program/university"). Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the institutionally and personally envisioned goals of EMI in the focal program?
2. What policy measures were deployed to manage EMI in the focal program? How did our participants perceive themselves to be affected by these policy measures?
3. What teaching/learning strategies were adopted in the focal program? Why did the participants adopt these strategies? How did they view these strategies in relation to their disciplinary and language learning?

Methodology

Research design

Given our objective of verifying the applicability of Europe-based findings about EMI in a new educational context and the focus of our research questions on the "what," "how," and "why" of a specific educational program, we found the case study an appropriate research strategy. As Yin (2003) points out, the case study has a prominent place in evaluation research that examines program implementation and related issues in some real-life context, and is "the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed" (p. 1). It is especially well-equipped to study a complex phenomenon (in our case, EMI as language policy) in its multi-layered contextual conditions (i.e., university, local, and national contexts for EMI implementation). Because of its unique strength in dealing with a variety of evidence (Yin 2003), the case study method allowed us to draw on multiple sources

of data (i.e., national and institutional policy texts, individual interviews, and focus groups) to develop an in-depth and holistic understanding of the recontextualization of EMI as an innovative form of language provision at a specific Chinese university. Furthermore, the case study method enabled us to benefit, in the words of Yin (2003, p. 14), "from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis." The theoretical propositions that guided our inquiry came from a language policy framework advanced by Spolsky (2004, 2009).

Spolsky conceptualizes language policy as being constituted by language beliefs, language management, and language practices. Language beliefs or ideology consists of deeply held attitudes, assumptions, ideas, and values regarding what language practices are appropriate in a community or a language use context. Language management refers to the deliberate and explicit effort made by someone or a specific social institution invested with authority over some individuals to modify or regulate the latter's language practices and/or language beliefs. Language practices are observable, regular, and predictable language behaviors and choices. These three constitutive components of language policy interact with each other in complex and dynamic ways. Language beliefs derive from and motivate language practices (Spolsky 2004). While they underpin language management efforts, language beliefs proper can also be what a management policy aims to support or modify (Spolsky 2009). Meanwhile, language practices, shaped by various linguistic and non-linguistics forces, constitute the linguistic context and means of language management and are themselves the target of language management (Spolsky 2004, 2009). Furthermore, language management mechanisms, as part of ideological, political, economic and sociocultural agendas, can turn language beliefs into language practices. Spolsky's language policy framework guided our data collection and analysis by focusing our attention on the language ideology (i.e., Research Question 1), management (i.e., Research Question 2), and practices (i.e., Research Question 3) that recontextualized EMI in our focal program.

Research site

Our focal university was a major university in southwestern China. At the time of data collection (i.e., December 2011–February 2012), it had 27 colleges/departments and offered 32 undergraduate programs. The university enrolled 24,000 full-time students, two thirds of whom were undergraduate students and 360 were international students. There were over 1,000 faculty members, 10 % of whom held PhDs from overseas universities. As of 2011, EMI was offered by seven of the undergraduate programs in the disciplines of Accounting, Business Administration, Finance, Financial Management, Insurance, International Business, and International Economics and Trade. The focal program, which commenced in 2008 and specialized in Business Administration, was chosen because it was regarded by both the department and the university management as a successful EMI program. It had one class of around 40 students each year. There was a Chinese-medium (CMI) program parallel to the EMI program that was offered to three classes of students. Both the EMI and CMI students took college English in freshman and sophomore years. EMI started in sophomore year and continued through the first semester of

senior year. Table 1 summarizes the college English and specialization courses the EMI and CMI students took.

Participants

The participants in the study were five university teachers and ten students drawn from the focal EMI program and its parallel CMI program. Although the focus of the study was the EMI program, data were also collected from CMI teachers and students to discover what would be the focal program's unique features in respect of curriculum, pedagogy, challenges, and strategies. This information was essential to developing a contextualized understanding of the EMI program. The students were selected in such a way that there were male and female participants from both programs studying in sophomore and junior years, the period when the bulk of EMI was delivered. Table 2 presents background information about the students. The considerable demographic diversity of the student sample allowed us to explore diversity and commonality in their language ideologies, practices, and management in relation to EMI. The five teachers were selected because they staffed the EMI/CMI program and taught the student participants (see Table 3 for demographic information on the teachers). Data collected from them would provide perspectives complementary, or even contrastive, to those held by the students and, consequently, facilitate the development of a fuller multi-perspectival understanding of the focal program. An additional reason for selecting EMI-T1, EMI-T2, and CMI-T1 was that they held a higher degree from an Anglo-American university and had received EMI themselves.

Table 1 Summary of English language and specialization courses by program and year of study

EMI	CMI
Year 1	
College English (4 h/week)	College English (6 h/week)
English Listening (2 h/week)	All other courses taught in Chinese
English Speaking (2 h/week)	
All other courses taught in Chinese	
Year 2	
Public Speaking Skills in English (Semester 1; 2 h/week)	1 elective College English module (Semester 1; 2 h/week)
Business English Writing (Semester 2; 2 h/week)	1 elective College English module (Semester 2; 2 h/week)
2–3 specialization courses (2 h/week each) taught in English each semester	All specialization courses taught in Chinese
Remaining 5–6 specialization courses taught in Chinese each semester	
Year 3/4	
2–3 specialization courses (2 h/week each) taught in English each semester	All specialization courses taught in Chinese
Remaining 5–6 specialization courses taught in Chinese each semester	

Data collection and analysis

This study drew on both policy documents and interview data. To obtain data on policy statements, we collected national and institutional policy documents related to EMI and located relevant news reports published from January 2002 to December 2011 on the focal university's website. We collected the interview data by means of one-to-one interviews and with focus groups. Individual interviews were conducted with each of the professors and the four CMI students; two focus groups were conducted with the EMI sophomores and juniors, respectively. While the individual interviews allowed us to tap into the details of an individual's perspective, the focus groups were effective in capturing the breadth and depth of views because interactions among the focus group members could lead to issues and topics that may otherwise be left unexplored (Berg 2009). The individual interviews were semi-structured and guided by a set of questions concerning the participants' views, beliefs, and language practices related to EMI and its implementation and management in the focal program. The focus groups were also organized around a set of planned questions and topics (e.g., reasons for enrolling in the EMI program, perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program, and learning strategies in and outside EMI class). The participants were encouraged to talk to one another, ask questions, and respond to each other's views. The individual interviews on average lasted about half an hour. The two focus groups lasted 54 and 69 min, respectively. All the interviews and focus groups were conducted in Chinese, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim for qualitative analysis.

Table 2 Background information on student participants

Student	EMI program			Student	CMI program		
	Age	Gender	Year		Age	Gender	Year
EMI-S1	20–24	F	2	CMI-S1	20–24	F	2
EMI-S2	20–24	F	2	CMI-S2	20–24	F	2
EMI-S3	20–24	M	2	CMI-S3	20–24	F	2
EMI-S4	20–24	M	3	CMI-S4	20–24	M	3
EMI-S5	20–24	M	3				
EMI-S6	20–24	F	3				

Table 3 Background information on faculty participants

Faculty	Age	Gender	Program	Degree	Position	Overseas experience
EMI-T1	40–44	M	EMI	PhD	Associate professor	PhD in UK
EMI-T2	35–39	M	EMI	PhD	Associate professor	PhD in UK
CMI-T1	35–39	M	CMI	PhD	Associate professor	MBA in USA
CMI-T2	55–59	F	CMI	BA	Professor	Visiting prof. in Japan
CMI-T3	65–69	M	CMI	MA	Professor	

We analyzed the data inductively, allowing themes and categories to emerge from the data (Charmaz 2006). In the first phase of our data analysis, we read all documents and interview data repeatedly and categorized the data in terms of their engagement with language ideology, management, or practices. We identified themes within each of these three categories and possible relations among the themes. In the second phase, we focused our attention on the interconnections and interplay of the three broad categories. Throughout the process, we drew upon Spolsky's language policy framework for "sensitizing concepts" (Charmaz 2006), namely, theoretical notions that could help us identify themes in the data, explore complex interactions among these themes, and organize them to uncover important patterns. In the following section, we organize our findings and their interpretation in terms of these sensitizing concepts. As our data analyses did not reveal salient systematic differences in the identified themes between various groupings (i.e., teachers vs. students, CMI teachers vs. EMI teachers, CMI students vs. EMI students, EMI sophomores vs. EMI juniors), our presentation and discussion of findings focus mainly on the individual participants' perceptions of and experiences with EMI.

Findings and discussion

Language ideology related to EMI

In this section, we focus on answering our first research question: What were the institutionally and personally envisioned goals of EMI in our focal program? As Spolsky (2009) points out, the values and prestige associated with a language constitute the most significant ideological beliefs in language policy and management. Our analyses of the national/institutional policy documents and the interview data revealed that dominant institutional and personal beliefs accorded high values and prestige to the English language through associating it inexorably with such national/institutional and personal benefits as internationalization, career prospects, and access to educational opportunities in Anglophone countries. However, there were also reservations that some of the perceived benefits of English proficiency might be imagined and that even if other benefits were real, they were only available to a small elite.

To begin with, internationalization featured prominently in both the national and institutional policy documents as a driving force for EMI. As the first clarion call for EMI at Chinese universities, the Ministry of Education issued a directive in 2001, requiring that 5–10 % of undergraduate courses in institutions of higher learning across mainland China be taught in English or other foreign languages within a period of 3 years. The overarching rationale for this far-reaching requirement was that "education should be geared to the needs of modernization, the world and the future, economic globalization, and challenges brought about by technological revolution" (Ministry of Education 2001).[1] Ever since China opened up in the late

[1] All quotations from Chinese-language sources and the participants in this study are translated into English by the authors.

1970s, mastery of English has been increasingly promulgated as a cornerstone of China's modernization and development (Hu 2008). For example, in the national College English curriculum requirements issued by the Ministry of Education in 2007, English teaching and learning were promoted as an essential component of higher education so that developing students' communicative competence in English was viewed as a strategic move to meet the needs of China's economic development and international communication. At a national meeting on undergraduate education held in 2004, the then Minister of Education called for stepped-up efforts to reform English teaching and characterized such reform efforts as breakthrough points for a fundamental overhaul of higher education (Zhou 2004). Recommended as a breakthrough strategy, EMI was seen as a key reform initiative to develop a global perspective in Chinese students, enhance their command of English, and provide access to cutting-edge knowledge in the West. To enforce its implementation, the Ministry of Education (2004) stipulated EMI as a key assessment focus in curriculum development and reform for undergraduate education: Universities would be evaluated on a 4-grade scale of "Excellent" (offering 10 % or more courses through EMI) to "poor" (offering few or no EMI courses). In its guidelines issued for further improving undergraduate education, the Ministry of Education (2005) reiterated the requirement for universities to offer more and better EMI courses/programs.

In response to the ministerial policy, the focal university issued a regulatory document aimed at developing, implementing, and managing EMI courses across its programs in 2002 and another document aimed specifically at its graduate programs in 2005. Though not explicitly stated in the first document, the various deliberations generated by the policy move and found on the university's website revealed that the university management latched onto the goals set by the ministerial mandate, embraced the perceived link between English proficiency and international competiveness, and underscored internationalization as a leading motivation for introducing EMI at the focal university. This is evidenced by one of its goal statements that "promoting English-medium instruction is one of the university's fundamental strategies to produce international talents."[2] The 2005 document explicitly stated the institutionally envisioned goals of promoting EMI: "coping with challenges brought about by economic globalization and internationalization of postgraduate education, producing talents with an international competitive edge, and deepening postgraduate curricular reforms." Similarly, the objectives of the focal program spelt out in its official curriculum echoed the goals of EMI promulgated in the ministerial mandates:

> Business Administration (EMI Program) aims to train business management talents who can adapt to economic globalization. With a long history, rich experience, and a strong faculty, we offer a program comparable to international advanced programs.… Our graduates will be equipped with a global perspective and capable of working in enterprises requiring extensive English use; and outstanding ones will be provided with opportunities to study abroad.

[2] To safeguard the anonymity of the focal university, the source of this quotation is not referenced.

The top-down promoted ideology on the relationship of English proficiency to quality education, comparative advantages, and internationalization had apparently built considerable support among faculty and students. Two faculty (EMI-T1; CMI-T2) and six students (EMI-S2, EMI-S3, EMI-S4, EMI-S6, CMI-S2, and CMI-S3) explicitly pointed to the important roles of English or EMI in individual endeavors and institutional internationalization (e.g., providing an international perspective/vision, interfacing with the world, connecting to the international community in terms of knowledge and practices). For example, one professor (CMI-T2) believed that "promoting EMI is a good strategic decision to train international talents who can cope with economic globalization and work effectively both in and out of China." Similarly, one student (EMI-S4) was convinced that "English is a prerequisite for internationalization." Indeed, several students reported that they were attracted to the focal EMI program mainly by the "selling point" of internationalization. One student (EMI-S3), for example, recalled that the university prospectus promoted its EMI programs as a feature and a proof of their successful internationalization policy, which appealed to him and his parents.

In addition to internationalization, the participants perceived other benefits of competence in English. A benefit recurrently brought up in the interviews had to do with the perceived power of English proficiency to enhance social mobility and employment prospects for individuals. Five students (EMI-S1, EMI-S2, EMI-S3, EMI-S5, and CMI-S4) and one faculty member (EMI-T1) believed that EMI could bolster students' career prospects, particularly in international businesses and corporations. For example, EMI-S5 observed that "I think compared with its parallel CMI program, the EMI program will be more competitive [in the job market]." Likewise, EMI-T1 observed:

> Another thing is job opportunities. Graduates whose English is good tend to land jobs with higher starting salaries. Even for the same job, those with better English proficiency are likely to earn much more. Take our graduates for example. Most of them work at banks. Those who deal with international settlements usually earn more than those who deal with domestic settlements. The same is true of those working in other enterprises. For example, in businesses, graduates who can handle business negotiation and communication in English can surely earn more than those who can't.

Another frequently mentioned benefit of EMI for individuals concerned the importance of English proficiency for further education. Five students (EMI-S2, EMI-S4, EMI-S5, CMI-S1, and CMI-S4) explicitly recognized a facilitative role of EMI in students' access to educational opportunities in Anglophone countries. One student (EMI-S2), for example, noted that "many students in this program want to study abroad after graduation—that's why they chose the program in the first place."

Centering on internationalization and benefits accruing to English proficiency, such beliefs presented a predominantly positive ideological picture of English and EMI. However, there were also expressions of reservations. With regard to internationalization, a few students raised concerns about possible national/contextual differences in principles, practices, and products of business administration and their pedagogical

implications. One student (CMI-S4) pointed out that professors in the CMI program "can better tailor their courses to the Chinese context and thus make them more relevant to actual practices" because "after all, we are in China, and some management phenomena and cases are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and context." As for the enhancing of career prospects and access to educational opportunities in Anglophone countries, several students from both the EMI and the CMI program acknowledged that only a small number of privileged students would have the opportunity to work for transnational corporations or to study abroad. One professor (CMI-T1) and two students (EMI-S5, CMI-S1) in particular expressed strong reservations about the link between English and better career prospects. The professor explained that "our graduates, whether working at research institutions or in corporations, mostly use Chinese in their day-to-day work; consequently, those from the EMI program don't have a marked advantage in the job market."

In sum, the great majority of the participants in our study had unquestioned beliefs in the crucial roles of English in opening up higher education to internationalization, landing individuals prestigious jobs, and securing access to educational opportunities in Anglophone countries. This finding is reminiscent of previous Europe-based studies (e.g., Aguilar and Rodríguez 2012; Costa and Coleman 2013; Jensen and Thøgersen 2011) reporting that students and teachers had overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward EMI. It is also consistent with findings from previous studies (e.g., Airey 2011; Björkman 2010; Tsuneyoshi 2005) that documented widespread beliefs associating English proficiency and EMI with internationalization, mobility, employability, and education opportunities. The language beliefs underlying the national/institutional policy guidelines and held by individual participants pointed to English as a language of access and a most valorized form of symbolic capital in China (Hu 2009). Even though a few participants in our study did express reservations about some widely perceived benefits of EMI, such reservations by their very nature did not undermine but contributed to the valorization of English by linking the language with career and educational opportunities enjoyed by the privileged few. Viewed through the lenses of Spolsky's language policy framework, the prevalent language beliefs performed the ideological task of linking English with development, be it national, institutional or individual, motivating efforts to adopt new language practices, and providing a rationale for EMI as a language management mechanism.

Language management and EMI

In this section we address the research questions regarding the policy measures deployed to support and manage EMI at the focal university and the perceived effects of these policy measures on the participants. To manage its EMI programs, the focal university resorted to a range of mechanisms, including explicit guidelines on the extent of English use (in class, textbooks, and exams), evaluation criteria, minimum qualification requirements for faculty members, incentives for EMI, among others. For the sake of space constraints, our focus here is predominantly on

the recruitment and support mechanisms that were instituted for students and faculty in the focal program.

First, out of concern that students without strong English proficiency would have difficulty coping with the language demands of EMI, the focal university stipulated that to be eligible for the focal program, students must have scored a minimum of 120 out of a total of 150 in the National Matriculation English Test. Although it can be justified on the ground that EMI requires an elaborate communicative competence in English and that only students with good English proficiency can take advantage of EMI, it is not difficult to see that this admission requirement would also serve, wittingly or unwittingly, the ideological goal of elitism and perform the ideological task of reinforcing the status of English as a gatekeeper. Added to this was another admission requirement that students in the EMI program pay twice the tuition of their counterparts in the CMI program, supposedly to cover the extra university expenditure on the EMI program. While it appeared to abide by the principle of distributive justice or "proportionality between cost and benefit" (Van Parijs 2011, p. 66) whereby individuals who benefit from a public policy should contribute to the cost incurred in the implementation of that policy, a requirement of this nature would have the unintended effects of further consolidating the hegemony of English proficiency as linguistic capital and limiting access to EMI to those with the required socioeconomic resources. Thus, both admission requirements were culpable for perpetuating English-related inequality by privileging the already advantaged and turning the language into "one of the main mechanisms for structuring inequality" (Graddol 2006, p. 38). As one student (CMI-S4) protested, "it is utterly unfair that the EMI program is restricted to those who scored higher for a single test [the National Matriculation English Test] and whose parents can afford to pay higher tuition fees."

Second, apart from admitting into the EMI program only those students with stronger English proficiency, the focal university also provided them with extra sheltered intensive instruction in English. In addition to four weekly hours of English reading instruction provided for all first-year undergraduates, EMI students received two additional hours of English listening instruction and two additional hours of English speaking instruction each week. Most EMI participants in our study found the extra sheltered listening and speaking classes very helpful in improving their English proficiency, but the reading class was generally seen as being ineffective. For example, one student (EMI-S5) observed that "we are generally weak in our listening and speaking skills, so these courses [the listening and speaking classes] have been very helpful." Two other students (EMI-S4 and EMI-S6) shared similar views. Given the usefulness of these extra sheltered classes and their restriction to those who were already good at English, this support mechanism contributed significantly to educational inequality.

Third, the focal university's 2002 policy document spelled out a set of criteria that faculty members must satisfy in order to be qualified to teach on the EMI program. While they were intended to ensure the quality of instruction, these criteria simultaneously served to restrict symbolic capital associated with EMI to a small number of faculty members. Specifically, the officially stipulated minimum requirements included:

- strong communicative competence in English and disciplinary expertise in curricular content;
- having received training on EMI or having studied/worked at an overseas institution for at least 6 months;
- holding at least an appointment of lectureship;
- having rich teaching experience and able to teach effectively.

In Bourdieuian terms, all the required qualities are types of cultural capital, with the first and the fourth "in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" and the second and the third "in the *institutionalised* state [i.e., in the form of qualifications, certificates, and credentials granted by authorized institutions]" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 243). Because of the inherent difficulty in vetting embodied cultural capital and the ease of verifying institutionalised capital, what would count in the end may be nothing but the faculty's institutionalised capital such as overseas educational experience. This was confirmed by our interview data: Both EMI teachers held a PhD from an overseas university and a senior academic position. Because of these university requirements, the EMI program was once again the purview of the privileged and implicated various forms of economic, cultural and social capital.

Fourth, the focal university put in place several incentives for faculty to teach EMI courses. These took the form of a favorable formula for workload calculation, material rewards (e.g., subsidies), and symbolic distinction (e.g., institutional recognition) for undertaking EMI. Although the two EMI teachers complained to us that these incentives were not sufficiently attractive and were far from providing enough to compensate for the extra effort they made to teach through English, they did constitute symbolic capital capable of accruing further distinction (Bourdieu 1991). One professor (CMI-T3), for example, held that the incentive scheme was "uncontentious" because those teaching EMI courses were more capable. However, this view was not without dispute. Another professor (CMI-T1) contested that "although the scheme is an appropriate means of encouraging faculty to teach EMI courses in the beginning, it should be dropped eventually, because there is no difference in the ability of those who teach EMI courses and those who teach CMI courses, and dropping the scheme is conducive to maintaining harmony among faculty." Apparently, this professor was concerned that such incentives could give rise to conflict among faculty members and might have a demoralizing effect on faculty who did not teach EMI courses. Such concerns echoed Safty's (1992) observation that "divergence of interest and conflict will result if a segment is perceived as having acquired prestige and social mobility not previously available or accessible to the rest" (p. 27).

In summary, though intended as measures to enhance the quality of EMI, the admission requirements and support mechanisms instituted by the focal university functioned in actuality as gate-keepers of access to English and potential educational, cultural, and symbolic capital associated with English proficiency. Specifically, our data indicated that access to EMI and its potential benefits was largely restricted to the elite, such as students who were already good at English and whose families could afford double tuition fees, and professors who had had sufficient capital of

various kinds to obtain an overseas education in Anglophone universities. This situation accords with Hu's (2009) observation that in mainland China "[access to English] is inexorably intertwined with the availability and deployment of other types of capital, creates relations of power and leads to both symbolic and material profits" (p. 49). Similar problems of EMI as a service to the rich, the elite, and the powerful have been reported in Europe-based studies (e.g., Costa and Coleman 2013; Wilkinson 2013) and discussed elsewhere (Shohamy 2013). From a language policy perspective, it is notable that the language management mechanisms employed by the focal university exerted palpable influences on individuals' language practices and reinforced language ideologies that valorize English proficiency.

Language practices in EMI

In this section, we focus on the research questions concerning the teaching/learning strategies adopted in the focal program, reasons for adopting these strategies, and the participants' perceptions of the strategies in relation to their disciplinary and language learning. As pointed out by Spolsky (2009), language practices refer to what individuals actually do in their language use and, in an EMI context, the day-to-day strategies adopted by teachers/students to teach/learn English and disciplinary content. As this section will show, the language practices in the focal EMI program were dictated by the students' and, to a lesser extent, the professors' less than adequate communicative competence in English. Despite the various language support mechanisms discussed in the preceding section, both EMI students and EMI teachers reported having an insufficient command of English to engage competently in the discursive construction of knowledge. They found it challenging to use English to explain scientific concepts and technical terms, discuss the fundamental processes and principles of their discipline, analyze complex cases, construct compelling arguments, and critique opposing views. To cope with the language demands of EMI, both teachers and students reported resorting to various strategies to alleviate the language problems encountered.

One common strategy adopted by professors was to water down curricular content. Three of the professors we interviewed (i.e., EMI-T2, CMI-T2, and CMI-T3) observed that the course content was often simplified or reduced due to language difficulties stemming from EMI. As EMI-T1 pointed out, the language difficulties seemed to be particularly aggravated by the disciplinary nature of Business Management, whose linguistic demands are high and whose knowledge construction depends much on language use. One professor (CMI-T2) explicitly linked reduced content learning to the language difficulties imposed by EMI: "The major problem for EMI is students' inability to comprehend the instructional content delivered through EMI, and their limited facility with English, particularly in speaking and listening, affects the quality of EMI." This perception of the professors was also confirmed by eight of the ten students interviewed. Thus, EMI-S1 observed that "in the same amount of time, CMI can definitely cover more content than EMI; alternatively, given the same amount of time, the professor can go deeper into the content if he or she teaches in Chinese." Another student (EMI-S5) lamented that "we may not be able to get an in-depth understanding of the content,

when taught in English." This echoed EMI-T2′s candid comment that "EMI can greatly reduce pedagogical effectiveness, and I have personally experienced it this year."

Apart from watering down the curricular content, the faculty also reported resorting to several other strategies to cope with their language difficulties. One reported strategy was to stay close to the textbook (i.e., repeating what was written in the textbook and their lecture notes based on it) and minimize spontaneous interaction and improvisation. For example, when asked about possible difficulties related to EMI, one professor (CMI-T3) replied:

> I think the major problem is the faculty's inadequate English proficiency. They may be able to teach the English textbook by following it closely, but they are unable to use authentic oral English to deliver the instructional content competently [i.e., in a spontaneous, interactive, freewheeling manner].

Another professor (EMI-T2) reported that he codeswitched to Chinese to explain difficult concepts and discuss case studies, because he found an exclusive use of English inhibiting him from effectively conveying the local culture and context vital to some case studies. This was consistent with EMI-S2′s observation: "It is difficult for professors to discuss in English some management issues in China, so they often switch to Chinese when it comes to discussing case studies based in China." Still another strategy reported by the EMI teachers to accommodate inadequate communicative competence in English was to make more use of support systems such as PowerPoint slides and pre-lecture readings. EMI-T1, for example, reported that he emphasized the importance of having students "preview" (i.e., cover the relevant sections of the textbook or assigned readings) the curricular content before coming to class.

The students reported, if anything, more frequent language difficulties stemming from EMI. EMI-S2 said it for all: "It is difficult for students, myself included, whose English is not good enough to follow the professors in class and, consequently, we can easily get confused." To cope with language difficulties, the students reported adopting various strategies, such as asking the professor to codeswitch to Chinese when encountering difficult concepts, using Chinese-language reference books as supplementary materials, spending a good deal of time looking up unknown words in the English textbooks before class, previewing the content of a lecture by reading relevant sections of the assigned textbook, reviewing lecture slides against Chinese reference books after class, translating content from English into Chinese, and preparing for tests by reciting answers based on Chinese and English textbooks. In particular, several students (e.g., EMI-S1 and EMI-S2) reported that they relied on Chinese readings to make sense of the EMI lectures or the English textbooks, especially when they first started in the EMI program. Another student (EMI-S2) explained that "the professor assigned a Chinese reference book to us and we would refer to it when we came across stuff in the lectures or the English textbook we didn't understand."

In conclusion, as Spolsky (2009, p. 6) recognizes, "language behavior is determined by proficiency." The reported language practices of the EMI teachers and EMI students were greatly constrained by their inadequate command of English

for academic purposes. This finding echoes those of previous studies conducted in China (e.g., Beckett and Li 2012; Tong and Shi 2012) and Europe (e.g., Airey and Linder 2006; Doiz et al. 2013; Thøgersen and Airey 2011; Vinke et al. 1998) that reported acute language difficulties arising from EMI. Like the students and teachers in these studies, our EMI participants resorted to various coping strategies to mitigate their language problems. While these accommodation strategies went some way toward getting the speaking/listening done in the classroom, as Björkman (2008) rightly points out, "the problem might be what speakers do not or cannot say rather than what they do say" (p. 40). In this regard, some of the coping strategies (e.g., simplifying curricular content) were explicitly recognized by teachers and students as leading to reduced content learning. This parallels Beckett and Li's (2012) finding in their study of an EMI program at a Chinese university that virtually all the student participants complained about "the shallowness of content taught in English" (p. 55). Because of the language difficulties experienced by the teachers and students, the EMI classroom did not seem to constitute an environment conducive to language learning either. Our interview data suggested that focus-on-form activities, varied opportunities for student interaction, and other conditions which have been found to contribute to language learning (Hynninen 2012; Smit 2010) were largely absent from the EMI classroom discourse. Thus, there appeared to be an unbridged gap between the envisioned disciplinary and language learning goals of EMI and the reported language practices in the EMI classroom.

Conclusions

Our findings demonstrate how language ideology, language management, and language practices in our focal EMI program interconnected and interacted with each other. The national and institutional EMI policies were the product of particular language ideologies. These ideologies were reactive to old language practices associated with traditional English language teaching in China and undergirded policy efforts to modify individual stakeholders' language beliefs and introduce new language practices. Notably, the national/institutional and personal ideologies in the context of our focal EMI program were well aligned in terms of the perceived benefits of competence in English and the expected learning outcomes of EMI. To achieve the institutionally and personally envisioned goals, various language management strategies were instituted. There were, however, considerable misalignment and tension between the institutional policy support available and the individual stakeholders' perceived needs. Furthermore, there was a yawning gap between the ideal language behavior institutionally envisioned for EMI and the actual language practices determined by teachers' and students' insufficient English proficiency. This critical gap was compromising and constraining the attainment of the envisioned EMI goals, hence introducing ambiguities into the ideological base of language policymaking. Notably, Spolsky's language policy framework provided us with useful interpretive devices for uncovering these complex and dynamic relationships. In particular, it was valuable in drawing our attention to the potential disconnection between language ideology and actual practice.

Of all our findings, the most striking and, arguably, the most important one is that the adoption and implementation of EMI at the focal Chinese university tended to perpetrate and accentuate inequalities. First, as rightly pointed out by some participants, many optimistically envisioned benefits of EMI were restricted to the elite few, who had access to other types of capital (e.g., institutionally accepted levels of English proficiency and financial resources for paying higher tuition fees). Second, though intended to enhance the quality of EMI, the institutional recruitment and support mechanisms that were put in place actually served to gate-keep access to English and various benefits associated with proficiency in the language. Such misalignment between EMI as policy and EMI as experienced by stakeholders point to the complicit role of EMI in exacerbating extant inequalities and creating new ones in Chinese universities and society. This raises concerns about the current approach to medium-of-instruction policymaking and the implementation of EMI at Chinese universities, and calls for a more equitable approach to replace the current one. In response to this call and the paucity of empirical research on EMI in Chinese universities, more research should be conducted on EMI from public policy perspectives, that is, perspectives which approach language as a public good and in terms of societal welfare (Hu and Alsagoff 2010; Hu and McKay 2012). Such research can draw on important theoretical work on principles underlying public policymaking (e.g., Grin 2003; Van Parijs 2011) and investigate the practical feasibility, allocative efficiency, and distributive justice of EMI. In other words, future research should examine whether necessary material and non-material resources are available to implement EMI, how these resources are allocated, whether they are used efficiently for maximum gains in aggregate welfare, and in what ways individuals whose welfare is negatively affected by EMI can be compensated for. Findings from this line of research can provide the necessary groundwork for language-in-education policies that contribute to societal welfare and justice rather than partake in structuring inequalities.

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