

Teaching English

English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus

Andrew Linn with Saida Radjabzade



ISBN 978-1-915280-00-8

© **British Council 2021**

1 Redman Place
Stratford
London E20 1JQ
United Kingdom

www.britishcouncil.org

TeachingEnglish

English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education in the Countries of the South Caucasus

Andrew Linn with Saida Radjabzade

About the authors

Andrew Linn

Andrew Linn is Professor of Language, History and Society at the University of Westminster, London, where he is also Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Head of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Before joining Westminster, Andrew spent 18 years at the University of Sheffield, UK, where he was from 2003 Professor of the History of Linguistics and latterly Director of Research and Innovation for the Arts and Humanities. He studied English and Linguistics at the University of Cambridge, where he wrote his PhD on the standardization of Norwegian. Recent publications include: *Current practice in English-medium education in higher education: Case studies from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Bangladesh and Nepal* (2021, with Prithvi Shrestha, Anastasiya Bezborodova, Kristina Hultgren); *Investigating English in Europe: Contexts & Agendas* (2016); *Attitudes towards English in Europe* (2015, with Neil Bermel & Gibson Ferguson); *English medium instruction in the South Caucasus* (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia): *Listening to the positive voice* (2021); *Language standardization in sociolinguistics and international business* (2018, with Guro Refsum Sanden & Rebecca Piekkari). Andrew is an elected Member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters and President of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas.

A.Linn@westminster.ac.uk

Saida Radjabzade

Saida Radjabzade (MA Applied Linguistics, Montclair State University; TESOL Cert, Montclair State University) is a module leader and a lecturer of Academic English module at Westminster International University in Tashkent. Her research interests lie in EME, ESP, EAP, Language Policy and Planning, Language Acquisition and Language Assessment. Saida has investigated the role of English in HEIs in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. She also published several articles, such as *English in Higher Education in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan* (2021, with Anastasiya Bezborodova); *Tolerance and Control. Developing a language policy for an EMI university in Uzbekistan* (2020, with Andrew Linn and Anastasiya Bezborodova); *Language Policy Project: Reviving Experience* (2018, with Anastasiya Bezborodova).

sradjabzade@wiut.uz

Contents

Executive summary	7	4 The research	26
1 Introduction	10	Research outline	26
EMI and research into EMI	10	Country visits	26
EMI in Higher Education globally	11	Classroom observations	27
Research into EMI	12	The Republic of Armenia	28
Key issues	13	The Republic of Azerbaijan	28
Managing the “runaway train”	14	Georgia	29
2 Background to the study	15	Group discussions	29
Project brief	15	Questionnaire survey	30
Approaching the project	16	The Republic of Armenia	30
3 National contexts	17	The Republic of Azerbaijan	31
The Republic of Armenia	17	Georgia	32
General Education	17	5 Students’ perspectives	33
Higher Education	17	The Republic of Armenia	33
Language ecology	18	Students’ background and expectations	33
Language learning	18	Student views on their own and others’ language competence	33
Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education and Research	19	Use of English in and out of class	34
The Republic of Azerbaijan	19	Language support	35
General Education	19	Perceived benefits of EMI	36
Higher Education	20	Other views on EMI and on the use of English	37
Language ecology	21	The Republic of Azerbaijan	39
Language learning	21	Students’ background and expectations	39
Georgia	22	Student views on their own and others’ language competence	40
General Education	22	Language support	40
Higher Education	23	Perceived benefits of EMI	41
Language ecology	24	Other views on EMI and on the use of English	42
Russian across the region	25		

Georgia	44
Students' background and expectations	44
Student views on their own and others' language competence	45
Language support	46
Perceived benefits of EMI	47
6 Staff and institutional perspectives ...	49
The Republic of Armenia	49
Teachers' background and experience	49
Teachers' views on their own and others' language competence	49
University management and leadership	50
The Republic of Azerbaijan	50
Teachers' experience	50
Teachers' views on their own and others' language competence	51
University management and leadership	51
Georgia	51
Teachers' experience	51
University management and leadership	52
Classrooms and resources	52
7 Conclusions	54
Summary of project	54
Further research	54
8 References	55
Appendix 1	59
Appendix 2	61
Appendix 3	63

Executive summary

This report presents the context for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education (HE) and the experiences and views of key stakeholders in the three countries of the South Caucasus: The Republic of Armenia, The Republic of Azerbaijan, and Georgia. All three countries are committed to the increased internationalization of Higher Education and to the development of EMI programmes as a key part of that strategy. To help the national ministries and the HE sector more widely in planning the best way forward, the British Council undertook to explore the experience of EMI and its progress in those countries and to set out a number of recommendations for consideration.

The current research was carried out by Andrew Linn (Armenia and Georgia) and Saida Radjabzade (Azerbaijan) in late 2019 and early 2020 and was based on visits to a selection of universities alongside a more extensive questionnaire study across the region. The focus of the research was the lived experience of all those involved in the delivery of EMI, including Ministry officials, University leaders and administrators, teachers and students, with the largest cohort of stakeholders surveyed being the students. The questions underlying the project were: 1) what are the challenges faced by those involved in EMI in Higher Education?; 2) how can an understanding of those challenges inform improved outcomes in the future?

The report was written in 2020 and consists of four main sections. After an introduction which includes a survey of the relevant research literature (sections 1c and 1d) and an outline of the project (section 2), section 3 presents the language ecology and education system in the three countries. Section 4 presents the research instruments employed in exploring EMI in Higher Education before we go on to focus in more detail on the views and experiences of students (section 5) and of staff (section 6). Section 7 provides a summary of the report, as well as conclusions and suggestions for further research avenues.

The recommendations reflect our findings that EMI in HE is a 'joined-up' phenomenon and not one that exists only within the confines of university courses:

- It depends on English teaching in High School (both what is provided and how it is perceived)
- It takes place in an environment where English is used and experienced across wider society
- It sits alongside and interfaces with instruction through the medium of other languages
- It is part of a multilingual reality for both teachers and students
- It feeds future employment prospects and responds to the needs of the local and national economy.

The recommendations arising from the study fall under six broad categories as follows:

A global policy issue

1. Ministries and universities should look beyond their own context to share insights, good practice and materials in the development of EMI as a worldwide challenge.
2. Ministries and universities should commit to establishing clear policies and guidelines relating to English-Medium Instruction and to providing English-language versions so that they can be readily shared and compared.
3. While recognising the need to market EMI programmes robustly to allow them to grow, universities should ensure that a perceived "two-speed" sense of the different medium-of-instruction programmes is not allowed to develop, as this would be to the detriment of graduates from non-EMI programmes.

A diverse and multilingual Higher Education sector

4. Measures should be taken to ensure that access to Russian and local languages and support for the learning of those languages as employability tools is not neglected.
5. Institutional or national policies on EMI in HE should recognise the value of there being a range of languages in the classroom and acknowledge the value of linguistic diversity and the multilingual repertoires of teachers and students alike.
6. All institutions, in locally appropriate ways, should take steps to celebrate language diversity and language learning more generally, as well as recognising cultural diversity as the enriching reality of globalisation and a commitment to international Higher Education.
7. Attention should be given to the local-language needs of international students, particularly those who will be exposed to professional environments.

Students' background, language competence and support needs

8. Evidenced levels of English proficiency in wider society need to be taken into account before further committing to advanced programmes of study which rely on English competence for students to succeed.
9. Students on EMI programmes should be surveyed as a matter of course about the language aspects of the experience, both from their own point of view and from the point of view of the programme delivery, in order to inform the right sort of ongoing support and development for faculty and students alike.
10. A standard international test should be adopted, carried out and reported for all students, whether local or international, enrolling on EMI programmes.
11. Standard international test outcomes should form the basis for a nationally agreed programme of language support, through both the taught programmes and extra-curricular provision.

Staff support and development

12. Universities should provide appropriate staff development to ensure that EMI classes are set up to encourage, recognise and reward *student-led* English-medium interaction.
13. Some teachers would benefit from ongoing professional English language support, and courses should be provided by universities to support those staff from the perspective of enhancing EMI skills more broadly. For teachers on EMI programmes this should form an explicit part of that annual discussion with their line manager when objectives are set and development needs identified.
14. Universities should be open about the challenges for teachers in developing and delivering EMI teaching, and peer-to-peer support groups should be enabled as well as more formal professional development, following consultation with staff to understand their particular needs.
15. More English-language support is needed for colleagues in administrative roles relating to EMI provision. This is a sector-wide challenge and may be delivered most cost-effectively, and also with the best peer support element, at national level.
16. Ministries should consider approaches taken elsewhere in Europe and establish a fit-for-purpose system of certification for EMI teachers in Higher Education.
17. Incentives to adopt innovative practice are a useful thing, but the principle of significant financial rewards for EMI delivery should be resisted, as it is likely to engender undesirable behaviours without a clear rationale for any salary differential.
18. Georgia only: The survey should be replicated and disseminated specifically to *teachers* on English-medium programmes in the universities known to be offering EMI programmes.

The socio-political and academic context

19. A nuanced and differentiated approach should be taken to further implementation of English-medium programmes, recognising that not all Higher Education institutions fulfil the same function and that local benefits, associated with local languages, may in some instances be more significant than national or international ones.
20. While acknowledging the general principles set out in this report, universities should note that EMI means different things in different learning environments and for different disciplines, and so EMI provision should be developed and negotiated based on local conditions and local needs wherever possible.
21. Georgia only: Since education in Georgia is declared to be ‘a vital condition for sustainable development of the country’ and ‘the cornerstone of the development of the country’, the Government should articulate the position more clearly that internationalisation of education is the cornerstone for the development of the country internationally and assess funding regimes in the light of that position.

Alternative approaches and delivery modes

22. Universities should pay attention to the provision of materials to help both staff and students develop phonetic and phonological skills in spoken English, not in the belief that nativelike pronunciation is achievable or desirable, but to help address potential embarrassment and frustration in the course of communication.
23. Some programmes with all the other features of EMI programmes (such as international experience and access to English-language materials) could be developed where content is delivered in the local language but alongside and in parallel with intensive academic English.
24. The emphasis should be on developing Masters-level EMI, where the risk to the quality of the student experience is lower than on longer Bachelors-level programmes.
25. Universities should capitalise on their experience of industry-relevant EMI programmes to explore the market for EMI Continuing Professional Development for Business and Industry locally and nationally.
26. Care and thought should be given to developing the EMI learning experience in the round, comprising an immersive and joined-up multimedia learning environment which does not just focus on the medium of instruction. This should be an explicit part of annual monitoring and reporting processes.

1 Introduction

EMI and research into EMI

The image which has recently come to define the phenomenon of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) is that of an ‘unstoppable’ (Macaro 2015: 7) or a “runaway train”.¹ Higher Education (HE) institutions across the world have been offering programmes delivered through the medium of English in increasing numbers, but, the image suggests, without much control over their progress. In the words of the original song of the same name by country music star Vernon Dalhart, ‘the engineer said the train must halt / he said it was all the fireman’s fault!’. As we will see below, countries like the Netherlands are the engineer in this image, deciding post hoc that English-medium teaching in universities has gone too far and that the brakes need to be applied, in the case of the Netherlands via the development of new legislation.

The British Council, with its oversight of teaching in and of English worldwide, has recently contributed to the control of the train while it is in motion by offering guidelines on English-medium delivery in basic education, concluding that ‘introducing EMI at primary level in low- or middle-income countries is not a policy decision or practice that should be supported’ (Simpson 2019: 11), suggesting that the train may be slowing down.

However, while researchers offer warnings about the impact of English-Medium Instruction, and governments and other organisations may attempt to apply brakes via local policies and principles, the reality is that in Higher Education leaders continue to see EMI as a cash-cow for a variety of reasons (Galloway, Kriukow & Numajiri 2017: 4-5), and the train continues, again in the words of that popular song, ‘down the track, the whistle wide and the throttle back’.

When this research was carried out in late 2019, *English-Medium Instruction* had come to be the standard term for the phenomenon we are concerned with here, although, inevitably with a relatively new concept which has only yet more recently become an object of academic research, there is a fair amount of discussion in the literature over the validity and value of ‘a plethora’ (Macaro 2018: 16) of competing terminologies (including *CLIL*

[Content and Language Integrated Learning] *ICLHE* [Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education] and others). More recently the alternative formulation *English-Medium Education* (EME) has been gaining currency (cf. Dafouz & Smit 2020).

As EMI has mushroomed in Higher Education globally, its reach has expanded, and to understand the practices fully, we need to look at more than just language of instruction. Consequently, Dafouz and Smit go further and propose the longer acronym *EMEMUS* (English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings) to embrace e.g. the research agenda, online and alternative pedagogies, and learning as well as teaching (Dafouz & Smit 2020: 3). The *MUS* focus draws attention to the specific sociolinguistic setting of the multilingual university. However, as our project was set up to study *EMI*, and this is the term used with informants and other stakeholders throughout, we will continue to use it here. While the notion of EMI has already become embedded in the academic landscape, not least via the 2015 British Council report, *English as a Medium of Instruction: A growing global phenomenon* (Dearden 2014), the British Council does now adopt *English-Medium Education* as the preferred formulation, and we endorse that going forward.

In the history of Linguistics (as in the history of other disciplines) there is a clear process by which an emergent disciplinary field gains independence and reaches maturity. Local studies within the parent discipline (here English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or Applied Linguistics) lead to peer-reviewed articles in established journals and then to independent journals for the new subject area. Researchers begin to self-identify as members of a new discourse community and come together in workshops and conferences and focused professional associations. The final seal of an academic field’s independence is the development of taught programmes (e.g. the recently-launched MA in English as a Medium of Instruction at the University of Bath, UK) and the publication of summary volumes which provide an overview of the field and establish the main parameters for it. Macaro (2018) fulfils this latter role and bears the straightforward title *English Medium Instruction*. There is also now a nascent book series, Routledge Studies in *English-Medium Instruction*, and journal (*Journal of English-Medium Instruction* (2022)),

1 Thanks to Prof. Kristina Hultgren for valuable comments on an earlier version of this report.

further cementing this term as the “industry standard”. EMI research has arrived.

Terminological and conceptual argument will doubtless continue (cf. Baker & Hüttner 2018), but for our purposes we will adhere to what is probably the most widely accepted definition of EMI in the literature, namely:

The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English. (Dearden 2014: 2).

EMI in Higher Education globally

The growth in English-taught programmes in European universities has been monitored for the past two decades and has been nothing short of spectacular. In their 2002 survey, Maiworm & Wächter identified 725 English-taught HE programmes in Europe (outside ‘Inner-Circle’ (Kachru 1985) English-speaking countries). The number had risen to 2389 by 2007 and by 1000% to 8089 in 2014 (Wächter & Maiworm 2014).

Dearden (2014) found that, while the novelty of the term *English-Medium Instruction* meant that it was sometimes difficult to get fully-informed responses from the 55 countries she surveyed as part of her investigation of this ‘growing global phenomenon’, EMI has indeed traversed the globe. EMI is offered at all three levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) and in all sectors, public and private.

The pattern worldwide is not uniform. According to Dearden’s survey, EMI is more prevalent in university education than at lower levels and more prevalent in private than in public institutions ‘largely due to EMI giving an international image, prestige and reputation to the institution in question’ (Dearden 2014: 11). Wächter & Maiworm (2014) found that the number of English-taught programmes was greater in northern than in southern Europe, and that 80% of English-taught programmes in Europe were at Masters level. In the same year Dearden was reporting 80% of the countries she surveyed offering English-medium HE programmes in the public sector and 90% of private HE institutions doing so.

In many countries English is only the latest in a series of non-native mediums of instruction and adopting an international language rather than the national one for teaching and for publication purposes is not a recent historical shift. For Europe there was only one lingua franca of education until Early Modern times, and that was Latin. From the sixteenth century French gained prestige as an international language of culture and learning, with German assuming this role in the nineteenth century. While the number of publications in the natural sciences was roughly equal for English, French and German around 1900, by the year 2000 over 90% of those publications were in English (Ammon 2016: 35). During the Soviet period, the authorities worked to install Russian as the inter-ethnic language of communication across the Soviet states, including in the domain of education. The rapid move to English away from Russian in former Soviet countries has a political motivation (as language planning invariably has), but there is a well-established historical precedent for adopting an international lingua franca in education and other official and culturally significant domains.

Research into EMI

Although research into EMI cannot be said to have grown at the pace of the phenomenon itself, scholarly attention has turned increasingly to this issue, but not in a consistent or uniform way. We noted above that a new book series and a new journal have been established to support research in the field, but only very recently, which means that research findings have tended to be rather dispersed and can be hard to locate.

Macaro et al. (2018) is a systematic review of the existing literature up to November 2015, including doctoral theses. The authors of this review identify 285 empirical studies of English-medium instruction, distributed as follows:

Education phase	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
Pre-primary	0	2	3	5
Primary	18	10	13	41
Secondary	27	49	61	137
Tertiary	28	33	41	102
Total	73	94	118	285

Table 1 (Macaro et al. 2018: 44)

The majority of studies focus on secondary education, which may seem surprising given the enormous rate of growth in HE and the fact that the majority of researchers are employed within the Higher Education sector. At tertiary level Macaro and colleagues found that, while there were 52 empirical studies focusing on EMI in European countries, none focused directly on the countries of the South Caucasus. Thus our concern with the region in this report means entering somewhat uncharted territory. Even a 2020 journal special issue on the role of languages in English-Medium Instruction at university makes no reference at all to the region or any of its constituent countries (*International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23:3), and nor does the most recent collection of papers on EMI and the internationalization of universities (Bowles & Murphy 2020).

The literature has continued to grow (see Galloway 2020), and we can state with confidence that EMI research is in the ascendant, and that this is likely to continue as a growth area within Applied Linguistics in the coming years as more and more case studies are reported and provide data for more sophisticated theoretical insights. We should also anticipate that the literature will increasingly move beyond local and even national case studies, overcoming the 'remarkable fact about EMI' that, 'though striving towards internationalization, it is almost entirely a purely national endeavour, not only in terms of discussions and implementation, policies and attitudes [...] but certainly in terms of the research that has tried to cast light on these issues' (Dimova, Hultgren & Jensen 2015: 319).

A *Web of Science* search for "English medium instruction"² is more catholic in its embrace than the 'systematic' review undertaken by Macaro et al. and yields 120 publications for the year 2015, increasing to 201 in 2018. Adding the South Caucasus country names to the search term yields no hits. This is, however, a rough and ready measure: "English medium instruction Kazakhstan", for example, is a search term which fails to find a recent article on that topic (Zenkova & Khamitova 2017), reinforcing the point that the research can be hard to locate.

All the same, our general observation holds good, that EMI research is in the ascendant, and the South Caucasus has been largely neglected in the research literature to date.

Key issues

The empirical research literature on EMI has tended to emphasise the practical *challenges* inherent in the delivery of EMI. While the introduction of EMI in HE institutions is typically top-down, a management initiative driven by one or more of the perceived benefits for the institution (enumerated in Galloway et al. 2017: 4), it is teachers and administrators who have to try to make it work and who bear the brunt of the delivery of a teaching model which may not have been well prepared or communicated within the institution and where the staff involved may have had little by way of professional development or upskilling.

Zenkova and Khatimova (2017) report that 24 universities in Kazakhstan offered courses where English is the medium of instruction. However, in the institution they investigated in their research, which was intending to introduce EMI, only 3 out of 10 of their informants had heard of CLIL and none had heard of EMI. At the same time informants were concerned about the introduction of EMI in the context of perceived insufficient proficiency in English amongst both staff and students, a lack of motivation, resistance to methodological innovation, the lack of teaching materials and resources and general unpreparedness for the development.

Research into existing EMI provision has typically revealed that the anxiety mentioned by those staff at the Innovative University of Eurasia in Kazakhstan is felt elsewhere. Macaro et al. (2018: 52-55) found that 'a number of deep concerns have been expressed by lecturers and students and in virtually all studies consulted', and specifically:

We find lecturers deeply concerned about their students' inability to survive, or better still thrive, when taught through English [...]

In Korea...nearly a third [of students] were ill-equipped linguistically to benefit from an EMI programme [...]

English played a significant role in marginalising the students who did not have adequate competence in English [...]

More studies reported lecturers as identifying that they [themselves] had linguistic problems than those that did not [...]

and in a Swedish study...only a minority of teachers considered they had language problems whereas a sizeable proportion of students were less enthusiastic about their teachers' level of English.

Focusing on the Nordic countries, which have been the subject of a considerable amount of research, we find some of these issues spelled out with particular clarity. Of 578 students at the University of Oslo, Norway, 33% reported reading English texts to be more difficult than Norwegian, while 80% of students experienced 'some difficulties', and this in a context of long-established and high levels of English proficiency (Ofte 2014). It has also emerged that students evidence decreased interaction (they ask and answer fewer questions) and focus on note-taking rather than on the content (Airey & Linder 2006). Students (Hincks 2010) and lecturers (Thøgersen & Airey 2011) alike tend to speak more slowly, and it takes lecturers 22% longer to cover the same material than it does when using their first language. University teachers report that teaching through English takes longer to prepare and makes their presentation less fluent and flexible (Airey 2011). More generally the literature reports on the lack of effectiveness of EMI in promoting language learning (Doiz & Lasagabaster 2020: 258).

Managing the “runaway train”

Clearly we are emphasising the negative findings here, but they do predominate in the research literature.

These findings do not mean that EMI should be avoided by national education policy-makers and university management. Quite the contrary, as EMI does have real institutional benefits which are well recognised and understood by staff: 90% of Zenkova and Khatimova's informants saw the institutional benefit of English-medium delivery in terms of potential for higher international league table rankings, academic staff and student mobility and enhanced international cooperation. But the runaway train is running away and people are getting injured in the process; there is evidenced damage in terms of staff and student wellbeing. Policy-makers and managers need to be aware of all this and be willing to invest in minimising that damage in order to maximise the benefits. Implementation of EMI must be informed by a cost-benefit analysis, but Higher Education as a humane international endeavour should not be prepared to accept a pay-off between human cost on the one hand and institutional benefit on the other.

Before we go on to present our work on the experience of institutions in the region of the South Caucasus, we will conclude this introduction with a challenge set by Macaro et al. at the end of the literature review to which we have made full reference in the above. The authors state this:

One thing is clear: policy makers and particularly university managers are not going to be swayed by sociolinguistic and sociocultural objections to the implementation of EMI as proclaimed in books on the subject (68).

Let's hope that they are proved wrong.

2 Background to the study

Project brief

This report is one of the outcomes of a consultancy carried out for the British Council between October 2019 and February 2020. The initial remit was to cover the three countries of the South Caucasus (Georgia, The Republic of Armenia, The Republic of Azerbaijan) as well as The Republic of Uzbekistan. All these countries are constituent members of the British Council Wider Europe region, which spans from Serbia to Kazakhstan and from Israel to Russia, embracing fifteen diverse countries, many of which were formerly part of the Soviet Union and have experienced significant and contrasting political changes in the course of the past quarter century.

Given the substantial reach of the project as it was originally conceptualised, and given the relatively short timeframe for the research, it was ultimately agreed that the project team would focus our energies on the South Caucasus for the current purposes.

The study of English and the development of English-medium programmes in Uzbekistan are the subject of several other British Council-led projects (e.g. *Open Learning for English Teachers (INSET³)* and *Internationalising Higher Education⁴*) and have also been explored as part of the current project team's ongoing research in Central Asia (e.g. Bezborodova & Radjabzade 2021), and so this country will be treated separately and also in the context of advanced English-medium education in the wider Central Asia region. This notwithstanding, the project brief remained a challenging one, exploring three independent Higher Education systems in differing linguistic and socio-political environments, all of which were new to the authors of this report.

The brief for the project begins by noting that:

[...] there is limited information available on the quality of teaching and learning on programmes offered in English [in the region], the effectiveness of programmes taught through the medium of English, the levels of English among lecturers, the levels of English among students or the professional development of lecturers teaching in English. In addition to that, there is not always an agreed policy on and general approach to EMI in Higher Education in each of these South Caucasus countries or local strategies for integrating EMI into institutions and departments. (British Council 2019: 1).

In short, there was a considerable amount of work to do to chart the context, experiences and attitudes involved in planning, developing, implementing and monitoring English-medium programmes in these countries, and the research which has gone into this report was never going to provide all the answers or all the data relevant to its various stakeholders ('such as respective Ministry officials and Institution decision makers', British Council 2019: 1).

This report constitutes a snapshot of the situation in the three countries, seen from the perspective of policy-making and policy implementation. It is an exploration of the reality of English-medium teaching and learning in Higher Education for those at the sharp end ('including teachers, learners and administrators', British Council 2019: 1). If pitfalls are to be avoided and lessons learned, this report will need to be treated as a *starting point* for governments and for the university sector to develop their own ongoing review and monitoring processes, ideally in a collaborative and international spirit.

3 <https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/global-projects/track-record/open-learning-english-teachers-inset-project-uzbekistan> – accessed 6 January 2020.

4 <https://www.britishcouncil.uz/en/programmes/education-society/higher-education> – accessed 6 January 2020.

Approaching the project

We need to be clear about our positionality, as the use of English in Higher Education is a vexed question and one which may engender strong views and conflicting political positions. A new Language and Accessibility Bill debated in the Netherlands in 2019, for example, focuses on promoting Dutch-language proficiency in Higher Education (where EMI has ridden high in recent years), and on potential quotas for English-medium programmes in order to 'safeguard' Dutch-medium courses, indicating that language-political positions in HE can switch suddenly.⁵ Even (and perhaps particularly) in countries boasting very high levels of English proficiency amongst the population, the increasing prevalence of and presence of English and the mushrooming of English-medium courses (Airey, Lauridsen, Räsänen, Salö & Schwach 2017; Edwards 2020), has not been met with universal enthusiasm. For this reason, readers of this report are entitled to know what position the authors are coming from.

The research was undertaken on behalf of the British Council by Andrew Linn, Professor of Language, History and Society at the University of Westminster in London (Armenia and Georgia) and Saida Radjabzade, Lecturer in Global English at Westminster International University in Tashkent (Azerbaijan). Our most recent work has been on the changing status and attitudes towards English in Europe (e.g. Linn 2016) and also attitudes and experiences in English-medium environments in Central Asia (e.g. Linn, Bezborodova & Radjabzade 2020). In line with the prevailing research tradition, this project focuses on understanding the *lived experience* of using particular languages for particular purposes, both the benefits and perceived positives as much as the challenges and the difficulties for stakeholders.

It is important to remain mindful of the basis for language policy-making in Higher Education contexts articulated by Kirkpatrick: '...actual practice [and hidden realities] should inform language policy', leading to 'a coherent language policy for which all stakeholders have been consulted' (Kirkpatrick 2017: 7). At the same time, we would agree with Lin (2015: 30) that 'along with the commitment to being explicit and reflexive about issues of researcher positionality, adopting a critical stance is very important if LPP [Language Policy and Planning] research is to contribute to promoting social justice and challenging unequal relations of power often found in LPP contexts'.

All practical arrangements for the project were made by the local British Council offices, to whom the authors are indebted for their efficiency in making the necessary arrangements at short notice and also for their hospitality and willingness to respond to the unexpected.

5 <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2019/09/06/more-balanced-internationalisation-in-higher-education> – accessed 7 January 2020.

3 National contexts

The Republic of Armenia

General Education

Education in the Republic of Armenia is offered at four levels. Primary education (level 1) is provided for six- to nine-year-olds, preceded by early childhood education (level 0) from the age of 3. Compulsory secondary education is provided up to the age of 17 and then post-secondary and tertiary education follows for 18- to 22-year olds.

According to UNESCO figures (UNESCO 2019a), in 2018 83.2% of eligible students were enrolled in secondary education and 54.6% in tertiary education. 62.7% of the eligible female population were enrolled on Higher Education programmes while the number of males was rather fewer at 47.1%. These latter figures were borne out by our classroom observations which noted a higher proportion of female students attending classes than males across the disciplines. Our sense was that more female students contributed to classroom interaction in the EMI classes we witnessed. This disparity is notable given the somewhat traditional gender roles which prevail in the workplace.

Expenditure on education in 2017 was 2.71% of GDP, down from 3.84% in 2009. Literacy rates are high at around 99% for all age brackets.

Higher Education

The Republic of Armenia joined the European Higher Education Area in 2005, signing up to the Bologna Process, adopting the three-level structure of Bachelors (four-year), Masters (two-year) and PhD study. There are currently 58 Higher Education institutions in Armenia, down from 65 in 2017 (based on Gharibyan 2017; MFARA 2019), which is still a significant number in a country of 3 million inhabitants. 27 of these institutions are public universities, and in addition there are five institutions established in partnership with other countries. The Higher Education landscape also includes 31 private, for-profit institutions and seven branch campuses of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian universities. We understand that there has been significant control of private institutions, which previously numbered over 100. As well as these university institutions, there were in 2017 98 research institutes and other specialist academic organizations, variously under the oversight of the Ministry of Education and Science, the National

Academy of Sciences and other government bodies. The Constitution stipulates that 'All citizens shall have the right to free higher and other vocational education in state higher and other vocational educational institutions on the basis of competition as prescribed by the law' (Tsaturyan et al. 2017).

Major reforms are currently in train. We were informed that a new Law on Higher Education and Science was being debated and would soon be ratified. This will require all institutions to undergo accreditation, which may force down further the number of independent Higher Education institutions in the country as will a move to consolidate state universities and see greater co-operation between institutions. There is likely to be a new funding model for Higher Education, based on performance against Key Performance Indicators.

The far-reaching reforms which are likely to come into force in the coming years are on the back of reforms already achieved. A national Quality Assurance agency was incorporated into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 2011, and a national university ranking system was trialled in 2013, with one of the quality indicators being internationalisation; this system is currently on hold. In the 2017-2018 academic year there were 90270 students enrolled in Armenian HEIs, of which 3,8% (3395) were from the Armenian Diaspora and 2,8% (2491) other international students. The majority of Diasporan students were from the Russian Federation (1454) and Georgia (1209), while 1/3 of all other international students (1142) came from India (Strategy 2019: 3-4).

It is clear that the Republic of Armenia is serious about the quality of Higher Education and is rigorously committed to internationalisation as part of that, despite the rather low percentage of GDP allocated to education. There are significant resource challenges on the ground, but the seriousness of the endeavour is admirable and impressive. As Manja Klemenčič noted in her 2016 feasibility study on Higher Education strategy in the Republic of Armenia, however, 'the most exciting and most challenging part is only beginning: that of collectively imagining the desirable future for higher education in Armenia (Klemenčič 2016: ii).

Language ecology

The Republic of Armenia's Law on Language was ratified in 1993, two years after independence from the Soviet Union. It states that the official language of the Republic of Armenia is Armenian (Article 12 of the Constitution) and that the state will protect and disseminate the Armenian language not only within the country but also amongst diasporic Armenians. There are a number of other laws which make reference to language use in specialised contexts, such as in the media and in education.

A state Language Policy was ratified in February 2002 with the following programme objectives:

- Regulation of literary Armenian
- Ensuring full-scale presence of Armenian in the computer network
- Ensuring education in official language
- Providing teaching of Armenian to non-Armenian speakers
- Supporting mass media to ensure language purity
- Ensuring the implementation of legislative requirements in language design/ formation of correspondence and public writings
- Ensuring the rights of national minorities in Armenia in the field of language.

(Country Report 2008)

Armenia is described as 'an ethnically homogenous state (97.8% Armenians)' with Armenian being the native language of over 97% of the population (Country Report 2008). There is however a commitment both in law and in practice to recognising and supporting other languages and their users. In 2001 the Republic of Armenia became a signatory to the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. This formalises special obligations to Assyrian, German, Greek, Kurdish, Russian Ukrainian and Yezidi, amongst the 20 nationalities represented in the population.

Armenian uses a distinctive and unique alphabet which was devised in the 5th century CE.

The language exists in two standard varieties, Eastern and Western, and both varieties continue in existence. Eastern Armenian, based on the dialect of the capital Yerevan, was the official language of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic from 1920-1990,

while the diaspora, following dispersal occasioned by the Armenian genocide (1914-1923), preserved Western Armenian. The spoken language evidences marked dialectal variation.

The legacy of the Soviet Empire means that Russian is still widely known in the Republic of Armenia, such that 'most of the (adult) population in Armenia is bilingual, or has some proficiency of Russian (in the broad sense of bilingualism)' (Country Report 2008). Russian is more prominent in the language ecology of Armenia than in the neighbouring countries of the South Caucasus, and it remains an important lingua franca and key feature of the language repertoire of Armenians. The current hunger for English in the region should not obscure this fact. Even ten years ago the numbers of applicants for places to study English at Yerevan State Languages University and Yerevan State University way outstripped the number of places available, and English applications outstripped applications to study Russian by a factor of 5,75:1, even though the tuition fee for Russian was 'comparatively low' (Country Report 2008).

Language learning

The study of Armenian is mandatory at all educational institutions on the territory of Armenia (Country Report 2008). Russian remains the first foreign language in schools with English, French or German being introduced as a second foreign language.

In Higher Education, according to the 2008 Country Report, 8,6% of university students were specialising in languages, and 93% of them were female. The percentage of language students rose to 15% of the total Masters community, and again the majority of candidates were female.

The Caucasus Research Resource Center—Armenia is currently (2020) carrying out a project to assess the state of knowledge of foreign languages in the Republic of Armenia, and it will be instructive to see their findings.

Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education and Research

In 2017 Gharibyan noted that ‘there is no clear internationalization strategy at the national level’, and, if there were to be such a strategy, ‘it should be possible to attract more students from neighboring countries’. In the academic year 2017-2018 3,8% of the total Higher Education enrolment was from the Armenian diaspora and 3% were international students, with the majority in professional fields such as medicine, architecture and construction. By far the largest number of overseas students (42%) were from India.

The strategic need expressed by Gharibyan has now been rectified by the drafting of an ambitious *Strategy for Internationalisation of Higher Education and Research in the Republic of Armenia*. This is an impressive statement, in line with the robust approach being taken elsewhere to the development of HE capability and capacity, and is very significant in terms of the strategic framework for the development of EMI in the Republic of Armenia.

The draft of the *Strategy* (Strategy 2019: 8) states:

the fact that international students are not very interested in studying in Armenia (6,8% of the total student population) indicates that the HE in Armenia is not attractive or is little attractive. Among the reasons for this could be: The small number of educational programs in foreign languages and the barriers to their organization [...]

So the very first reason suggested relates precisely to a perceived dearth of programmes delivered through the medium of other languages. The perspectives from students and staff outlined below provide an important test of this hypothesis.

The Republic of Azerbaijan

General Education

The education system of the Republic of Azerbaijan is divided into pre-school (age three to six), primary school (grades 1 through 4), followed by secondary school (grades 5 through 9 or 11), concluding with vocational professional (three years) and/or tertiary education (four or five years). Following pre-school at the age of five children might go to preparatory school (sometimes referred to as 0 grade). Primary and secondary schooling are compulsory and free for citizens enrolled in public educational institutions. Students, who wish to continue their education at vocational professional schools, study five years of secondary school, but if they want to be enrolled directly at university, they have to complete the full seven years.

Students who study in the Azerbaijani or Russian sectors at university complete four years of education, whereas those enrolled on EMI programmes complete five years (some universities offer a one-year foundation course and four years at Bachelor’s level). Enrolment in vocational professional and/or university programmes can be offered for free if a student passes the state entrance exams with the highest score.

The Education Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan clearly states in article 5 the citizens’ rights to education, that everyone has a right to study irrespective of gender, nationality, race, religion, political views, social status or medical condition. The development of the education system at all levels is based on the following five strategies in *The National Education Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan*:

- Improvement of educational content based on the national strategy;
- Formulation of transparent quality assurance on all types of educational institutions;
- Teacher professional development;
- Involvement of ICT in teaching and learning process;
- Establishment of Education Development Fund to support institutions financially.

(Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2013).

The economic development of Azerbaijan in moving from lower-middle-income country status to upper-middle-income has made a rapid impact on the education sphere. According to UNESCO data (2020), the total government expenditure on education grew from 5,64% of GDP in 2012 to 6,95% in 2017, while the share for HE was 0.25%. The literacy rate is high at almost 100% for most age groups except 65+ which is at 98%.

Higher Education

The Republic of Azerbaijan embarked on reforms in HE after 2005 by joining the Bologna Process. In line with that, the HE system of the Republic of Azerbaijan is divided into three cycles: Bachelor's degree (four years); Master of Arts (two years); Doctor of Philosophy and/or Doctor of Science (three years). Later in 2009 a new Law on Education was implemented specifically on accepting the European Credit Transfer System. Since then Azerbaijan and the European Union have been working effectively by establishing different exchange programmes for both students and staff. For instance, most HE institutions are supported by the EU's Erasmus+ programme, studying on short term programmes (3-12 months) in Europe. Since 2015 the EU has funded over 1000 students and staff to study abroad on the Erasmus+ programme, and about 500 students and staff have had a chance to study in Azerbaijani HE institutions.

In 2013 the *National Strategy for Education Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan until 2025* was adopted to develop the HE system at all levels according to the specific goals, directions and mechanisms stated in the document. To implement this, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched a new pilot project entitled *SABAH* in 12 universities across some 40 different majors for 2nd and 3rd year students. This programme is mainly English-medium, and therefore MoE has been working with the British Council to evaluate and to improve students' English language skills. In order to do so, students have to pass the *Aptis* language test before the start of the programme and at the end of the project as well. Students also have a chance to take the General English course with experienced British Council educators. There are also Academic Writing and Technical English courses which are offered at the request of the universities and faculties to support students in developing their knowledge in their field of study. Moreover, teachers are also monitored thoroughly throughout the academic year to assure the quality of the education. The project has witnessed students gaining early career success and continuing their study at prestigious universities abroad.

According to the MoE (2020), there are 52 HE institutions including state (40) and non-state (12) universities, institutes, academies and conservatories across the country. Each year the number of students in these HE institutions has been increasing. At the beginning of the 2013/2014 academic year there were 151,274 registered students, and by the beginning of the 2018/2019 academic year the number had reached 176,723. This growth impacted both state and private sectors, with 161,326 students enrolled in state and 15,397 students accepted at private HE institutions in the 2018/2019 academic year (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2020). It is important to note that both state and non-state HE institutions share the same curricula, which are designed by the MoE; however, the content and academic plans can vary by institution.

Bringing international students to Azerbaijan is one of the priority activities set by the Ministry of Education for HE. The number of international students studying in the 2019-2020 academic year was 6,979. The languages of instruction are Azerbaijani, English, Russian and Turkish.

Sub-bachelors	148
Bachelors	1144
General medicine	3446
Masters	1831
Residency programme	56
Doctoral programmes	93
Other programmes (Flagship, Fulbright, Title VIII..)	8

Table 2 Number of international students by level of education

The largest concentration of students (2057) are registered at Azerbaijan Medical University. Students from 93 countries study in Azerbaijani universities, and the majority come from Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, India and the People's Republic of China.

The State Examination Centre which was created in 2016 plays a key role in students' admission to HE institutions and in the quality assurance of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AzQF) which was established in 2010 by the MoE. This framework is developed to support learners, educators, and employers to follow national and international qualification standards. The State Examination Centre has been improving the testing strategies over the years which currently focus on assessing students' listening, reading and grammar knowledge in English. The exam tasks mainly cover listening to lectures, reading short passages and dealing with prepositions, tenses and vocabulary.

The Azerbaijan HE system has undergone various positive changes such that the *Times Higher Education* ranking agency has now included Azerbaijan State University of Economics and Khazar University in the list of leading universities in following the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2020.⁶

Language ecology

Azerbaijani is the official language of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is spoken by 92% of the population as a mother tongue. Azerbaijani belongs to the Turkic language family. During the Soviet period Azerbaijani was written using the Cyrillic alphabet, and from 1978 it was given legal status as the state language in Article 21 of the Constitution. In 1991 the Latin alphabet was restored and legal status was strengthened further in Article 21 in 1995:

*The Azerbaijan language shall be the State language of the Azerbaijan Republic. The Azerbaijan Republic shall ensure the development of the Azerbaijan language. The Azerbaijan Republic shall guarantee the free use and development of other languages spoken by the population (The Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic 1995).*⁷

In order to develop the state language, a new decree "On Improvement of the Application of the State Language" was signed in 2001 which highlights the historical importance of the language for the nation. In 2004 to improve language use in the media, another decree was introduced to solve issues concerning the Latin script⁸. These decrees have served to eliminate illiteracy in Azerbaijani and have promoted widespread use of Azerbaijani in most language domains. Russian is used widely as a second language in the country.

Language learning

The study of Azerbaijani is compulsory throughout schooling, therefore students are obliged to pass various language exams at school and at the universities. The ability to speak Azerbaijani is essential in the job market. Specifically, fluency in Azerbaijani is required for all official government jobs. Although Russian has been a second language for most Azerbaijanis, English looks set to take its place. Firstly, English teaching hours have been doubled at schools such that students study English twice for 45 minutes, whereas Russian is taught only once per week. In addition, MoE in collaboration with the British Council has been offering trainings as a part of the SPEX project for the secondary school English teachers. This project has been running for the last three years to improve teachers' proficiency levels and pedagogical knowledge. The project particularly focuses on updating teachers' expertise in evaluating students' speaking skills in English. 1500 English teachers from 110 secondary schools around the Republic of Azerbaijan have participated in the programme.

Secondly, students continue learning English in colleges and universities. English is the most favoured language for 90% of university students (Karimova 2017), as it is felt to provide more opportunity to succeed in the future in comparison to Russian (borne out during the interviews). Other foreign languages such as Turkish, German, French and Chinese are studied, but only sporadically.

The Azerbaijan University of Languages, which has been functioning for more than a century, also embodies the attention of the government on the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Moreover, according to the state programme for increasing international competitiveness in HE from 2019 to 2023, internationalisation should be observed in all HE institutions, starting from study abroad programmes to fostering foreign language teaching and learning.

6 <https://edu.gov.az/en/page/9/18251>

7 *The Laws and Other Acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State Language and the Languages Rights* (Presidential Library).

8 *The Laws and Other Acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State Language and the Languages Rights* (Presidential Library).

Georgia

General Education

General Education in Georgia lasts for 12 years and comprises six years of primary education followed by three 'Basic' and three 'Secondary' years⁹. It is based on a national curriculum set out by the National Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the governmental unit with responsibility for all levels of education as well as scientific research.

English is compulsory in all schools from Grade 1 to Grade 12, and the national curriculum for English language makes reference to listening, reading, writing and speaking. The aim of the national curriculum for English is that school leavers will achieve at least proficiency at B1 level (see the b sections in Part 5 for more on the actual and perceived reality of this goal).

In 2017 there were just over 2000 state schools in Georgia alongside 236 private schools. According to UNESCO figures (UNESCO 2019b), in 2018 95,6% of eligible students were enrolled in secondary education (up from 88,8% five years earlier) and 63,9% of the eligible population were in tertiary education, which is double what it had been in 2013. 68,1% of the eligible female population were enrolled on Higher Education programmes while the number of males was rather fewer at 60,2%. Expenditure on education in 2018 was 3,85% of GDP (considerably higher than neighbouring Armenia, for example, at 2,71% of GDP), and the percentage of GDP spent on education has been gradually rising. Literacy rates are high at around 99% for all age brackets.

As of 2017 there were 5277 English language teachers in the state schools, 33% of whom are certified as senior teachers, possessing 'relevant subject knowledge and methodic competencies' (*Rules for Teachers Evaluation* 2015). The number of teachers passing the English language teacher exam, which was launched in 2010 by the National Assessment and Examination Centre to evaluate whether teachers have attained B2 proficiency, has been steadily decreasing

Despite step changes in investment with concomitant positive movement against some of the key performance indicators for education in Georgia, reform continues. The reform plans are set out in the *Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021* (Ministry 2017), which entails ambitious targets for all aspects of educational provision. At the level of General Education, the strategic objectives are to:

1. Ensure equal and universal access to high quality general education;
2. Improve the quality of education to increase the possibilities of transition to the next education level, to develop vital skills among school students and to achieve better academic results;
3. Improve the educational environment;
4. Increase motivation and effectiveness of school administration and teachers;
5. Develop effective management system at all levels of general education.

From the perspective of Higher Education, strategic objective 2 is the most relevant, as only those holding a state certificate (or international equivalent) may proceed to Higher Education. The most recent midterm evaluation of progress against the objectives suggests that progress is sluggish here with the number of high school graduates failing their final examinations at the first attempt (13%) remaining unchanged between 2011 and 2017. The 2019 midterm evaluation concludes that 'the money spent on general education had no effect on the progress in the achievement of the goal' (Ministry 2019: n.p.). This downbeat assessment should be taken in the context of other indicators actually pointing to some impressive developments, e.g. in dropout rates.

Increasing numbers in education underpinned by growing investment testify to the headline statement that 'quality and affordable education [...] is one of the main priorities of the government of Georgia and is declared to be the cornerstone of the development of the country' (Ministry 2017: 3). There is clearly a genuine commitment to further investment in educational infrastructure, including new and refurbished buildings and a significant uplift in teachers' salaries since 2017, not least to combat a perceived lack of prestige for the teaching profession. It should be anticipated that the quality of General Education will continue to improve as the current strategy enters its final years ahead of the ratification of a new strategy.

⁹ Information on Education in Georgia is taken from the webpages of the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE 2020), the webpages of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (Ministry 2020) and specifically the *Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021* (Ministry 2017).

Higher Education

In 2017 there were 75 authorised Higher Education institutions in operation in Georgia, according to Ministry figures. Of those, 73% (55) were private, which is a comparatively high percentage of private provision, but 35 are teaching universities or colleges, so not offering the range and research-led intensity of the large state institutions. 68% of institutions are located in the capital, Tbilisi. Between them the HE institutions catered for around 140,000 students and employed 13,000 staff across the full range of academic and non-academic roles. Five universities are also home to 42 scientific research institutes employing around 2500 individuals, in addition to three scientific institutes which are 'legal entities of public law'.

Higher Education legislation is enshrined in two principal laws: *The Law of Georgia On Higher Education* (2004) and *The Law of Georgia On Education Quality Enhancement* (2010). These have been subject to various amendments in subsequent years (see Glonti et al. 2017: 19-21). The operationalisation of the relevant laws is pursued via the *Unified Strategy for Education and Science*, whose approach to Higher Education we will return to in a moment. In 2010 a new national qualifications framework was introduced, but, according to the *Unified Strategy* (p. 27), the changes made 'are not enough to respond to modern challenges', and further reform is underway.

Georgia has been a full member of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process) since 2005 and has actively participated in EU education programmes. Under the Erasmus+ scheme, Georgia holds 8th place out of 131 partner countries for successful projects (Ministry 2017: 27).

The Unified Strategy sets out one key goal for Higher Education, underpinned by three strategic objectives, as follows:

The specific goal of higher education is internationalization of higher education and ensuring access to quality higher education for the individual and professional development of the individual and the improvement of employment.

Strategic objective 1. Further modernization of higher education system, promotion of internationalization and improvement of quality.

Strategic objective 2. Create effective opportunities of lifetime learning;

Strategic objective 3. Increase access to quality education. (Ministry 2017: 29-31)

Internationalisation runs through the strategy like a mantra. The word *international* appears 87 times in the course of this 40-page document. By comparison, *local* appears 19 times and the word *region* just 12 times. 'In order to succeed', the strategy states:

...the education system of Georgia needs efforts to continue the internationalization of education, strengthening research and knowledge, international mobility of academic staff, as well as students, in order to meet the international standards and create high quality programs at the local and international level to meet the requirements of the labour market. (Ministry 2017: 7).

There is a logic here: Success = internationalization = mobility 3 → higher quality → the market.

At the level of General Education this equation depends on more and better teaching of European languages, supported by holiday camps. In Higher Education a key success indicator is the number of overseas students studying in Georgia, with the ambition that Georgia should become a 'regional education center'. This is partly based on more joint programmes with international institutions, and, crucially from the point of view of this report, this also means more foreign-language-medium instruction.

In 2017 there were 182 foreign-medium programmes being offered in Georgia, up from 168 the year before. Senior university leaders contributing to the 2019 midterm evaluation of the strategy noted that their institutions needed more help in attracting overseas students to Georgian universities. One of the university leaders interviewed as part of the current project made the point that the government should commit more resource to supporting the internationalisation agenda since internationalisation is a benefit for the country more broadly and not merely 'a contribution to the financial sustainability of higher educational institutions' (Ministry 2019: n.p.).

According to data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia¹⁰, numbers of international students on medical or veterinary programmes have been increasing over the past five years, while numbers on other Bachelors programmes have been going down. Numbers of overseas doctoral students have also been going down over the same period:

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Bachelors	3822	3611	3115	2681	2943
Med. / vet.	2805	4401	6948	9550	10382
Doctoral	99	83	78	33	42

Table 3 International student numbers in Georgia

The Ministry-sponsored *Study in Georgia* scheme (<http://www.studyingeorgia.ge/>) is the principal channel for inward mobility. The Study in Georgia website currently (April 2020) lists 136 programmes in English from Bachelors level up to PhD-level and predominantly in medical and business fields, seven programmes in Russian and three in combined languages. These are offered across 27 institutions.

A Millennium Challenge-funded project to offer double degrees with San Diego State University in the USA has since 2014 supported STEM students at Tbilisi State University (TSU), Iliia State University (ISU) and Georgian Technical University (GTU) and has now come to an end with the last cohort enrolled. In December 2019 six French universities signed an agreement with TSU and GTU to form a partnership called the French Georgian University, offering double Bachelors degrees in Computer Science and Food Technology and double Masters in Viticulture and in Tourism.

Language ecology

The Republic of Georgia is bounded to the west by the Black Sea, to the south by Turkey and Armenia and to the southeast by Azerbaijan with the whole of its northern border shared with Russia. This geographical (and therefore political) “crossroads” location in part explains the rich contemporary language ecology of the country.

Following a brief period of independence (1918-1921) in the wake of the Russian Revolution, Georgia was absorbed into the USSR, gaining independence again in 1991. The population in 2020 is 3,99 million (worldpopulationreview.com), down from 5,4 million in 1990, with 1,049 million (26%) living in the capital. The majority of the population (84%) are ethnic Georgians.

Georgian is the principal language of the Kartvelian language family, and it is spoken by 90% of the population. It is the official language of the country as enshrined in the constitution, and the co-official language in Abkhazia (with Abkhazian). All matters relating to the official language are enshrined in the 2016 *Law of Georgia On Official Language* (<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/2931198/0/en/pdf>), overseen by the Ministry sub-committee for the State Language.

The use and study of Russian has been waning since the end of the Soviet period as Georgia has looked politically and culturally towards Europe. However, Russian does remain the only de facto language of inter-ethnic communication both within the country and across the region; English has not yet come close to assuming that role for Georgia (Maisuradze 2016).

¹⁰<https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/61/higher-education> – accessed 25 September 2020.

By joining the Council of Europe in 1999, Georgia, like Armenia, committed to ratification of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML). Twenty years later Georgia has still not signed up to the charter, however. It is recognised that there have been activities to acknowledge and support minority language groups within the country, notably Abkhazian, Armenian, Assyrian, Avar, Azerbaijani, Chechen, German, Greek, Kurdish, Ossetian, Russian, Udi and Ukrainian (see Tsikvadze, Lortkipanidze & Gurgenidze 2017), and implementation of the ECRML has been included in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2016-2019.

As has often been the case in the history of languages, it was for religious purposes that an orthography was developed for Georgian, in the wake of the adoption of Christianity in the early fourth century. The current distinctive, largely phonemic orthography (Mkhedruli) dates from the 10th century, initially used alongside other earlier scripts but gaining full dominance by the 19th century. The spoken language exhibits significant dialect variation for a relatively compact country (see the Armazi project on Caucasian languages and cultures for more detail: <http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/armazill/enebi.htm>).

English is overwhelmingly the most widely studied foreign language. Students seeking entry to University take a compulsory language exam. Although this language component may be in English, Russian, French or German, 80% of school leavers choose English. Students on many of the Georgian-medium programmes at Tbilisi State University are offered foreign language courses, and here again, although a number of European languages are available, over 90% select English. The University also offers English language support via the Language Center.

Russian across the Region

Internationally, knowledge of Russian is potentially a more compelling “unique selling proposition” [USP] for the workforce in all these countries than knowledge of English, although it must be acknowledged that the use of the language is coloured by the current and historical political complexity of the region. According to the European Commission *Europeans and their Languages* report (European Commission 2012: 5-6), English is the most widely spoken foreign language used by 38% of Europeans, with 12% speaking French as a foreign language, 11% German, 7% Spanish and only 5% Russian. Just over two-fifths (44%) of Europeans claimed that they are able to understand at least one foreign language well enough to be able to follow the news on radio or television with 25% of Europeans able to do so in English while only 3% can do so in Russian.

4 The research

Research outline

The research for this project deployed a number of methods in order to paint the broadest possible picture in a short space of time. This was in line with the project brief as articulated by the British Council, which recommended a three-pronged approach: 1) a pre-visit review of relevant literature; 2) visits to universities; 3) a survey administered to teachers, although in the event the majority of our respondents were in fact students (as many as 97,5% of respondents in the case of Georgia).

The local British Council teams provided the necessary documents describing and reporting on national and local conditions. This material was patchy, an issue compounded by having to rely on English-language materials and some translations. For example, information on patterns of language learning in Georgia was not readily accessible and some information had to be prepared specially to inform this project, and across the region there are no existing policies or policy statements on EMI.

The one common language for all stakeholders in this activity is of course English, and, since we have already established the global nature of EMI, the only way of ensuring international best practice, and also the development of international support networks, is by allowing the ready circulation of materials. An (ideally searchable) online repository of EMI policies and guidelines from across the world would be of enormous value to practitioners and researchers alike.

We have already given an overview of the key research into EMI in section 1c above, so in the following sections we elaborate on our approach to the other two research instruments in the project brief, noting the challenges and limitations of these approaches in general as well as some of the positive outcomes.

Country visits

Although the project brief only referred to visits to universities, it was important that our visits sought to establish a broader picture than discussions with members of university communities alone could provide. For many of the students we spoke to, studying through English is seen as a route to the world beyond university, to more prestigious and better-remunerated employment and to the possibility of working in an international context,

whether at home or overseas. Thus English symbolises the world beyond academia rather than academic study itself. It was relevant to be able to form a picture of the prevalence of English in the city landscapes and in wider society, the extent to which English is or is not a part of the day-to-day scene. It was also important for us to gain a sense of the presence in universities of English beyond the classroom to help inform our understanding of whether English is in practice any more than just an academic tool for Higher Education.

Our visits centred on the capital cities of Baku (Azerbaijan), Tbilisi (Georgia) and Yerevan (Armenia), which present a somewhat skewed image of the day-to-day realities across the countries as a whole. As De Waal (2019: 229) writes, ‘the divide between the prosperous capital city and the struggling provinces is a miserable feature that all three countries of the South Caucasus have in common, and one the casual visitor who only sees the capitals can easily miss’. Capital cities, with their economic and political status, will inevitably reflect more internationally focused, more affluent and more highly educated demographics than other parts of the country where employment may be more locally focused and the ambition of young people may tend in different directions. For example, the private English classes provided by the British Council at its Tbilisi teaching centres are over-subscribed and perforce not available to young people outside the capital. The impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on face-to-face teaching provides an opportunity to consider how enhanced online delivery can benefit learners outside the capital and across the regions.

Dependencies here include the needs of the local economy for which students are being educated (which languages will be the most relevant for future employees?), the languages taught in the local schools and the levels of achievement in foreign languages amongst high school graduates (how well equipped are young people in that region for study in a foreign language?) and the level of resource available to institutions and to individual students and their families.

The visit to Baku took place between 4 and 8 November 2019 and included several visits to state and private HE institutions, the Ministry of Education and the State Examination Center. Institution visits were to the Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction, Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University, Azerbaijan State University of Economics,

ADA University, Baku Higher Oil School, and Khazar University. Most of these universities offer three mediums of instruction, namely Azerbaijani, Russian and English. The private Khazar University founded in 1991 was a pioneer in EMI implementation to produce highly qualified specialists with a knowledge of English. Later after the 2000s more universities were established offering EMI only, such as Baku Higher Oil school in 2011 and ADA university in 2014. French-Azerbaijani University (UFAZ) functioning only in English was opened in 2015 under Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University, giving an opportunity to earn a degree from the University of Strasbourg or Rennes 1. The rest of the universities offer a few EMI programmes; however, they have specific plans to open more such programmes.

The visit to Tbilisi took place on 21 and 22 October 2019 and included a meeting at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia as well as visiting academic institutions. University visits were to Ivane Javakhsishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), Tbilisi State Medical University (TSMU) and to Ilia State University (ISU). TSU was founded in 1918 and is the oldest university in Georgia with seven faculties. TSMU dates from the same year and also comprises seven faculties across areas of medicine, pharmacy, public health and nursing. ISU by contrast is a recent foundation, growing out of institutional mergers in 2006. All institutions are research-intensive, and all are based in downtown Tbilisi. All have explicit international ambitions and were three of the five institutions forming the degree-awarding partnership with San Diego State University.

The visit to Yerevan, Armenia took place between 23 and 25 October 2019 and began with a meeting with the Head of Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education at the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport before visits to academic institutions. University visits were to Yerevan Brusov State University of Language and Social Sciences, Armenian State University of Economics, and Yerevan State Medical University. We also visited the English-medium Agribusiness Teaching Center, part of the International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education (ICARE) Foundation, a collaboration between the Armenian National Agrarian University and Texas A&M University, USA.

Particular gratitude should be expressed to Ministry and university colleagues for their welcome and their openness. It is hoped that, as English-medium programmes increase in number, their introduction will be supported by the policies and the resources needed to ensure a positive experience for teachers and students and positive outcomes in terms of skills, employability and the welfare of all involved in the delivery of EMI.

Classroom observations

While changing uses of English and attitudes towards English are questions of the wider language ecology of the country and are relevant to take into account as we seek to understand the English-language reality of stakeholders in the round, the heart of the matter in this report is of course what goes on in the learning environment. To what extent is English used or not used vis-à-vis other languages available to those in the classroom? What is English used for and who uses it? Do stakeholders appear to manage the classroom interaction comfortably through the medium of English? Are students engaged in the learning experience? A key question to which we don't have the answer is how the classroom experience in English-medium classrooms compares with that of native-language-medium classrooms, and this would be a valuable next stage in understanding the reality of English-medium study.

Classroom observations are notoriously difficult to set up effectively. As Dörnyei (2007: 190) puts it, 'regardless of how low a profile we strive to keep we must face it: classroom researchers are intruders who are inevitably obtrusive'. He goes on:

It is a real challenge in most situations to find ways of minimizing the intrusion so that classroom events are as natural and unstaged as possible while we are present, which of course is the prerequisite for obtaining data.

Classroom research is a well-established field, going back at least 40 years (cf. Martin-Jones 2015: 95), and ideally we would have set up our classroom observations more rigorously and over a longer period, based on developing relationships with those we were going to observe. Macaro states categorically that 'detailed Conversation Analysis techniques are essential for interpreting what is going on in EMI classrooms' (2018: 216). In practice, this wasn't possible, and we should recognise the limitations this has imposed on the insights gained from attending classes at local universities.

We did not know in advance of our visit what classes would be observed, which meant that we were unable to prepare in detail. This was a good thing as we were looking for the lived experience and we needed to be open to taking the situation as we found it and not as we had preconceived it or thought it might be in comparison with classroom situations with which we were ourselves familiar. We went in with an open mind and observed the picture in the round, noting the layout and dynamic and the resources used, as much as the nature of the language interaction, as these all contribute to the pedagogical environment.

EMI is not and cannot be a simple substitution of one language code for another. Teaching and learning through the medium of a foreign language presupposes a different feel, a different level of engagement and calls for a different approach to managing the classroom experience. As Diallo & Liddicoat (2014: 116) note, 'where pedagogy is not attended to in the implementation of language policy, this results in problems for implementation that can severely compromise the policy [of EMI] and its objectives'.

Classroom observations demonstrated that the diversity of the material, the language background of stakeholders and issues of classroom and interaction management would all benefit from more discussion and training in institutions. As students prepare to enter the workplace, they should have experience of operating within a multilingual professional context and learn to handle this and to benefit from it.

The Republic of Armenia

We attended classes at all the three Armenian Higher Education institutions we visited. In all cases the group of visitors included both British Council and other university colleagues, which inevitably meant that there was a feeling of a delegation having come to town. In one class the university photographer took pictures during the class which further reinforced the sense of this being an "event", despite our efforts to communicate in advance that we were not reviewing or monitoring or judging. One teacher asked us after the class what our judgment was.

Students seemed on the whole to be genuinely disinterested in our presence while teachers were inevitably more or less aware that this was not an entirely normal classroom situation and tended, despite their best efforts, to "play to the gallery".

All three classes observed were examples of what Macaro (2018) terms 'interaction-constrained settings'. They were not formal lectures but neither were they set up to be maximally interactive. All involved the teacher presenting information to which the students reacted in a largely formulaic manner, quoting back definitions or responding with yes/no answers. In all three cases the teachers were fluent in their use of English and had a strong command of their subject material. The direction of flow was firmly one-way, from teacher to students, and it was not possible to determine with any great clarity the extent to which English was a live resource for the students, given their limited and highly constrained involvement in the dialogue. If our

classes truly reflect the norm, then we have to conclude that in the Armenian HE context, students are not getting or capitalising on the opportunity to develop their academic English skills in class.

In all three classes we noted at the end of each five-minute interval who was talking, whether it was the teacher, the students or whether there was interaction going on. The contribution noted was predominantly that of the teacher with some dialogue, but no instances of pure student input.

Where students interacted with each other informally, for example to clarify a point between themselves, this was in their own language. International medical students, for example, defaulted to their shared home language, bringing more linguistic richness to the classroom but based on pragmatism rather than policy. Some students told us, however, that, while their class was officially English-medium, in practice the whole group frequently defaulted to Armenian as they were all Armenian speakers, and this was the pragmatic solution.

There is no one language ecology under the umbrella of EMI. The role of the various languages in the class involving only international medical students, who, it can be assumed, have access to little or no academic Armenian or Russian, is different from that found in the mathematics class at the National Agrarian University. Similarly, the nature of the discipline plays a role in terms of choice of language and the nature of language use. The maths class on Integration by Parts presupposes a dramatically different discourse to the detailed analysis of the institutions of EU government. As Kuteeva and Airey (2014) remark, 'a one size fits all university language policy is unlikely to correspond to the needs of all disciplines equally'.

The Republic of Azerbaijan

Ten 45-minute classes were observed across six universities. Most were seminars which were mainly student-centred; however, some did adopt the teacher-centred lecture format prevalent elsewhere. The lecture-type classes evidenced minimal interaction between students and teacher. Some we assume were pre-prepared classes for a special occasion. For example, we observed a literature class which had all the hallmarks of a theatrical performance! The observed classes ranged across STEM, Social Science and Humanities subjects.

Most classrooms were equipped with PCs, overhead projectors and whiteboards. Although some classes were in a traditional layout which limited interaction, flexible interactive-layout classes were in evidence.

Language use in the classes varied depending on the interlocutor and the purpose of the talk. Lecturers mainly used English to explain a new topic, to hold a class discussion, to ask questions of students and answer students' questions. Although the observed lecturers' language proficiency in English was excellent, three instructors (n=10) used Azerbaijani to explain terms, to introduce examples and answer informal questions at the end of the class. However, students employed English to answer teachers' questions and to ask questions of the lecturer when he/she ignored other languages being used. Students mainly used Russian and Azerbaijani to explain the topic to each other, to clarify the tasks among themselves, for group discussions and to ask some questions of the lecturer.

Most of the observed classes were not only taught in English, but they also reflected a US- or UK-style pedagogical approach. The seminars were student centred and interactive. The instructor approached students with questions which generated a heated discussion around the topic. In addition, students were involved in individual and group work which motivated them to work quickly and effectively. In some groups there was a student who did not understand the question or the topic and another student explained in Azerbaijani allowing the student to complete the task easily and go on to express ideas in English to the group.

Georgia

Classes were observed at just two of the universities we visited. In both cases we were able to arrive and leave relatively unobtrusively and sit at the back of the room, out of sight of students. Students and teachers alike seemed on the whole to be genuinely not concerned by our presence. Both classes, as in Armenia, offered further examples of 'interaction-constrained settings', leading us to conclude that here too students are not getting or not capitalising on the opportunity to develop their academic English skills in class. We witnessed no instances of pure student input.

Students arrived and left the room quite freely which made the sessions feel particularly disjointed. Against all the coming and going, the teacher continued to present the material, giving the impression of two isolated activities going on simultaneously: the teacher talking without much attention to the dynamic of the student body; the students coming and going without much sense of

being part of a discrete learning experience. One of the classes started with 6 students in the room, and this number doubled as time passed but without acknowledgement from the teacher. The other group started with 31 students with 10 more arriving in the course of the class, and at points the noise of the students talking to each other felt quite disruptive. Both classes made use of the available technology but were evidently based on working through a textbook. These two classes (which were a random snapshot and may not have been representative) felt somewhat dispiriting. There was nothing student-centred about them. The coming and going, the unrelated conversation and the fact that some students in a Machine Learning class did not even switch on their computers, all suggest a level of student disengagement, which will not be addressed via altering the medium of instruction. It rather calls for a range of staff development activities around pedagogical innovation and variety to help accelerate the move towards more international teaching practices and styles.

Where students interacted with each other informally, for example to clarify a point between themselves, this was in Georgian, bringing more linguistic richness to the classroom. The students we spoke to were rather divided on the question: Do you think that English only should be used in English-medium classes? Some said that using other languages than English should not be acceptable, as international students do not understand the content of the discussion, though switching to Georgian is what actually happens. Others thought that discussion in class in Georgian is fine if the content is translated, particularly where English technical terms are hard to understand, and explanation via a more familiar language can be beneficial. The key thing here is that teacher and students should discuss together their views on the use of other languages in class to arrive at an agreed position. Wherever English is used in Georgian society, it happens in the context of the use of Georgian. Should the university lecture theatre be any different?

Group discussions

All those involved in the group discussion received a letter from the project team explaining what the project was about, who was driving the work and to whom we would be reporting (Appendix 1). The letter also clarified what we would do with the information received and that it would only be used anonymously. The project had previously been through the University of Westminster's standard ethics approval process, and all participants were invited to sign a form giving consent to their involvement in the project under the terms set

out in the letter. This process was new and intriguing to many involved.

The questions to participants were standardised (Appendix 2). The starting point was a set of questions used with colleagues in universities in Uzbekistan on a previous project and honed in consultation with the British Council in Tbilisi (the first country visited and so providing a benchmark in this respect). To allow participants freedom to speak openly, the sessions were not recorded, and to allow us to be involved in the conversation unencumbered, British Council colleagues took detailed notes of the discussions.

Students and teachers attended different sessions so that neither group felt constrained by the presence of the others. The meetings of teachers in Armenia and in Georgia were slightly confused by the presence of both English-medium subject teachers and teachers of English, whose experiences and attitudes tended to be rather different.

We met administrators and senior management in varying permutations (depending very much on availability during a busy university schedule), and again we are grateful for the generosity of all concerned in giving of their time and for their frankness of views.

Questionnaire survey

In order to factor in more views and experiences than was possible in the course of the very short visits, a questionnaire was subsequently compiled to be distributed to teachers, students and administrative staff at universities in all three countries. The questions were based on those previously used in a large-scale survey of attitudes and experiences at Westminster International University in Tashkent (Linn, Bezborodova & Radjabzade 2020), and building on that, other universities in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Bezborodova & Rabjabzade 2020). These surveys in turn built on a survey instrument earlier developed and distributed at Stockholm University (Bolton & Kuteeva 2012), all of which is designed to allow for more robust international comparison in the future. The precise formulation of the questions was agreed with senior British Council colleagues, and the survey was distributed, managed and initial analysis undertaken by the British Council team. The list of questions is given as Appendix 3.

The Republic of Armenia

The questionnaire survey on *Your Experience of English at University* was completed by a total of 383 respondents from the Republic of Armenia, comprising 247 students, 127 teachers, 8 administrative colleagues and 1 senior academic manager. Respondents came from the following 18 institutions which offer English-medium programmes, and the list includes those institutions visited in person (in bold):

- **Yerevan State Medical University –YSMU**
- Armenian State Pedagogical University – ASPU
- **Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences – YBSULSS**
- Gavar State University – GSU
- Eurasia International University – EIU
- **Armenian National Agrarian University – ANAU**
- Komitas State Conservatory of Yerevan – KSCY
- European Regional Academy – ERA
- Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia – PAARA
- National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia – NUACA
- National Polytechnic University of Armenia – NPUA
- Yerevan State University – YSU
- European University of Armenia – EUA
- Vanadzor State University – VSU
- Yerevan Northern University – YNU
- **Agribusiness Teaching Center – ATC**
- **Armenian State University of Economics – ASUE**
- European University Foundation – EUF.

The largest cohorts of respondents were from ASPU (95), NPUA (72) and YSMU (55). The range of subjects taught by the teaching staff who responded was vast, from the STEM disciplines to a host of Social Science and Humanities disciplines. This is noteworthy as it indicates that EMI is a reality across the discipline spectrum in Armenia, but as we noted above, English has a different role to play in different disciplines. Literature, Education and Law, for example, are much more reliant on Armenian for professional communication than Medicine or Computer Science: one size does not fit all.

90 of the 127 teachers were “content” teachers, i.e. they were engaged in EMI as defined above. 23 of the teaching staff are described as EFL teachers, and others were teachers of other languages. We have chosen not to exclude the views of straight language teachers from our analysis, as these are teachers operating in an EMI environment as part of a single workforce, and their views and experiences are valid from the point of view of providing the optimal context for EMI to flourish and be a positive experience for all stakeholders.

94% of teachers described themselves as local rather than “international”, and 77% of students also identified as “local”. None of the administrative or managerial colleagues identified as international. International students reported 13 different countries of origin. We know that numbers of overseas students in Armenia are currently small, but the geographical reach is significant, suggesting that, if the student experience is attractive and marketing effective, there is capacity to attract students (and lecturers) from a broad international base.

Since the majority of respondents to our survey describe themselves as local, the majority also report that Armenian is their mother tongue. However, even in this snapshot, students report six “mother tongues” other than Armenian. This is a potential resource. Respondents include native English and Russian speakers, who can give the benefit of their greater fluency in class and beyond, helping fellow students with difficulties of expression, etc.

The linguistic variety represented on campus should be a reminder that global communication is not just about English. Respondents report that between them they know a further nine languages (German, French, Spanish, Punjabi, Dutch, Italian, Turkish, Korean, Chinese) although we did not ask about degree of fluency or nature of that experience. As we noted above, having English is not a particularly special skill in 21st-century Europe, and those students who know other languages have something additional to bring to the world of work.

The Republic of Azerbaijan

The questionnaire was completed by 263 respondents in total, comprising 197 students, 45 lecturers and 21 administrative staff. These participants belonged to the following eleven institutions offering English-medium programmes, including the universities visited in person (in bold):

- **Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy – ADA**
- **Azerbaijan State University of Economics – UNEC**
- Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University – ASPU
- Azerbaijan University of Languages – AUL
- **Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University – ADNSU**
- Azerbaijan State Marine Academy – ASMA
- **Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction-AUAC**
- Baku Engineering university – BEU
- **Baku Higher Oil School – BHOS**
- Baku State University – BSU
- **Khazar University – KU**
- Western Caspian University – WCU

Most lecturers (43) were content teachers, with only two teachers of EFL.

Most respondents were from UNEC (82), ADNSU (77) and AUL (27). There were 25 internationals including one teaching and one administrative staff member, and 23 students from Tanzania, Georgia, Great Britain, Iran, Italy, Palestine, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Although only a few internationals were part of this study, the number of international students has grown in just two years from 3370 in 2017 to 4262 in 2019 (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2020).

Participants reported 7 “mother tongues” (Azerbaijani, Russian, Urdu, Tamil, Bangla, Swahili, Lezghian and Arabic). 92% of them spoke Azerbaijani, while 3% stated Russian to be their L1. Besides these languages, the participants spoke eight other languages as second or foreign languages, namely English, Russian, Turkish, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Korean. 85% of the participants stated that they use more than one language while at the university, however 10% of participants (28 of 262) were negative or neutral on the statement, ‘I think we should be more tolerant to linguistic diversity on campus’.

Georgia

The survey was completed by a total of 240 respondents from Georgia, comprising 234 students, just one teacher, two administrative colleagues and three alumni. What we got was effectively a survey of student views and experiences, which is disappointing from the perspective of seeking a rounded view of EMI in Georgian HE. Our narrow timeframe means that we just had to get what we got, and a follow-up survey should be conducted to focus on the experiences, views and attitudes of teachers on EMI programmes.

Respondents came from the following six institutions, which offer English-medium programmes, and the list includes the institutions visited in person (shown in bold):

- Batumi International University (BIU)
- Caucasus University (CU)
- East European University (EEU)
- **Ilia State University (ISU)**
- **Tbilisi State Medical University (TSMU)**
- **Tbilisi State University (TSU).**

The largest cohorts of respondents were from TSMU (37%), EEU (27%) and ISU (18%).

77% of students in the Georgia survey self-identified as international and reported 32 different countries of origin, suggesting that the international reach of Georgian HE is already quite substantial. 127 of these 179 students (71%) reported being from India with most other countries represented in ones and twos, some of whom may have been Georgians resident abroad or students with Georgian families. We know that the number of overseas students studying in Georgia is currently below where the government would like it to be, but the geographical reach again suggests that there is indeed capacity for increased internationalisation. Part of what makes the environment attractive will be an appropriate and appropriately resourced medium of instruction, but equally fundamental, we suggest, is infrastructure amelioration to bring the learning environment and the learning resources more in line with those countries from which students are coming, such as South Korea, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

The students surveyed report 24 “mother tongues” other than Georgian (52 respondents) and English (ten respondents). Since a significant number of the respondents are from India, it is no surprise to find that Malayalam, Hindi and Tamil are the most widely spoken other languages, but the range of languages remains a potential resource. Respondents report that they know other languages (e.g. Russian, French and German) although again we did not ask for more detail.

Both international and local students stated that they were interested in learning languages and that they liked talking about language and languages (Question 25 of the survey). 85% agree or strongly agree with the statement ‘I am interested in learning languages’ and 73% agree or strongly agree with the statement ‘I am interested in talking about language and languages’, and these are predominantly students on medical or STEM programmes.

5 Students' perspectives

The Republic of Armenia

Students' background and expectations

The student groups we spoke to were majority Armenian nationals. One of the classes we observed was, however, entirely *international*. This view of the national and linguistic make-up of student groups underlines the fact that English has a potentially very different role to play in different classes.

The international class comprised students who had enrolled on their course in the expectation that English would be the medium of classroom discourse. Here there is no option to default to Armenian or Russian, to adopt translanguaging practices (Mazak & Carroll 2016) to help the flow of the class, although students were seen to use their home language between themselves to help clarify points. The teacher has to stick to English at all times and negotiation of language use is straightforward.

The two student groups we spoke to were articulate and forthcoming and a credit to their universities. Some of the views they expressed were shared, but in other respects their experiences differed. One point that we heard from both groups of students and also from lecturers was that the English learned in School did not adequately prepare students for English-medium teaching at University. On this point the students were very clear in their views, particularly when asked what message they would like to communicate to the Ministry! One student responded that she wished to tell the Ministry that the level of English learned in School is not enough and that they don't have a rich vocabulary and 'cannot speak'. Students noted that there are few opportunities to speak English in the School context and that teaching in English invariably switches to Armenian. Several students expressed a wish to have more EMI at School, but it should be remembered that these are students who are now studying on EMI programmes in HE and so have a particular perspective.

The students we met were competent and confident in English, but there is clearly a perception that they have not got there by virtue of their School education, noting that they pay a lot of money for extra tuition. If this extra tuition is necessary or seen to be necessary, EMI will not be open to all but may become the preserve of those with money and opportunity, favouring students from richer families and from urban backgrounds, leading to EMI as capital on the linguistic market, (following Bourdieu (cf. Hamid 2016)).

Where the groups differed was in their perception of their teachers. One group at one university reported that their EMI classes are indeed delivered in English by teachers who have good English, and as a result they felt that their English was improving. In another university students felt that their teachers underestimated their language skills by translating a lot of material into Armenian and defaulting to Armenian in class, especially where, in the perception of students, those teachers had less good English than their students and did not like to be corrected. This presents an interesting scenario if it is widespread, in which students feel that in fact they are the ones with the superior language skills and so are not learning language from the EMI classroom. However, another student in this group reported that only 2/3 of the students were confident in English and so teachers had no choice but to translate into Armenian. These same students reported that they had little opportunity to use English in or out of class and that they had no access to native speakers.

The views reported here are from a small and somewhat arbitrary selection of students in rather different institutions, and we will now go on to consider our questionnaire findings drawn from a considerably larger sample of students. However, the views just noted do make an important point: EMI is not a single uniform thing, either in how it is delivered or how it is perceived and experienced. It is doubtful that there can be a single national EMI policy except in terms of general principles. In practice, what EMI means will be negotiated by the local stakeholders, and, if that is not going to lead to frustration, disappointment and disenfranchisement, that negotiation must be explicit and a shared contract between students and teachers.

Student views on their own and others' language competence

We have just noted some individual students' thoughts about the English proficiency of those who teach and study alongside them. No institutions explicitly state an evidenced level of English proficiency as one of the admissions requirements for undergraduate study, rather it is fluency in *Armenian* that is the relevant language requirement for matriculation at an Armenian institution. For Masters and PhD-level admission to Armenian institutions, students are expected to achieve 6.5 in the IELTS test or 79 in TOEFL iBT.

The private American University in Armenia, not one of the institutions surveyed as part of our project, does require IELTS 6.5, which is equivalent to the top of B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), between *Independent and Proficient* user in the CEFR terminology. In our survey, only 52% (n=129) of students believed themselves to be at this level or above. However, only 19% (n=47) conversely believed themselves to be at level A (*Basic User*): 'Beginner' (A1) or 'Elementary' (A2) in the terms of our survey. It is true that the data has not been thoroughly cleansed, and informants were self-selecting, but it is striking that students capable of completing the survey and with sufficient interest in the English language to do so should regard themselves as being only basic users of English. This is in line with the self-criticism students articulate with respect to their language skills on arrival at University and also the rather critical discourse around fellow students in one of our focus groups.

Only 14% of the students surveyed reported that they had taken an international English test, such as IELTS or TOEFL (n=34/247), with scores ranging from A2 to C2. In the light of the above insights into students' perceptions of their preparedness for EMI at University, this is a matter which needs addressing urgently. Students cannot know what their language needs are, and institutions cannot know how to support them, when an understanding of the level of English proficiency is based on a vague self-assessment, everything from A1 to C2, and a sense that what they learnt at School is insufficient. Institutions can't provide the right type of support without having a calibrated benchmark as to what is needed.

Use of English in and out of class

Only 75% of those students (n=186) questioned reported that they use more than one language when at university, which suggests that a number of those who responded are not actually taking English-medium courses or that they didn't understand the question. We have already seen that the use of English in EMI classes is variable, ranging from the universal, where all students are international, to cases where the reality is to use more Armenian. In the latter cases, we need to acknowledge that staff and students are operating in a multilingual learning environment which reflects a multilingual world, and this should not be artificially swept aside. In response to the statement, 'I think we should be more tolerant to linguistic diversity on campus', only 13 out of 247 students disagreed.

It is an artificial version of the multilingual ecology in which we live to insist dogmatically on English-only in EMI classes, provided that all stakeholders in the learning agree on their expectations. However, an interesting recent finding is that translanguaging practices ('multilingual, multimodal, and multisensory sense- and meaning-making' (Li Wei 2018)) can also function as a mechanism of exclusion and reinforcement of language standards by a group of 'elite' translanguagers (Kuteeva 2020), and from that perspective a rigorous English-only policy does at least help ensure linguistic democracy in principle if not in practice. This is an area which certainly calls for more investigation and debate.

The following information is instructive in shedding light on the multilingual ecology which surrounds university students in the Republic of Armenia.

	How often are you exposed to English in your spare time (for example, through music, computer games, or films) compared to when you are at the University?					
	About the same	All English in spare time	Less English in spare time	More English in spare time	No English in spare time	Total
Administrative staff	0	0	5	3	0	8
Content teacher	16	5	39	34	1	95
EFL teacher	5	8	5	9	0	27
ESP teacher	2	2	0	2	0	6
Student	62	18	54	108	5	247
Total	85	33	103	156	6	383

Table 4

EMI provision implies that English-medium is something special or different, that it is just a property of university study. However, English is everywhere; 76% of students state that they have as much or more exposure to English outside the university environment.

Language support

58% of students surveyed reported that they had taken courses specifically to improve their English since starting University, although 6% of the student respondents did not answer this question. We don't know without further investigation where these courses were delivered or what they covered, or how effective they were. The point is that over half these students involved with EMI programmes in Armenia have recognised a need for more training and have taken the initiative to get it. This is not surprising since students feel anxiety about their English-language competence, and our survey suggests that more is desired by way of 'additional professional English support'. 78% of students reported that they would be either 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' to sign up for additional language support, if it were offered, and just over half the students surveyed (n=134) stated that they would be 'very likely' to avail themselves of such support.

These findings conflict slightly with the answers to Question 26: 'Does your university offer you sufficient support with English language development?'. In answer to this question, 60% of students report that they feel that their university does offer them sufficient support, while 26% were 'not sure'. A conclusion potentially to be drawn is that EMI students in practice feel that they have a need for more support and training, and indeed are ambitious to improve their English skills, whether academic or otherwise, over and above what is already on offer.

Of those students who were of the opinion that their university did not offer sufficient support with English language development, given the preferences listed, most calls were for more English language courses, followed by the provision of more English-language materials and in third place came the establishment of an English language support unit. Students seem to be calling for very practical language support around their EMI programmes rather than major infrastructural investment.

Perceived benefits of EMI

The draft *Strategy for Internationalization of Higher Education and Research in the Republic of Armenia* includes the following assertion:

Today, the proportion of courses offered in foreign languages in the total number of courses offered at HEIs is very low [...] The development and implementation of educational programs in foreign languages will make HE accessible to international students and will enhance the attractiveness of education for local students. Moreover, it will enable the integration of international students in the educational process and will improve the intercultural communication skills of Armenian students. (Strategy 2019: 9)

The easy correlation between offering more courses in foreign languages and an influx of both international and local students is dangerous as it may fail to acknowledge the real challenges involved in implementation. Any strategy based on increasing Foreign-Language-Medium Instruction (FLMI) would need to address the key challenges we have noted in this report, including:

- Proficiency levels on entry
- The language needs of EMI students and how to address those both in content classes and in other support
- The additional burden of studying through a foreign language
- The need for adequate resources both on-line and in libraries to support English-medium courses
- Training for both staff and students within and beyond the institution in engaging with an EMI pedagogy and acknowledging that the discourse dynamic in a FLMI classroom is not the same as when all interlocutors are native speakers of the language of instruction
- Celebrating and supporting language diversity and language learning.

For now, however, we will consider the reasons given by students for choosing an English-medium programme. Table 5 shows the total numbers of all those surveyed, including staff, and it is interesting to note where the motivations of staff and students do and do not coincide, as shown in Figure 1:

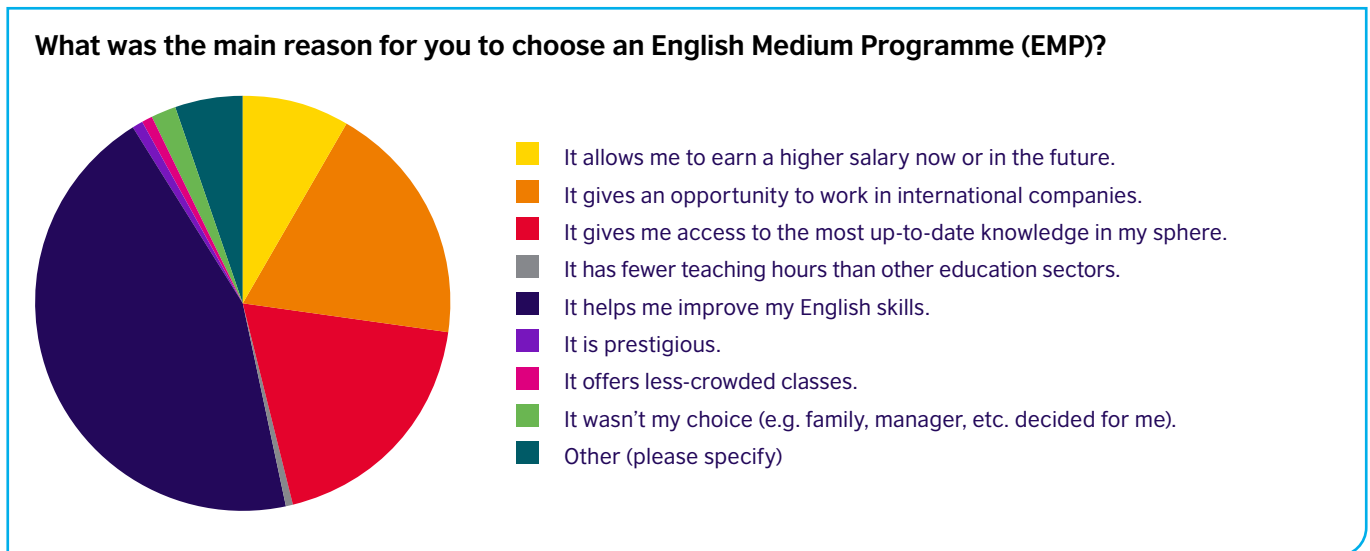


Figure 1

What was the main reason for you to choose an English Medium Programme (EMP)?	Administrative staff	Senior mgt	Teacher	Student	Total
It allows me to earn a higher salary now or in the future.	2	0	11	20	33
It gives an opportunity to work in international companies.	2	0	11	59	72
It gives me access to the most up-to-date knowledge in my sphere.	1	1	43	28	73
It has fewer teaching hours than other education sectors.	0	0	2	0	2
It helps me improve my English skills.	3	0	43	124	170
It is prestigious.	0	0	0	3	3
It offers less-crowded classes.	0	0	2	1	3
It wasn't my choice (e.g. family, manager, etc. decided for me).	0	0	5	2	7
Other	0	0	10	10	20
Total	8	1	127	247	383

Table 5

For students, and bearing in mind that the majority of respondents are Armenian students, the overwhelming motivation is to improve English-language skills (50%), followed by what actually flows from that, namely the opportunity to work internationally (24%). EMI then is seen as a means to increase language competence as a means to achieving employment ambitions. Only 11% of students report that taking an EMI course is primarily about better access to subject knowledge.

Other views on EMI and on the use of English

In order to form a rounded picture of the experiences and attitudes of those involved in EMI in Armenia, we asked a number of direct questions in our survey, not all of which need drawing out here, but the data can be made available on request. One question which is particularly relevant to those who are now considering the way forward for EMI programmes in Armenia and the support required for that is what stakeholders consider to be the most important factors for a good English-medium course.

The underlying data looks as though respondents may have interpreted this question in different ways. In any case, the overwhelming majority in all groups considered that the most important concerns are the subject-knowledge and the language fluency of the teachers. Students' fluency does not seem to be high on the list of criteria with top priority for students. After the content and language skills of the teachers there is no one criterion which seems to be singled out as of top importance. Content teachers appear

to value resources (online and library) highly, while for local students and administrative staff the presence of international staff and students is of high importance. The only really sure thing here is the emphasis placed on the combined subject and language skills of the content teachers (although these criteria do also get substantial numbers in the 'least important' category too, hence the caveat on the findings):

Qualities of a good English-medium course	Administrative staff	Content subject lecturer	EFL lecturer	International student	Local student	Total
Teacher's subject knowledge	3	21	6	11	70	111
Teacher's fluency in English	3	17	7	12	70	109
Students' fluency in English	1	11	3	4	24	43
Variety in class activities	1	10	4	3	38	56
All students contributing to discussion	1	12	1	4	34	52
Using English all the time	1	12	5	4	38	60
Using online resources	1	17	4	8	39	69
English-language resources in the library	1	15	4	9	37	66
International staff	3	13	3	7	42	68
International students	3	11	4	8	44	70

Table 6 showing numbers of respondents assigning each quality a score of 1 (top importance)

- 90% of local students agreed or strongly agreed that they liked using English.
- 22% of local students disagreed that using English on campus was 'just as easy' as using their own first language.
- While 24% of local students were neutral on the subject, 44% agreed or strongly agreed that 'British English is better than other forms of English'.¹¹

¹¹ The other questions asked as part of Question 25 were in response to the statements: a) It doesn't matter if someone's English pronunciation isn't very good; b) I am interested in talking about language and languages; c) I am interested in learning languages.

The Republic of Azerbaijan

Students' background and expectations

The discussion groups included only national students of both genders. Students expressed their positive attitude towards English and its importance for their bright future. However, they did complain about English lessons at School, which were more about English grammar than anything else. The excerpts below are from student interviews and represent the most frequent comments:

Public schools should have more English Medium Programs.

...difficult process, teachers are not good, students are not interested.

It would be better to have better English knowledge at school before the university.

School doesn't give General English, only grammar.

At school speaking and listening is not good.

Thus, as in other countries we visited, students felt the need to take extra English courses which focused on developing the four skills required to enter university and specifically EMI programmes.

Another intriguing issue is that most students (70 out of 100) would like to be able to access foundation-level courses before starting their degree programme, because studying subjects in English without prior experience of doing so was found to be difficult. Most students in the group had had Azerbaijani school education, and studying completely in English was said to pose challenges both in terms of the demand of the course load and understanding the subject matter:

During my 1st bachelor year at university the level of English was so poor. That's why it demanded me to learn much more on myself. Apart from that, we were learning the whole courses in English, microeconomics, macroeconomics, algebra etc. however the wrong mechanism made us get less knowledge in these courses. As a recommendation, I can say that if we learn a year English language, then other subjects, it will be more effective for the students. But our university makes all things at the same time, and it decreases the effective language level of students.

There should be academic English courses. IELTS/SAT doesn't mean that student is ready for academic English.

Problems in math/ difficult with understanding terminology – I knew only general English, not specific.

Lessons were academic, so it took a lot of time to study one subject.

One quarter of students (25 out of 100) were dissatisfied with their lecturers' pedagogical approach. They mentioned that lecturers possess very good subject knowledge and excellent English, but their teaching methods were deemed less successful. Classes were described as boring, and they had a hard time understanding the subject:

Classes should be interactive, more interaction with students.

Teachers have good academic background, but they do not have good teaching skills. They come from good companies, but lack in teaching skills.

Therefore, they suggested the university focus on pedagogical training rather than English language courses. Although many students complained about faculty members switching languages during the classes, some students did not mind as they were more concerned about understanding the subject than the English.

There was a chance to meet with only two international students from Business Administration, who liked the country, the people and their friends, but they were unhappy about the quality of EMI programmes and universities' response to English use. They explained that sometimes lecturers (20% of them) switched to Azerbaijani, and students (70%) also used Azerbaijani among themselves and with the lecturer during the classes. The same was also observed out of class in their group channel on social media. As a result, they felt uncomfortable and had to keep silent. A few students offered help in translating, but the lecturer was not involved to solve issues with language use. The same problem was observed around the campus with administrative staff. Therefore, international students suggested working on EMI implementation at all strata, since the number of international students has been growing each year.

Both national and international students note that the university monitors EMI programmes through anonymous student feedback about the lecturers and quality of classes. However, their feedback was not always taken into consideration because of a shortage of content teachers and administrative staff with sufficient English language knowledge.

The survey results provide more insights into students' competence and confidence (writing, reading written documents, speaking and understanding) in English at university. Generally, the data indicates that local students "have no difficulty" (65%) or "some difficulty" (31%) with the above-mentioned skills. However, there are still some students (4%) who expressed "having a lot difficulty" and (2%) "being unable" to perform those skills in a university environment. Consequently, many local students highlighted in discussion the necessity for university support with English language development.

Although most international students (80%) mention "no difficulty" with functioning in English at the university, they complain about their speaking ability outside of the university where English does not help them; thus, international students see the need to take extra Azerbaijani language classes to function properly outside of the university:

Group chats, WhatsApp- are in Azeri, and the students use Azeri for giving information about study issues, so I cannot understand.

Only 30% of my classmates speak English.

....in the street we cannot use English because no one understand us.

Finally, in response to question 16 on the level of exposure to English in their spare time, only 5.2% of local students ticked "all English", with 35.5% "less English" or "no English" exposure. Although English is prevalent in all domains now through TV, the internet, street signs and so on, there are still some lecturers and students who have less or do not have any exposure to English in their free time. English for many, however, is not just an academic tool but a natural part of their whole being.

Student views on their own and others' language competence

There is no specific entry requirement for English at HE institutions in Azerbaijan, which depends on the state exam score. Students who choose an EMI programme must gain a mark of 23 out of 25 points from grammar, writing and reading. However, these points do not adequately indicate students' proficiency in English; thus, most challenges in EMI programmes are related to proficiency level. During the interviews, students emphasized the varied proficiency level in the classes which made the lecturers switch back and forth between English and Azerbaijani.

According to the survey, 85% (n=167/197) of students evaluate their proficiency level in English as intermediate (B1) or upper-intermediate (B2), and 4% (n=8/197) regard their proficiency level as elementary (A2) or beginner-level (A1). Certainly, this language evaluation is subjective; and it clearly shows that most students have high self-confidence, and some may lack self-esteem which is observed in identifying themselves as poor language users. However, in the interviews students' main complaint was about lecturers' English proficiency, that they were practising their English with students and making many mistakes while explaining, but they had excellent subject knowledge.

In question 17, students were asked about their experience with international exams such as TOEFL or IELTS, and 90,4% (n=168/197) reported having no experience with such exams with only 9,6% (n=19) having taken one. Although admission exams to HE institutions are administered by the State Examination Center, there are still some universities (notably Khazar University) which conduct internal English exams to evaluate students' proficiency level in English and differentiate them in terms of levels into groups. However, there is no clear information about the language requirement for international students on universities' websites. Only a few schools such as ADA and Baku Higher Oil school indicate a language requirement with a minimum IELTS 6.0 score.

In order to resolve issues around the English proficiency level, a standard international test should be adopted for both students and staff. Universities should require this international test as a part of the entry requirement for students, and employment requirements for staff.

Language support

In response to question 19 regarding taking additional language courses to improve proficiency in English, 50,5% of students answered 'yes'. The other half (49,5%) expressed their satisfaction with the English language support provided at the university, while there were still other students (32%) who were not sure about the foreign language support provided to them. Most students complained about school education due to the lack of opportunity to practice and grammar-focused lessons. However, international students (80%) were mostly happy with the support from the university.

Interestingly, the interview results indicate contradictory opinions about university support, focusing on the lack of subject materials written in English and pressure on studying the first year of an

EMI programme. Accordingly, 50% of students were very likely to participate in professional language courses if the university offered them in future. Nevertheless, 6% of students did not consider taking part in such courses, and 16% of students were hesitant about the necessity for these courses. There were also other suggestions, such as establishing foundation courses to strengthen their knowledge in core modules in English before starting their degree programme and launching exchange programmes with other schools abroad.

Perceived benefits of EMI

The government has focused on increasing the number of incoming students since 2013 by easing the admission procedures for them. Since then, a lot has been achieved in Higher Education in terms of academic staff and student mobility, and launching exchange programmes. For instance, since 2013 Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan Architecture and Construction University, Azerbaijan University of Languages, for example, have joined the Mevlana Exchange Program for students to study or staff to teach in Turkish HEIs for at least a semester (Mevlana Exchange Programme 2020); in 2017 and 2018 the government approved “The Educational Grant Programme for the Citizens of the Member Countries of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation” and “The Educational Grant Programme for the Citizens of the Member Countries of the Non-Aligned Movement” which gives an opportunity for 40 overseas students to study at the best universities in Azerbaijan (Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020).

However, it was only in 2018 that a new presidential resolution was approved in an attempt to upgrade the content and quality of the HE system, the *State*

Program for Increasing International Competitiveness of Higher Education System in the Republic of Azerbaijan 2019-2023 (Resolution of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2018). It clearly highlights the need to match the educational standards of leading countries by addressing all HE-related issues and considering stakeholders’ needs. Since EMI plays a very important role in the internationalisation of the education system, the following survey results may prove valuable in efforts to improve the quality of the broader HE system in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The survey results illustrate that out of nine potential reasons for choosing EMI programs only seven were common among the students. The first main motivation was to improve English proficiency, and the lowest-ranked rationale was ‘It was not my choice’, and this latter option was not mentioned by international students. Interestingly, as was the case in Armenia, most overseas (35%) and local students (42%) have chosen EMI programmes to improve their English proficiency. Other notable reasons among both categories of student were future employment needs (locals – 18%; internationals – 26%), high salary (locals – 13%; internationals -13%;) and a desire to know more about their field of study (locals – 16%; internationals – 13%). Only 8.7% of international and 6.9% of local students have opted for an EMI programme because of its prestige, whereas 6.6% of students selected the programme for other different reasons, such as lessons being conducted in an interesting and fun way and teachers being more qualified compared to other faculty in other modes of instruction.

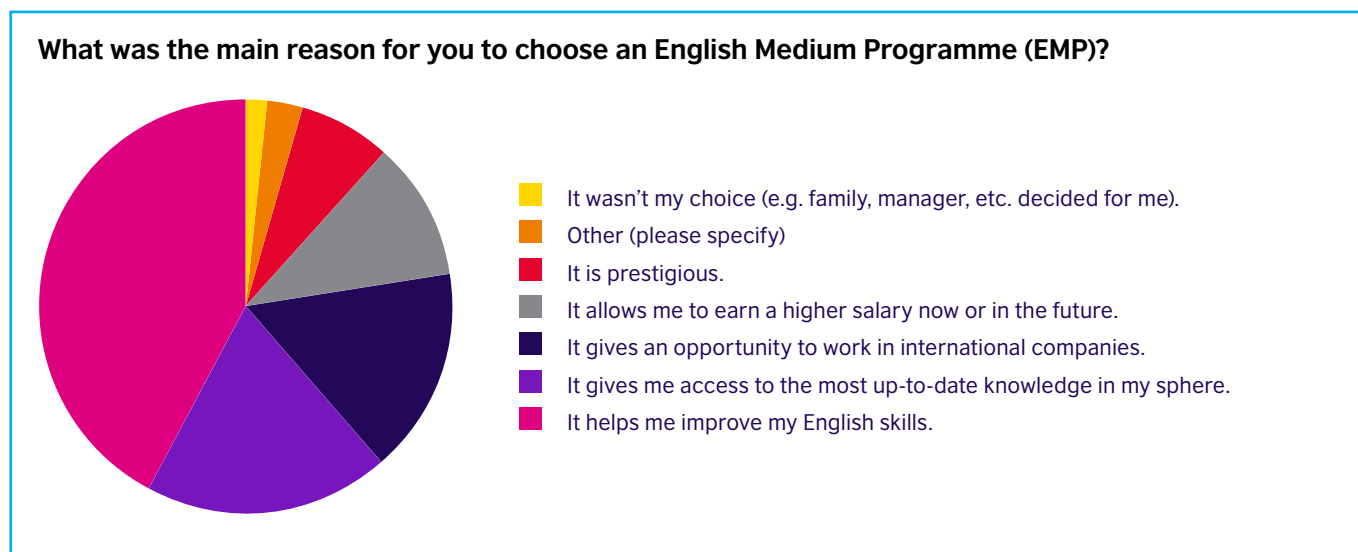


Figure 2

Main reasons for choosing EMP	International student %	Local student %
It allows me to earn a higher salary now or in the future.	13.1	12.6
It gives an opportunity to work in international companies.	26.1	18.4
It gives me access to the most up-to-date knowledge in my sphere.	13.0	16.1
It helps me improve my English skills.	34.8	42.0
It is prestigious.	8.7	6.9
It wasn't my choice (e.g. family, manager, etc. decided for me).	0.0	1.7
Other (please specify)	4.3	2.3
Total	n=23	n=174

Table 7 Main reasons for choosing an EMP

Other views on EMI and on the use of English

Most students, both international and local, suggested during the interviews that academic staff have better subject knowledge compared to their English language skills. However, they mainly complained about library resources, subject difficulty, poor academic language skills, and code-switching during the classes. To ameliorate the situation, some teachers and students came up with practical solutions such as additional office hours to explain topics in Azerbaijani, the use of simple language to explain complex terminology, more self-study hours and agreement between teachers and students to code-switch, since, as one student stated, 'We are here to learn the subject, not the language'.

In order to clarify and summarise the opinions of students on the qualities of a good EMI programme, the survey included ten questions (numbers 24 to 33) to rank the various qualities. According to the survey results, 121 participants rated the teacher's subject knowledge as the number one quality, which bears out the interview data as students never complained about their teachers' subject knowledge,

although some mentioned its importance over English language skills. Surprisingly (but bearing out the Armenia findings), participants (118 out of 263) rated the teacher's fluency as more important than students' fluency (only 43 out of 263 chose this). The data suggests that teachers play a key role in EMI as the importance of "international staff" is high ranked at number 6 (chosen by 73 out of 263) whereas "international students" are ranked 9th. Many students prefer EMI programmes to be "only in English" (82 out of 263); however, the reality is different either because of students' or teachers' proficiency levels, a fact which became clear during the discussion sessions. Interestingly, access to online resources is evaluated as a more important feature than library resources. Finally, during the interviews, teacher pedagogy was criticized only by a few students and indeed respondents regard class activities and class discussions as the least important amongst the ten listed qualities.

Rank	Qualities	Total n=263	%
1	Teacher's subject knowledge	121	46.01%
2	Teacher's fluency in English	118	45.38%
3	Using English all the time	82	31.66%
4	Access to online resources	82	31.54%
5	Access to English sources in the library	79	30.74%
6	International staff	73	28.63%
7	All students contributing to class discussions	63	24.42%
8	Variety of class activities	68	26.25%
9	International students	60	23.53%
10	Students' fluency in English	43	16.67%

Table 8 Qualities of a good English medium course

Further striking findings were as follows:

- 85% of students express interest in using English with only 2% expressing a negative view.
- Although 85% of students are interested in learning languages, only 73% of students are open to talking about languages.
- 70% of international students preferred British English, whereas 40% of local students express a neutral view toward British and other forms of English.

Georgia

Students' background and expectations

In the focus group, students were respectful of each other's views and experiences, and these were by no means uniform. There was a clear sense that Georgian and international students were getting different experiences of their university study, and that there is a corresponding difference in the experience of EMI programmes compared with Georgian-language programmes.

Some students felt that Georgian students coming from Georgian high schools were less well-prepared for university study than those coming from overseas, although this view was not unanimous. 'American students' (students on SDSU double-degree programmes) were said to have the opportunity to learn other languages on their course while other international students do not have that chance. Students in general perceived that the quality in the EMI groups is higher than in the Georgian-medium classes, with better teachers and more support for preparation for the US Medical Licensing examination. Even with this very limited sample of students (26) at just one university, we gained a clear sense of a Higher Education system of "haves" and "have-nots", of a (perceived) lack of equality of opportunity. One student referred to 'a barrier between students which is not healthy'.

There was a strong view that international students on EMI programmes should be taught (more) Georgian. It is particularly difficult for medical students going into clinical environments not to have the necessary language skills, and Georgian students end up having to translate for the international students. Clearly, if international students had more knowledge of Georgian at an earlier stage in their studies, classes could be more linguistically rich. Students noted that scientific terms are sometimes difficult to explain to Georgian students in English, so there would be real benefit to be gained from international students receiving tuition in scientific / medical Georgian here too.

While this project is primarily concerned with the language aspect of EMI, students were quick to talk about their experience of the instruction more broadly. The prevailing view was that teaching staff fall into two categories: a) predominantly younger teachers with good subject knowledge and sufficient language skills; b) those teachers who are not living up to students' expectations in terms of their support, their subject knowledge and their language skills, who were described as typically older faculty. While students did not make a hard and fast distinction between older and younger faculty, there was widespread dissatisfaction with those teachers who are felt to be unhelpful and lacking the content and language skills expected in 21st-century HE. This was the one point that we were asked particularly to highlight to the Ministry! Although the story was anecdotal, it was alarming to hear that students sometimes can't understand exam questions because the English-language formulation is so poor.

It is our understanding that faculty tend to be resistant to straight language support, and so this (at least in one university we visited) is not provided. There is, in the view of student stakeholders, a significant need for such training, and it may be more welcome to staff if language skills could be supported via a programme of EMI pedagogical development.

Students' experience of their EMI programmes does not appear to be monitored explicitly. We were told that internal surveys of the experience of students ask questions about various aspects of the programme, including whether the instruction is clear, but do not explore how students have found the language aspects of the instruction, whether that be around their own needs or on the part of the teachers.

Question 21 of the survey asked students to state how they found using English for different purposes (reading written documents, understanding spoken English, etc.). Most students stated that they had no difficulty, particularly international students. While local students found managing English pretty much the same in all contexts (c. 80% had 'no difficulty' and 20% had 'some difficulty'), international students reported in slightly greater numbers finding using English outside the university more difficult than performing academic tasks within the university. 84% reported that they had 'no difficulty' speaking

English outside the university compared with 92% reporting no difficulty with academic English tasks. These are very small numbers, but they might suggest some attention be paid to supporting international students more around integration and social engagement as well as providing more support with Georgian.

In question 16 students were asked about their relative exposure to English within and outside the university. It is no surprise to learn that 78% of international students have as much or more exposure to English in their spare time, but it is maybe more surprising to learn that over half (53%) of local students report *more* English in their spare time than in their academic studies, and no local student reports a lifestyle which does not involve English. English is everywhere in modern Georgia, and thinking narrowly about English-medium *instruction* may not represent the reality of what is in fact an English-medium *lifestyle*.

Student views on their own and others' language competence (Georgia)

Any student entering an EMI programme at a Georgian university needs to have gained a B2 level (Common European Framework of Reference [CEFR]) in English, but it is not clear what evidence is actually required and how it is presented to the admitting university. Universities interview and admit their own students, and after that there are no guidelines from the Ministry around the delivery and development of EMI programmes. The autonomy of institutions in this regard is desirable, but, given that appropriate competence in English is of the essence for thriving on an EMI programme, the Ministry should consider managing the process of English testing and certification more robustly.

In response to the question 'Have you ever taken an international test in English, such as TOEFL or IELTS?', only 22% of international students surveyed and 27% of local students responded affirmatively. Most reported a level of IELTS 6 (equivalent to CEFR B2) or above, but several reported A2 and scores below 6. We don't know whether these were initial scores which were subsequently improved in order to satisfy entrance requirements, or whether in fact students were being admitted without the required level of English.

The present study focuses on what it is really like for students and staff operating in an EMI environment. What is therefore more significant than the initial test scores is how stakeholders feel about their ability to cope. Taking all students together (responding to Q.11: 'What do you think is your current level of English?'), we found the following:

What do you think is your current level of English?	
Advanced (C1)	69
Beginner (A1)	4
Elementary (A2)	1
Intermediate (B1)	35
Proficient (C2)	37
Upper-intermediate (B2)	88
Total	234

Table 9

Here absolute numbers are more revealing than percentages. 17% of students enrolled on university programmes at prestigious Georgian institutions regard themselves as possessing English competence below the level required to be admitted. In discussion, teachers told us that some Georgian students 'do not know basic English' and that some overseas students 'do not speak English'. These views have not been tested, but as perceptions and the basis for an educational experience, they are alarming. Other evidence suggests that students' readiness for English-medium learning at university is indeed a serious issue, with only 40% of students registering for the National Assessment and Examinations Centre English language assessment achieving the pass mark of 20% (Kelly 2019: 3).

One aspect of English use was mentioned several times by both faculty members and by students in the focus groups, namely accent and pronunciation. Medical students realised that they encounter problems when communicating with patients because of their pronunciation of English. One student also wrote that ‘it would be great if the teaching staff could speak more fluently; students have difficulty in understanding the teacher’s words considering the teacher’s age and pronunciation’. From the other side, a teacher remarked that the accents of students can make communication difficult.

Language support

18,6% of international students stated, in response to Question 19 of the survey, that they had taken a course to improve their English since starting at university, as did 36% of local students. It is not immediately clear what those courses might have been, but there is clearly an appetite for more. 66% of both local and international students stated

that they would be ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to sign up for additional professional English support, if it were offered (Q. 20). Just 41% of international students felt that their university provided ‘sufficient support with their English language development’ (Q. 26). There is a clearly unfulfilled need here. Two-thirds of international students would like more support, the same fraction feeling that the university doesn’t give sufficient support, and they are not finding that support elsewhere, with less than one-fifth having taken a course.

For those students who felt that their university did not offer them sufficient support, and in response to the question ‘what additional support could be offered?’ (Q. 27), opinion was fairly equally divided between three possibilities, as follows:

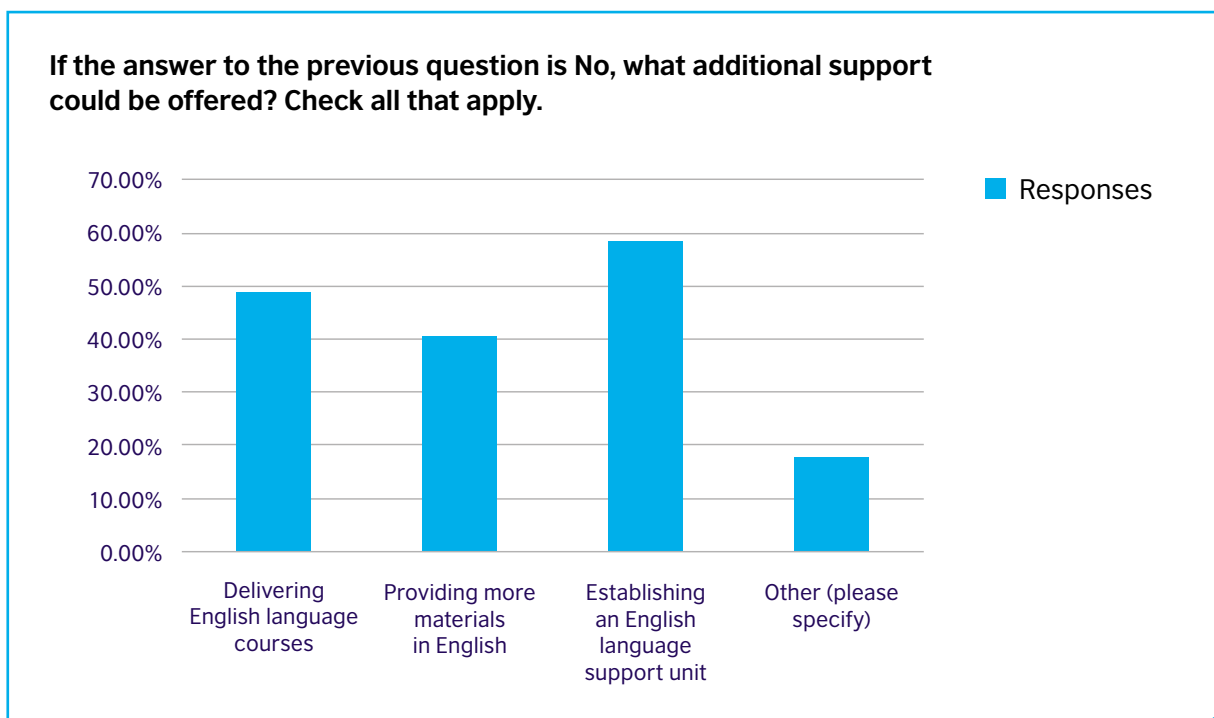


Figure 3

Perceived benefits of EMI

A key question for the Ministry and universities in Georgia relates to the market and the expressed desire to increase overseas student numbers with the aim of becoming a regional centre for HE. All planners and strategists are aware of the inherent danger in the view that, “if you build it, they will come”. This is the basis for the Study in Georgia programme:

The program facilitating internationalization “Study in Georgia” was designed to promote the elaboration of English language programs, development of the student-oriented infrastructure and attracting foreign students to Georgia. (Ministry 2017: 27)

For now, however, we will consider the reasons students give for choosing an English-medium programme:

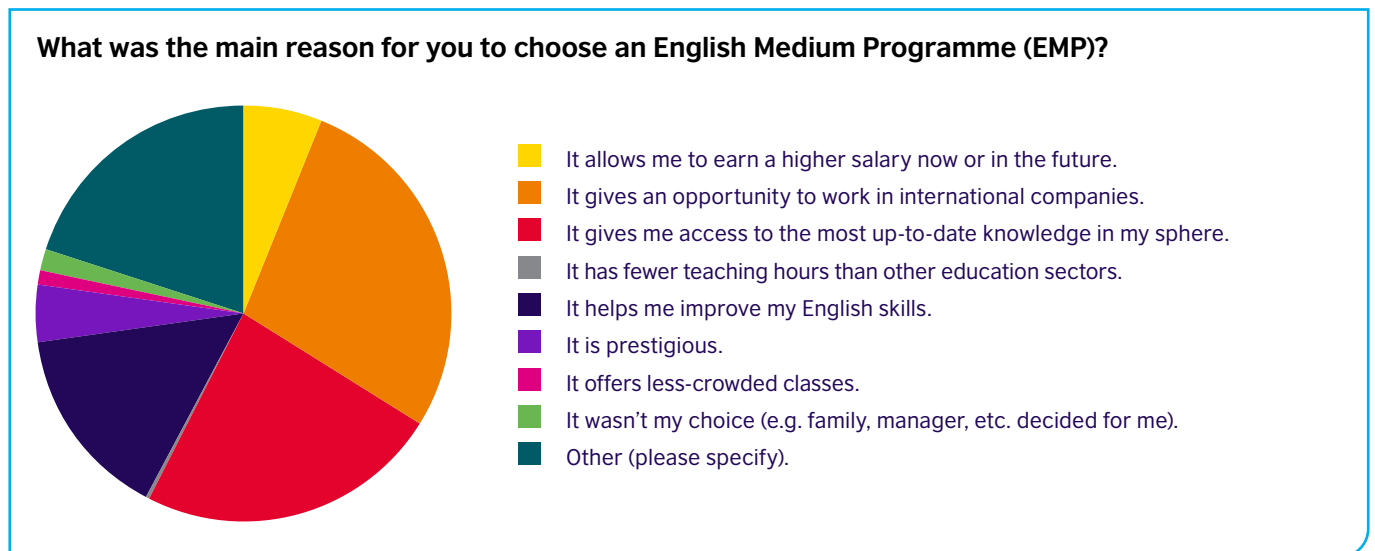


Figure 4

The predominant rationale is to work internationally with improving English skills only appearing to be around half as compelling as a motivation. Note that figure 10 aggregates both international and local students, so it may be instructive to separate out the motivations expressed by Georgian students for EMI study, as follows:

What was the main reason for you to choose an English Medium Programme (EMP)?	International student %	Local student %
It allows me to earn a higher salary now or in the future.	7.8	1.8
It gives an opportunity to work in international companies.	30.2	18.2
It gives me access to the most up-to-date knowledge in my sphere.	21.8	32.7
It has fewer teaching hours than other education sectors.	0.6	0
It helps me improve my English skills.	13.4	18.2
It is prestigious.	5.0	3.6
It offers less-crowded classes.	0.6	0
It wasn't my choice (e.g. family, manager, etc. decided for me).	1.7	1.8
Other (please specify)	19.0	23.6
Total	n=179	n=55

Table 10

This is only a snapshot, but very significantly, considerably less than 20% of all students are primarily taking an EMI course to improve their English skills. 'Other' reasons given are mostly pragmatic ones, e.g. 'because I've always studied in English language' or 'because I don't speak Georgian or Russian'.

Since there is insufficient evidence in the research literature to suggest that students will acquire the same language skills via EMI as they would if they were to study content and language in parallel, and given some of the challenges and downsides of taking a full EMI package, one might question the value of EMI for local students. As Galloway (2017) suggests, since 'an intensive English language programme can achieve the same result in just ten weeks, it seems that EMI is not as effective as traditional language study'.

6 Staff and institutional perspectives

The Republic of Armenia

Teachers' background and expectations

The majority of our Armenian respondents were students, however we also had a strong response from the teaching staff. Of these, 90 can be described as subject content teachers, i.e. those engaged in EMI as we are understanding it in the current context. The remaining 33 teachers were foreign language teachers. 94% of the teachers surveyed were local.

In discussion, teachers reported many of the experiences common to EMI worldwide (see, e.g. Henriksen, Holmen & Kling 2019: Ch. 7). It was noted, for example, that classes are “slower” in English and that it takes longer to prepare for EMI classes than Armenian-medium classes. There was not a sense that the University was providing training to prepare staff for English-medium teaching, and that particularly EMI methodology was a priority for professional development.

Teachers felt that teaching content in English was straightforward enough at a superficial level, but it becomes more difficult when there is a need to express the teachers' own feelings and thoughts. In some disciplines even translating the concepts is not an easy task, as discourse patterns vary across languages; technical terms and academic discourse mean different things in the context of different language systems. 5 of the 127 teachers who responded to the survey reported that EMI was not their decision, rather that it had been imposed on them. However, teachers also spoke up for the value of EMI from the students' perspective. Students believe that EMI is a good thing, for reasons we have already discussed, and, while it is challenging for students, they are motivated by the possibility of study abroad and better-paid jobs in the future.

The sector and students are eager for EMI programmes, and one of the “brakes” which should be applied is a culture of openness and honesty about the challenges and demands on teachers, especially those who are well-established in the profession and who may find the switch to new methods more challenging (Henriksen, Holmen & Kling 2019: 157).

Teachers' views on their own and others' language competence

Teachers are more optimistic about their own language ability than students are. 51% of subject content teaching staff describe themselves as being at CEFR C-level, i.e., in our terms, ‘proficient’ or ‘advanced’. The teachers we witnessed in action in Armenia were highly proficient and clearly took great pride in their excellent language skills. They were outstanding EFL role models for their students. However, one of our subject content teacher respondents self-assessed as CEFR A2-level, which is not sufficient to cope with EMI; a language user possessing A2 competence ‘can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters’, which is a far cry from the complex language requirements of university-level study.

72% of subject content teachers would be likely or very likely to sign up for additional professional English support, if it were available. 59% say they have already done so since starting to teach at their university, and it would be instructive to know more about where they have accessed that support.

Based on the self-assessment of teachers, there is clearly a strong desire for ongoing professional development both in language and in EMI pedagogy.

It is recommended that all agencies address this as a top priority, as articulated in the draft *Strategy* (2019: 9): ‘[...] the implementation of systems encouraging the knowledge of foreign languages and of professional development programs at HEIs is very important’.

We encountered some insightful views amongst university staff around the potential impact of EMI on wider society. Some questioned the benefit of studying through English when graduates will go on to work in the Armenian economy. Although not described as such, concerns were expressed about *domain* loss, whereby areas of language use are handed over to English so that the *domain* in question ceases to be functional in the local language, e.g. medicine or engineering (for more on the domain loss phenomenon in language policy, see, e.g., Hultgren 2016). In the course of our research, medical students spoke to us about the challenge for international students studying through the medium of English having to communicate with patients expecting to discuss medical matters in their own language.

Given that the status of Armenian is enshrined in law, it is somewhat fantastic to maintain that Armenian will be lost to English, but, in the context of the “runaway train” it is recommended that debates about potential domain loss and the rise of English as both opportunity and threat should be encouraged, focusing on ways of ensuring a flourishing multilingual ecology with Armenian, Russian and English co-existing to mutual benefit.

University management and leadership

The driver for increased EMI provision is typically top-down and a strategic decision at executive level to seek to increase student numbers by offering programmes which will attract overseas students and also increase the employability appeal for the home market.

Interestingly, the emphasis in Armenia appears to be on undergraduate (Bachelors) provision, while the major growth in EMI programmes elsewhere further West and North in Europe has tended to be more at postgraduate (Masters) level. Numbers at Masters level are smaller, but it is potentially easier to keep the brakes on EMI as students are both more advanced in their language learning (hence the IELTS 6.5 requirement in Armenia, which is the same as for most UK-based programmes) and academically more resilient, having already completed a number of years of university study.

In one institution we were made aware of the challenge to wholesale implementation of EMI as only 20% of the lecturers “know” English, although it was hoped that this could be increased to 60%. As will be clear from the current report, increasing capacity in this way is not a simple linear process. Upskilling teachers to “know” enough English does not address the issue of the challenges inherent in EMI delivery, nor the embedding of pedagogical techniques and methods appropriate to the foreign-language classroom.

Offering salaries to those who are prepared to embrace EMI teaching which are twice those of Armenian-medium teachers strikes us as a dangerous policy. Such a financial benefit (evidenced in the other countries too) is likely to encourage lecturers to embark on EMI for the wrong reasons and without adequate preparation. It is also in danger of creating a two-speed curriculum, where EMI is presented as being twice as valuable as a commodity and its providers as being twice as valuable as colleagues.

HE in Armenia is a competitive market, not least as more international providers enter that market. We have heard that there will be a brake on the proliferation of private providers in order to ensure quality of provision. However, it may be that universities can be more innovative in their EMI offer if they are empowered to offer more short courses and CPD for business. While current students might or might not need English skills for the workplace in the future, business and industry know what their actual needs are, and professional upskilling delivered through English could serve the economy more directly and more immediately than more undergraduate EMI programmes.

The Republic of Azerbaijan

Teachers’ background and expectations

In Azerbaijan lecturers comprised 17% of respondents (n=45). These lecturers were mainly from STEM, Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines. The majority were locals (97,8%) with the international 2,2% being from Iran.

During the interviews, most teachers admitted that EMI was challenging with a lack of knowledge about innovative methods to deliver lectures and seminars and a shortage of resources in English for the development of lesson plans. Lecturers did their best to explain the topic in simple language but in some cases they had to code switch to explain terminology:

...lack of knowledge about innovative methods to deliver my lectures.

Every year subjects get renewed, so I have to translate some materials from Russian to English to prepare lectures and seminars.

The problem is more about students rather than teachers. I teach management and business-related subjects – it is difficult to make the students understand.

Major classes have to be taught in English, but still depends on the level of students, sometimes we have to switch to other languages.

In response to question 15 about the main reasons for choosing an EMI programme, 44,4% of lecturers mentioned the opportunity to improve their language and 28,9% the opportunity to gain the most up to date knowledge; only 2,2% had to teach in this programme because of an administrative directive. In one or two universities with both teachers and students the point was made that administration has had the final decision as to who

teaches on English-medium programmes. The reasons behind such actions were fewer teaching hours compared to other medium instruction programmes and a higher salary. However, those teachers' competence to teach in English might be under question, as students suggested.

Finally, many teachers were younger in career-age and demonstrated a manifest passion to work on themselves and develop their knowledge and skills.

Teachers' views on their own and others' language competence

The majority of teachers (75%) evaluate their knowledge of English as being advanced (C1) or proficient (C2), and only one teacher assesses their English as elementary (A2). However, teaching on an EMI programme with A2 would not be possible in practice. According to the self-reports, only 28,9% of teachers have taken IELTS/TOEFL for employment purposes. It is clear that not all universities have a specific certified language requirement of teachers, and interview alone may be enough to be hired onto an EMI programme. 65% of teachers state that they have taken specific courses to improve their English since they have started working at their university, and at the same time 71,1% were very likely to take part in a professional English course if the university offered one. Although institutions were said during interviews to provide enough language support, most of the content teachers feel they need more language and methodology support specifically related to their subjects, i.e. English for Specific Purposes rather than General English. It is important to mention that only those teachers at Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction referred to extensive training in the form of eight months EMI online teacher training from the University of Leicester, UK. This course was said to have helped them to rethink and upgrade their teaching methodology.

During the discussion groups with teachers, there was an oft-repeated concern about students' English proficiency, in that they struggled to understand the content. Therefore, teachers considered code-switching and translating as the only effective solution. The teachers at those universities which did not offer foundation courses acknowledged the importance of foundation courses in addressing the issue of language proficiency as well as potentially redesigning entrance exams.

University management and leadership

A small number of responses in the survey were provided by administrative staff (8%); however, participation rates in the interviews were sufficient to obtain a reasonable picture of the situation. Administrative and management staff evaluated their proficiency level very highly but still expressed an interest in additional language support provided by the university. During the interviews international students expressed their dissatisfaction openly about the English language proficiency of administrative staff. It was reported that some EMI universities do not require them to possess English skills while others do. Most institutions offer special courses for administrative staff to help improve their English. They even offer "native speaker hours" where native speakers of English have conversation classes with administrative staff twice a week in one of the universities.

Some universities referred to the use of a quality assurance system. For instance, monitoring and examining both ELT and EMI teachers regarding language and subject proficiency every 2 or 3 years, attending lessons to observe language use between teachers and students and also receiving feedback from students about teachers' language use. Most of the emphasis in quality assurance clearly focuses on teachers rather than the student perspective.

Georgia

Teachers' experience

The overwhelming majority of our Georgian respondents were students, with only three staff responding to the questionnaire. Consequently, we have less material to work with to assess the views and the experiences of those involved in the delivery of EMI in Georgian HE. As less than half of those in our focus group were delivering academic subject content (as opposed to teaching general English), our insights into the faculty perspective is quite limited, and comments should be understood in that light.

One of the Georgian faculty admitted to finding the language challenge so great when he started this work that he wanted to quit. As noted above, students' accents can take some time to get used to with each new intake. Other expressed practical challenges are common to university teachers everywhere and relate mainly to teaching students with different levels of prior learning and different levels of preparedness for EMI studies.

University management and leadership

Both the Ministry and the universities in Georgia are quite rightly concerned about the nature and amount of *support* needed to ensure good student outcomes on EMI programmes. The international research literature reviewed above shows very clearly that the runaway train is causing damage. EMI courses are being developed at a vertiginous rate without due care and attention being paid to an infrastructure of support and development for those involved in the teaching and learning, and this is perhaps even more of an issue for those in support rather than academic roles.

Nominally at least, teachers and students are assessed for their language skills necessary to embark on EMI courses, but administrative staff often end up having to communicate both internally and externally through the medium of English, when it was never previously part of their role or their required skill set. In one university we were told that ‘the main problem is with administrative staff’. In another institution it was stated that more ‘English language competent’ staff are needed in the faculties, as students complain about the lack of information being provided, and one student wrote of the need for administrative staff dealing with international students to have the necessary English skills.

One university leader explained that more English-medium programmes were coming on stream each semester, but the language skills of the staff delivering them are not assessed. Currently it is up to the staff themselves and to course leaders to say whether teachers are at the right level. This is not a robust system and, in order to give confidence to students and employers, it would be desirable to implement a system of certification for EMI teachers which is fit for purpose, and this would apply across the region.

The University of Copenhagen has developed a test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff (TOEPAS), which is only the most well-elaborated of a number of such certification tests in operation at universities elsewhere in Europe, typically in institutions with a culture of EMI research.

TOEPAS (Henriksen, Holmen & Kling 2019: 83-92) assesses test-takers for audience awareness, pronunciation, fluency and cohesion, grammar and vocabulary. The test functions as a means to assess training needs, so any such regime would need to be introduced in the context of significant investment in CPD, and this may well prove impractical; one of the institutions visited felt that such CPD would have to be provided externally. However, as the international market in EMI provision becomes more competitive, quality assurance of the teachers may well come to be expected. At the Georgian university where this issue was discussed, it was felt that Quality and Standards needed to develop new regulations around certification for EMI teachers.

As in Armenia, there may be interesting opportunities for universities in the context of national vocational education (see Mackenzie 2019 for recommendations here). The strategic goal for vocational education, as formulated in the *Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021*, is to:

Increase the number of vocational students in support of socio-economic development of the country and ensure their competitiveness by developing professional and general skills.

Classrooms and resources in all countries

As we noted in the previous section, few of the classes we observed (at least in Armenia and Georgia) could be described as truly English-medium pedagogical experiences. While the teachers were super-fluent, delivery was almost entirely one-way with students at best responding in a formulaic manner. Students were not using English dynamically as part of an interactive and immersive learning experience; they were passive recipients and students arrived at and left the class quite freely, pointing to a feeling of disengagement. It may be that other classes are able to offer that immersive experience in a way that the lecture-type events we witnessed could not. However, if EMI is really to be a shared experience for all those in the room, thought should be given to classroom lay-out and avoiding the “sage on a stage” model with students as passive recipients of pre-packaged facts. I’m sure what we witnessed was indeed not indicative of all taught contexts.

This is not an issue unique to these countries. As O'Dowd notes, based on his survey of the research literature, 'there are also serious questions relating to whether content teachers are willing and able to make the methodological changes necessary to teach successfully through a foreign language and to what extent they are being trained in methodologies suited to EMI' (O'Dowd 2018: 556.). O'Dowd concludes that there is significant variation across Europe in terms of the training provided for EMI teachers as well as in terms of the level of English competency required and methods for accreditation of EMI teachers (see previous section for more on the question of certification).

More of an issue may be the lack of classroom infrastructure. One classroom we witnessed at an Armenian university had no technology beyond a few elderly posters on the wall and so was unable to capitalise on the wealth of on-line resources available to aid the classroom experience. Another classroom appeared to have a projector, but the only medium supporting the lecture was the whiteboard. In Azerbaijan only four classes were organised in a flexible layout to allow student-centred lessons, while the other six were in a traditional format with desks and chairs in several rows.

Informal discussion suggested that there were no relevant English-language materials related to the programme in question available in one Armenian university library. Teachers in Georgia mentioned a lack of textbooks, and a student also referred in the free-text section of the questionnaire (Q 28) to the need for English books in the library.

Delivery in English is not divorced from the international norms with respect to resources associated with the English-medium learning environment, whether this be library resources, online and interactive materials or other pedagogical tools and techniques.

7 Conclusions

Summary of project

Our task has been to gain a rounded picture of the experience of and attitudes to English-medium instruction in the Higher Education sectors of the South Caucasus countries in order to provide recommendations for those involved in developing this provision further. The relevant ministries are committed to the further provision of FLMI education as a principal enabler of increased internationalisation and rightly want to gain a fuller understanding of the reality of EMI to date before moving forward.

We began by establishing what we mean by EMI and provided a survey of the insights arising from previous research to set out the issues for all stakeholders – teachers, students and planners – as evidenced by the longer experience of EMI in other parts of Europe and beyond. From this it became clear that there are two potentially conflicting positions.

Ministries and universities on the one hand are attracted by the idea of increased EMI provision as it seems to offer a number of benefits. In theory EMI provision will enable more international students to enrol on degree programmes. This brings increased income for the institutions as well as for the communities in which they are situated, as overseas students spend money in the local economy. The delivery of teaching and assessment in a foreign language appears to offer a two-for-the-price-of-one experience for local students, who can develop subject-specific skills and knowledge while at the same time developing their skills in a language which could prove valuable for their future employment. Furthermore, the opportunity to teach in an international language could allow for the engagement of international staff, potentially with international research ambitions. In practice it seems however that thus far international student numbers remain low as do numbers of teachers from overseas.

On the other hand (bottom-up) the research tells us that there are non-trivial practical challenges for both students and teachers in engaging with the experience, and support for the enterprise tends to be limited in HE institutions, which introduce EMI without notable training and support for those involved.

To achieve our ‘rounded picture’, we adopted several research instruments. Initial desk research on the existing literature was followed by a visit to the three capital cities to visit universities, observe EMI classes, meet with focus groups of staff and of students, and speak to the ministries. Informed by this, an on-line survey was designed and carried out. This mixed-methods approach and its findings has informed the discussion we present in parts 5 and 6 above. Section 3 provides an overview of the national political and educational landscapes, which we hope will be relevant and interesting for readers not familiar with this EMI context, which to date has not figured in the research literature.

Further research

EMI in the countries of the South Caucasus region is an under-researched issue. Given this, any of the aspects addressed in the current report could benefit from further, fuller investigation (see also Galloway 2020: 57-58). Agencies across the region are encouraged to commit to an evidence-based approach to developing FLMI further as part of the push for increased internationalisation of HE. We found both students and staff in universities to be both interested in and committed to improving EMI, and local researchers could fruitfully be engaged in further research in this field.

The focus in the current report has been on context, and the experience and attitudes of stakeholders, and little has been made of the content of programmes or how the language skills are or are not being delivered. Alternative pedagogies have not been explored or proposed, so there is more detailed work to be done on these issues too.

8 References

- Airey, John 2011. Talking about teaching in English: Swedish university lecturers' experiences of changing teaching language. *Iberica* 22, 35-54.
- Airey, John, Karen M. Lauridsen, Anne Räsänen, Linus Salö & Vera Schwach 2017. The expansion of English-medium instruction in the Nordic countries: Can top-down university language policies encourage bottom-up disciplinary literacy goals? *Higher Education* 73:4, 561-576.
- Airey, John & Cedric Linder 2006. Language and the experience of learning university physics in Sweden. *European Journal of Physics* 27:3, 553–560.
- Ammon, Ulrich 2016. English as a language of science. In: Andrew Linn, *Investigating English in Europe: Contexts and agendas*. Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 34-39.
- Baker, Will & Julia Hüttner 2018. “We are not the language police”: Comparing multilingual EMI programmes in Europe and Asia. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 29, 78–94.
- Bezborodova, Anastasiya & Saida Radjabzade 2021. English in higher education in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. *World Englishes*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12556> – accessed 18 November 2021.
- Bolton, Kingsley & Maria Kuteeva 2012. English as an academic language at a Swedish university: Parallel language use and the ‘threat’ of English. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 33:5, 429-447.
- Bowles, Hugo & Amanda C. Murphy (eds) 2020. *English-Medium Instruction and the Internationalization of Universities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- British Council 2019. *The British Council Research into Provision of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education in South Caucasus Countries*. https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/emi_research_terms_of_reference_final.docx – accessed 6 January 2020.
- Country Report 2008. *Language Education Policy Profile: Country Report Armenia*. Yerevan: RA Ministry of Education and Science / Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov.
- Dafouz, Emma & Ute Smit 2020. *ROAD-MAPPING English Medium Education in the Internationalised University*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dearden, Julie 2014. *English as a Medium of Instruction: A growing global phenomenon*. London: British Council.
- De Waal, Thomas 2019. *The Caucasus: An introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2001. *On Improvement of the Application of the State Language*. <https://aztc.gov.az/en/posts/id:190> – accessed 15 April 2020.
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2013. *The National Strategy for the Development of Education*. <https://edu.gov.az/en/page/473> – accessed 10 April 2020.
- Diallo, Ibrahima & Anthony J. Liddicoat 2014. Planning language teaching: An argument for the place of pedagogy in language policy and planning. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* 9:2, 110-117.
- Dimova, Slobodanka, Anna Kristina Hultgren & Christian Jensen 2015. *English-Medium Instruction in European Higher Education*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Doiz, Aintzane & David Lasagabaster 2020. Dealing with language issues in English-medium instruction at university: a comprehensive approach. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23:3, 257-262.
- Dörnyei, Zoltán 2007. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Edwards, Alison 2020. Language and the law: How Dutch universities legally justify English-medium education. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics* 9:1-2, 38-59.

- European Commission 2012. *Europeans and their Languages*. https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf – accessed 20 April 2020.
- Galloway, Nicola 2017. How effective is English as a medium of instruction (EMI)? <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/how-effective-english-medium-instruction-emi> – accessed 6 March 2020.
- Galloway, Nicola (ed.) 2020. *Teaching English: English in Higher Education – English Medium. Part 1: Literature Review*. London: British Council.
- Galloway, Nicola, Jaroslaw Kriukow and Takuya Numajiri 2017. *Internationalisation, Higher Education and the Growing Demand for English: An investigation into the English medium of instruction (EMI) movement in China and Japan*. London: British Council.
- Gharibyan, Tatevik 2017. Armenian Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/world-view/armenian-higher-education-european-higher-education-area> – accessed 8 January 2020.
- Glonti, Lika, Tamar Lortkipanidze, Nino Urushadze & Irina Darchia 2017. *Overview of the Higher Education System: Georgia*. Brussels: Erasmus+.
- Hamid, M. Obaidul 2016. The linguistic market for English in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 17:1, 36-55.
- Henriksen, Birgit, Anne Holmen & Joyce Kling 2019. *English Medium Instruction in Multilingual Universities: Academics' voices from the Northern European context*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hincks, Rebecca 2010. Speaking rate and information content in English lingua franca oral presentations. *English for Specific Purposes* 29:1, 4–18.
- Hultgren, Anna Kristina 2016. Domain loss: the rise and demise of a concept. In: Andrew Linn, *Investigating English in Europe: Contexts and agendas*. Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 153-158.
- Kachru, Braj B. 1985. *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models for Non-native Varieties of English*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Karimova, Valida 2017. Multilingualism in Azerbaijan: The most preferred foreign languages in private universities of the country and its socioeconomic aspects. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society* 2:4, 120-125.
- Kelly, Keith 2019. *A Concept for English as a Medium of Instruction in Georgia*. Unpublished report.
- Kirkpatrick, Andy 2017. English-Medium Instruction: Global views and countries in focus. The rise of EMI: Challenges for Asia. *Language Teaching*, 7-10.
- Klemenčič, Manja 2016. *Feasibility Study: Towards a New Higher Education Strategy 2016-2025 of the Republic of Armenia*.
- Kuteeva, Maria 2020. Revisiting the 'E' in EMI: students' perceptions of standard English, lingua franca and translanguaging practices. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23:3, 287-300.
- Kuteeva, Maria & John Airey. 2014. Disciplinary differences in the use of English in higher education: Reflections on recent language policy developments. *Higher Education* 67:5, 533-549.
- Lin, Angel M. Y. 2015. Researcher positionality. In: Francis M. Hult & David Cassels Johnson (eds), *Research Methods in Language Policy and Planning: A practical guide*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 21-32.
- Linn, Andrew 2016. *Investigating English in Europe: Contexts and Agendas*. Boston and Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Linn, Andrew, Anastasiya Bezborodova & Saida Radjabzade 2020. Tolerance and Control: Developing a university language policy for an EMI university in Uzbekistan. *Sociolinguistica* 34, 217-237.
- Li Wei 2018. Translanguaging and Code-Switching: what's the difference? <https://blog.oup.com/2018/05/translanguaging-code-switching-difference/> – accessed 6 March 2020.

- Macaro, Ernesto 2015. English medium instruction: Time to start asking some difficult questions. *Modern English Teacher* 24:2, 4-7. <http://www.modernenglishteacher.com>.
- Macaro, Ernesto 2018. *English Medium Instruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macaro, Ernesto, Samantha Curle, Jack Pun, Jiangshan An & Julie Dearden 2018. A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching* 51:1, 36-76.
- Mackenzie, Alan S. 2019. *English Language Learning and Teaching in Vocational Education in Georgia: A Scoping Study*. Tbilisi: The British Council in Georgia.
- Maisuradze, Tamar 2016. Russian language in Georgia: not number one. *JAMNews*. <https://jam-news.net/russian-language-in-georgia-not-number-one/> – accessed 23 April 2020.
- Maiworm, Friedhelm & Bernd Wächter 2002. *English-Language-Taught Degree Programmes in European Higher Education*. Bonn: Lemmens.
- Martin-Jones, Marilyn 2015. Classroom discourse analysis as a lens on language-in –education policy processes. In: Francis M. Hult & David Cassels Johnson (eds), *Research Methods in Language Policy and Planning: A practical guide*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 94-106.
- Mazak, Catherine M. & Kevin S. Carroll (eds) 2016. *Translanguaging in Higher Education. Beyond monolingual ideologies*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- MFARA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia] 2019. *Study in Armenia*. <https://www.mfa.am/en/study-in-armenia/> – accessed 8 January 2020.
- Mevlana Exchange Programme 2020. *Regulations and Protocols*. http://mevlana.en.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=57 – accessed 15 April 2020.
- Ministry [Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia] 2017. *United Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021*. <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng> – accessed 22 April 2020.
- Ministry [Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia] 2019. *Midterm Evaluation of the Implementation of Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021*. https://mes.gov.ge/uploads/files/Midterm%20evaluation_education%20strategy_ENG_final.pdf – accessed 23 April 2020.
- Ministry [Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia] 2020. Webpages. <https://mes.gov.ge/index.php?lang=eng> – accessed 22 April 2020.
- Ministry of Education the Republic of Azerbaijan 2020. *Educational Institutions*. <https://edu.gov.az/en/page/339> – accessed 10 April 2020.
- NCEQE [National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement] 2020. Webpages. <https://eqe.ge/eng> – accessed 22 April 2020.
- O'Dowd, Robert 2018. The training and accreditation of teachers for English medium instruction: an overview of practice in European universities. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 21:5, 553-563.
- Ofte, Ingunn 2014. English academic writing proficiency in higher education: Facilitating the transition from metalinguistic awareness to metalinguistic competence. *Acta Didactica Norge* 8:2.
- Presidential Library 2013. *The Laws and other acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the State language and the Languages' rights*. http://files.preslib.az/projects/remz/pdf_en/atr_dil.pdf – accessed 15 April 2020.
- Republic of Azerbaijan Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020. *Scholarship*. <https://mfa.gov.az/en/content/399/scholarship> – accessed 25 April 2020.
- Resolution of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2018. *2019-2023 State Program for Increasing International Competitiveness of Higher Education System in the Republic of Azerbaijan*. <https://edu.gov.az/az/page/451> – accessed 25 April 2020.
- Rules for Teachers Evaluation 2015. *Decree of the Government of Georgia 2015 on the Rules for Teachers Evaluation*.

Simpson, John 2019. *English Language and Medium of Instruction in Basic Education in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: a British Council perspective*. London: British Council.

Strategy 2019. *Strategy for Internationalization of Higher Education and Research in the Republic of Armenia*. [Unpublished draft].

The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2020. *Education, science and culture*. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/education/?lang=en> – accessed 10 April 2020.

Thøgersen, Jacob & John Airey 2011. Lecturing undergraduate science in Danish and in English: A comparison of speaking rate and rhetorical style. *English for Specific Purposes* 30:3, 209–221.

Tsaturyan, Kristina, Lusine Fljyan, Tatevik Gharibyan & Mary Hayrapetyan 2017. *Overview of the Higher Education System: Armenia*. Brussels: Erasmus+.

Tsikvadze, Mariam, Ekaterine Lortkipanidze & Salome Gurgenidze 2017. *Applying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Georgia 2015-2017*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

UNESCO 2019a. *Armenia: Education and literacy*. <http://uis.unesco.org/country/AM> – accessed 8 January 2020.

UNESCO 2019b. *Georgia: Education and literacy*. <http://uis.unesco.org/country/GE> – accessed 23 April 2020.

UNESCO 2020. *Azerbaijan: Education and literacy*. <http://uis.unesco.org/country/AZ> – accessed 10 April 2020.

Wächter, Bernd & Friedhelm Maiworm 2008. *English-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education: The picture in 2007*. Bonn: Lemmens.

Wächter, Bernd & Friedhelm Maiworm (eds) 2014. *English-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education. The state of play in 2014*. Bonn: Lemmens.

Zenkova, Tatyana & Gulmira Khamitova 2017. *English medium-instruction as a way to internationalization of Higher Education in Kazakhstan: An opinion survey in the Innovative University of Eurasia*. e-Teals 8, 126-158.

Appendix 1

Participant information sheet

English-medium instruction (EMI) in the South Caucasus and Uzbekistan

Researcher: Prof Andrew Linn

You are being invited to take part in a research study to explore options for English-Medium instruction in the universities of the South Caucasus and Uzbekistan. The research is funded by and carried out in partnership with the British Council. The project will involve a review of the existing literature on the experience of English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education as well as relevant documentation produced by ministries and universities. It will also involve a study of the experiences of teachers, students and administrators currently involved in English-medium teaching. The outcome of the project will be a report for the British Council which they may then share with relevant stakeholders, such as government ministries.

The study will involve you:

Participating in an open group discussion with me about your experiences of English in Higher Education. This will take about 1 hour and notes will be taken. The notes will be retained as part of the research archive for a period of three years.

Please note:

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- No personal data or information will be included in the notes.
- You do not have to answer particular questions either on questionnaires or in interviews if you do not wish to do so.
- Your responses will be anonymous, and will be kept confidential unless you provide explicit consent to do otherwise, for example if you explicitly state that you wish your own views to be made known.
- No individuals should be identifiable from any collated data, written report of the research, or any publications arising from it.
- All computer data files will be encrypted and password protected. The researcher will keep files in a secure place and will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.
- All hard copy documents, e.g. consent forms, completed questionnaires, etc. will be kept securely and in a locked cupboard, wherever possible on University premises. Documents may be scanned and stored electronically. This may be done to enable secure transmission of data to the university's secure computer systems.
- Information on the results of the research will be made available after the research and communicated to your University.
- The researcher can be contacted during and after participation by email (X@Y) or by telephone (+44 XYYY).
- If you have a complaint about this research project you can contact the University of Westminster Director of Research for the Liberal Arts and Sciences, Prof. N. by e-mail (N@westminster.ac.uk).

Consent form

Title of Study:

English-medium instruction (EMI) in the South Caucasus and Uzbekistan

Lead researcher: Professor Andrew Linn

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes No

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes No

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes No

I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).

Yes No

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes No

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes No

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes No

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised.

Yes No

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participation Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

Discussion questions on the experience of EMI – students

English in everyday life

1. Does everyone need to learn English?
2. Do people learn more English in school or outside school? – Is there a difference between the capital city and the regions?

English at University

1. Do you think that your university could do more to support students with their language needs? If so, what would you like?
2. Do you think that English only should be used in English-medium classes?
3. Do you think that other languages (e.g. Russian or Chinese) should be taught and encouraged at University?
4. Are you happy with the subject-specific English-language books and other materials you use?
5. Why do you think your University wants to teach you in English?

Your own experience

1. Do you think your own English is 'good enough' for your academic study?
2. Do you think that your teachers' / fellow-students' English is 'good enough'?
3. In the future will you use your English more within the country or overseas?
4. Do you think that studying in English will make it easier for you to get a good job?
5. Do you ever speak English outside class?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me so that I can provide good advice about EMI in universities in your country?

Discussion questions on the experience of EMI – teachers

English in everyday life

1. Does everyone need to learn English?
2. Do you and your students learn more of their English skills in school/university or outside school/university?

English at University

1. Do you feel that you were ready to cope with teaching in English when you started doing it?
2. Do you think that your university could do more to support teachers with their language needs? If so, what would you like?
3. Do you think that English only should be used in English-medium classes? Does it matter if you ‘code-switch’?
4. Do you think that other international languages (e.g. Russian or Chinese) should be taught and encouraged at University?
5. Are you happy with the English-language books and other materials you use?
6. Why do you think your University wants you to teach in English?

Your own experience

1. Do you think your own English is ‘good enough’ for your professional needs?
2. Do you think that your fellow teachers’ / students’ English is ‘good enough’?
3. Do you publish scientific work in English? How does that compare with writing in your own language?
4. Do you ever speak English outside class, either in the University or elsewhere?

Is there anything else you’d like to tell me so that I can provide good advice about EMI in universities in your country?

Appendix 3

Overview of Questionnaire Questions:

Context

1. What University do you work/study at?
2. Which one of the following best describes your status?
3. If you are a lecturer, what subject do you teach?
4. What is your residency status?
5. If you are an international student/staff, what is your home country?
6. When did you start working/studying at your University?
7. What is your mother tongue?
8. What other languages do you know?
9. What languages do you use at your University?
10. What is the status of English at your University?

Experience

11. What do you think is your current level of English?
12. Do you use more than one language when at University?
13. If the answer to the previous question is Yes, what languages do you use in the following situations at university?
14. If you chose the “other” option in the previous question, please specify your answer.
15. What was the main reason for you to choose an English Medium Programme (EMP)?
16. How often are you exposed to English in your spare time (for example, through music, computer games, or films) compared to when you are at the University?
17. Have you ever taken an international test in English, such as TOEFL or IELTS?
18. If the answer to the previous question is ‘Yes’, what level did you achieve when you started your English-medium study/work at your university?
19. Since you started at your university, have you taken any courses specifically to improve your English?
20. If you were offered additional professional English support, how likely would you be to sign up?
21. How able are you to perform in the following situations?
 - Understand English in your daily activities at university.
 - Speak English in your daily activities at university.
 - Write English in your daily activities at university.
 - Read written documents in English in your daily activities at university.
 - Understand spoken English in general.
 - Speak English for general purposes (outside the university context).
 - Write English in general.
 - Read English for general purposes.
22. How able are you to discuss your academic/professional interests (having to do with your area of study or teaching) in English compared to your native language?
23. How well does your proficiency (language skills) in English meet your needs at your university?

Attitudes

24. On a scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 the most important and 5 the least important), please rank the most important factors in a good English-medium course.
25. What is your opinion of the following situations?
 - I think we should be more tolerant to linguistic diversity on campus.
 - I think that knowing English in addition to my native language will make me more likely to succeed in my career.
 - I like using English.
 - Using English on campus is just as easy as using my own language.
 - British English is better than other forms of English.
 - It doesn't matter if someone's English pronunciation isn't very good.
 - I am interested in talking about language and languages.
 - I am interested in learning languages.
26. Does your university offer you sufficient support with English language development?
27. If the answer to the previous question is No, what additional support could be offered?
28. Please add any additional thoughts or comments on the above questions or on the issue of teaching and learning through the medium of English in the box below.

ISBN 978-1-915280-00-8

© **British Council 2021**

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.