Linguistic Capital in the University and the Hegemony of English: Medieval Origins and Future Directions

Shahid Abrar-ul-Hassan¹,²

Abstract
As the institution of university has evolved into a highly diverse educational community, the language of communication (or linguistic capital) in higher education plays a vital role. Therefore, English as a medium of instruction (EMI) became the dominant characteristic of academia in many parts of a (globalized) world. This growing influence of EMI has affected the scope of both higher education and academic research. Being a linguistic form of capital, the significance of English as a major linguistic resource can be analyzed historically since the institution of university was founded. In fact, EMI seems to have challenged the linguistic diversity and accessibility to higher education in the contemporary world. The case of Canadian higher education highlights new directions in the exploitation of the linguistic capital at university, and the emerging concept of a multilingual university could offer some unique opportunities for knowledge mobilization and access to higher education. Thus, the issue of linguistic capital at the current (globalized) university needs to be re-examined.

Keywords
language teaching, language studies, humanities, applied linguistics, linguistics, language, curriculum, education, social sciences, higher education

Introduction
The institution of university expanded its charter and scholarship over nearly 800 years of its existence, and the university has developed into a highly diverse educational community engaged with numerous branches of knowledge. Language as a communication tool has been considered essential (linguistic) capital in higher education since the medieval times in Western Europe and beyond. The trivium (i.e., grammar, logic, and rhetoric) was a key component of the academic functions of early medieval universities, and Latin remained the language of instruction for centuries (Axtell, 2016). This historical legacy lived on in many U.S. and British universities as the subject of rhetoric became a contemporary iteration of the trivium in classical studies. With the changing demographics and geographical coverage, the university embraced new languages in instruction and academic communication, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, while entering the age of “super complexity,” as Barnett (2000) noted at the turn of the 21st century for the reason that “no longer are the boundaries, or the forms of right knowing clear” (p. 415), the university is faced with the complexity of new linguistic realities of global academia.

As the university positions itself as an influential social institution all over the globalized (or hyperglobalized) world, the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and English as a major academic lingua franca in higher education has become a dominant characteristic of global academia (Baker, 2016; Preece & Marshall, 2020). The characterization of EMI varies and is often contested in the literature (Okubo et al., 2020; Pecorari, 2020) because “there is a lack of definition, specification and consensus” (Macaro, 2018, p. 15). Building on and expanding the well-known definition by Dearden (2015), EMI in the university setting denotes the practice of teaching educational courses while employing English as the academic language in bi/multilingual or non-Anglophone settings (also Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Lin, 2020).

The prevalence of EMI has affected the scope of higher education and academic research in modern universities across the globe. Now language education, competence, and requirements/standards need to be reviewed or reassessed in relation to the changing demands of higher education and the
linguistic capital at university is approached from the values (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 474). In this article, the issue of resources, such as discourse conventions and social norms/which goes beyond general linguistic proficiency to cultural resources are deprived of the capital that is needed to thrive or cultural power is asserted through symbolic means, such as linguistic capital. Therefore, social capital is mediated by (social) resource that shapes everyday life activities in the public realm, such as studying at higher education institutions and emerging practices related to linguistic resources at the university.

Based on the historical developments that shaped linguistic capital in the university, this article focuses on and problematizes, using Bourdieu’s (1986) forms of capital theoretical framework, the (emergent) issue of English as the dominant or preferred medium of communication under the influence of globalization and the gate-keeping role English plays in higher education in the contemporary world. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized linguistic capital as a component of social capital, which is one of different forms of capital in the society. According to Bourdieu (2000), “Language forms a kind of wealth” (p. 467), and this linguistic capital has numerous manifestations in individuals’ lives as well as within surrounding social systems. A crucial aspect is how it regulates and empowers (or disempowers) individuals. In fact, this linguistic capital as a social tool signifies a (social) resource that shapes everyday life activities in the public realm, such as studying at higher education institutions and having membership of various speech communities (e.g., business professionals, academic researchers, and earth scientists).

In any given society, according to Bourdieu (1986), one or more socio-cultural groups dominate, and this dominance or cultural power is asserted through symbolic means, such as linguistic capital. Therefore, social capital is mediated by linguistic resources, and individuals with constrained resources are deprived of the capital that is needed to thrive within communities as well as the society (also Ferragina, 2010). Linguistic capital refers to “the legitimate competence” in a language as is established by dominant groups, which goes beyond general linguistic proficiency to cultural resources, such as discourse conventions and social norms/values (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 474). In this article, the issue of linguistic capital at university is approached from the perspective of symbolic means of power distributed across society.

Development of the University and Academic Language

The description of the university by Pope Gregory IX as “parents of sciences . . . wisdom’s special workshop” in the 13th century (Axtell, 2016, p. v) proved to be a prophecy of educational enlightenment and social development in coming centuries all over the world. During the ensuing centuries, the institution of university flourished and strengthened its charter in different parts of Europe, and later, this European version of the university spread across the continents despite various local university-type institutions existed in different parts of the world (also Axtell, 2016). Although this evolution of the university is hard to divide into distinct segments, three phases could be readily identified in regard to the role of linguistic capital during the eight centuries of the university’s existence (e.g., Mortensen & Haberland, 2012).

Phase 1 (13th–16th Century)

The first phase was the medieval period in Europe. The institution of university was born in medieval Europe with Bologna being the earliest toward the end of the 12th century, while Oxford, Paris, and Montpellier were founded soon after. By the end of the 14th century, Europe had 30 major universities including Prague, Florence, Vienna, Oxford, Paris, Rome, Lisbon, and Cologne, in the regions where several different languages were spoken. These universities not only delivered general education in liberal arts but also created professional knowledge in law, medicine, philosophy, and theology (Daly, 1961; Scott, 2006). It was intriguing that these medieval universities were situated across multilingual Europe but were linked through one language, that was Latin, as the language of emerging academia and scholarship.

The phenomenon of one common or dominant language could be linked with a variety of socio-cultural and political factors, such as papal authority and the role of the church as well as the prevalence of Latin manuscripts to document existing knowledge. Latin remained the medium of instruction as well as the lingua franca of academia in Europe until nearly the 17th century, and that is why the university nomenclature (e.g., professor, dean, sophomore, senior, campus, tuition, lectures, chancellor, dormitory, convocation, diploma, and alumni) was primarily derived from Latin during the medieval period (Cobban, 1999; Mortensen & Haberland, 2012). Throughout this time, Latin remained the main language of lectures (lectio), debates (disputatio), textbooks (e.g., manuscript texts; a popular textbook was Peter Lombard’s Four Books of Sentences), and examinations.
Students were required to use Latin during formal discourse on campus and good proficiency in Latin was a prerequisite to employment after graduation, especially in clerical and legal roles that offered most of the employment to university graduate alumni (Daly, 1961).

The hegemony or dominance of Latin was manifested through the linguistic trivium for being the core component of the university curriculum and for playing a foundational role in the undergraduate university education, especially in the seven liberal arts. The trivium, particularly grammar, equipped students with competence in Latin. The use of European vernacular languages, such as German, French, and English increased as the university evolved in response to the rising nationalism in the 16th century (Scott, 2006), but the centrality of Latin as linguistic capital of the European educated class and the intelligentsia remained established throughout this first phase.

**Phase 2 (17th to Mid-20th Century)**

The second phase marked the rise of English in the university, especially in the Angophone as well as British colonized regions, with the emergence of U.S. colleges and universities under the influence of Oxford and Cambridge (or Oxbridge) in the 17th century. According to Axtell (2016), despite being archetypical medieval universities, Oxbridge evolved differently from other European universities due to political and religious developments that shaped these institutions. For instance, one such development was when the Church of England embraced Protestantism in the 16th century and services were mandated to be in English, which tremendously raised the significance of English in the society as well as in the university (Cobban, 1999). Later in the 18th century, the emergence of colleges in the United States was essentially modeled on English institutions of higher learning. Harvard was an example of the transfer of English educational heritage to the American shores, which was a replica of the Emmanuel College in Cambridge (Axtell, 2016). The system of U.S. colleges had mushroomed by the end of the 19th century as new tides of immigrants arrived in independent America. These colleges proved to be a catalyst for social mobility by making the United States a land of opportunity and economic growth. Although these colleges were established in the English tradition, they acquired a distinct institutional character, in terms of funding, charter, autonomy, and governance, shaped by the ambient developments in the American society.

In the context of Britain and the United States, the use of English as the medium of instruction increased remarkably with the educational materials and formal academic discourse being in English. It is hard to identify any specific timeline, but toward the end of the 18th century a transition of medium of instruction from Latin to English was almost complete (Mortensen & Haberland, 2012). In the 19th century, the U.S. university underwent considerable reforms in an effort to become centers of quality education and as a result, gave rise to specialized disciplines. New norms or standards were set, and consequently the research-focused Standard American University (SAU) came into being, especially to foster research (Axtell, 2016). During this period of remarkable developments, the role of English as a language of academia strengthened, and English became the language of new forms of knowledge and applied research. Therefore, Oxbridge in Europe and the higher education institutions in the United States gained eminence as leading centers of learning and research, and English being their common language as well as of the British colonial rule in the wider world became a prominent language of the university in the 20th century. The post-war era was a remarkable phase in the growth of the modern university with a larger focus on graduate studies, reduced teaching load for faculty, research publications, and the digital revolution. The modern university proved to be a versatile institution and an incubator of socio-economic capital in the United States and beyond.

**Phase 3 (Mid-20th to 21st Century)**

The third phase of linguistic capital in the university can be described as a post-modern era phenomenon, which became salient around the mid-20th century. I have used the term post-modern (as compared with “modern” used in this article) temporally, in the context of the post-industrial knowledge-based economies and societies as well as theoretically, as an overarching characteristic of this era that recognizes complexity, pluralism (non-unitary), and constructivism (Andres, 2016; Cahoone, 2003; Ford & McMullin, 2016). From this perspective, linguistic capital could be viewed as a product of socio-historical and political discourses or power dynamics, which is socially constructed, for instance, in the realm of academia. As such, linguistic capital could potentially play a role in reproducing or perpetuating inequalities of various kinds including access to (higher) education as Bourdieu’s sociological studies in Francophone university contexts demonstrated. During this phase, the university had spread as an influential social institution across the world and morphed into “a different kind of institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as a producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture” (Jay, 2010, p. 24; also Brown, 2019). Therefore, the university by and large aimed for a global outlook in its outreach and functions. Although there has been use of various languages in higher education transnationally, such as Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and German, English has emerged as a dominant language of academia globally. For instance, a survey of 2,637 higher education institutions across 28 European countries revealed that there was a 239% increase in English-taught programs over a period of just 7 years (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). Similarly, Chinese Ministry of
Education aimed to enhance EMI undergraduate courses at major universities, and the number of EMI programs offered was used as a criterion for the evaluation of universities (Hu & McKay, 2012). Against this backdrop of this EMI tide, it seems important to analyze the role of linguistic capital in the post-modern university.

Linguistic Capital in the Post-Modern University

The medium of communication in the university forms the linguistic capital (in the social field, using Bourdieu’s notion) for people, and it is an instrument both for access and achievement related to higher education. Therefore, this capital is crucial for the members of university community in present times as academia is spread over six continents. Expounding upon Bourdieu’s (1986) theory, Andres (2016) has noted that schools or universities “reinforce particular types of linguistic competence, authority patterns, and types of curricula” (p. 36). Linguistic capital (i.e., “the legitimate competence”) in universities provides access, mobility, and legitimacy to its members, and the issue of linguistic capital is fundamental to understanding access to academia in the 21st century when the university as an institution all over the world has become standardized in its scope beyond the Western world. The dominance of North American universities established a new form of university as multiversity that is comprised of many constituent institutions, academic communities, and research centers (Marginson, 2016). The multiversity institution brought enormous power to the university for its control on knowledge creation, manipulation, and affirmation. The 20th century witnessed massive expansion of the university across the globe, which continues to date, enormity of research in numerous fields, and creation of new branches of knowledge.

In the context of colonialism and the Western industrial-economic power, this global academia was highly influenced by the British and North American universities, and as a consequence, English has become a predominant lingua franca (or most-commonly employed medium) of academia just as Latin was during the early period of the university in multilingual Europe. However, the reasons, patterns, and the motives, as Mortensen and Haberland (2012) had noted, of the spread of both languages were quite different. In fact, the notion of linguistic capital provides an explanation for the spread and use of English as the medium of instruction (or EMI) in the academia as a study by Klapwijk and Van der Walt (2016) exemplifies in the multilingual South African higher education context.

In regard to English in global academia, linguistic capital is “fluency in, and comfort with, a high-status world-wide language which is used by groups who possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and global society” (Morrison & Lui, 2000, p. 473). On the one hand, the use of EMI is widely recognized, promoted, and practiced within global academia primarily due to the socio-economic and political influence of Great Britain and the United States during the last two centuries, which exemplifies the Americanization and Englishization of contemporary higher education (Jenkins, 2014; Marginson, 2016; Phillipson, 2015). For instance, scholarly or academic publishing is dominated by English and centered in the Anglophone regions. On the other hand, the phenomenon of globalization has ushered the university into a unique period of its structure and function as a social institution of higher learning to serve communities mostly beyond socio-economic and geographical bounds. It seems pertinent to examine whether the process of globalization provided access to the university through using English as a communication medium or concomitantly afforded it hegemony (or dominance) and gate-keeping control over the global academic community of students, scholars, and researchers. To examine this complex issue, the following sections focus on two key aspects: the influence of globalization and the impact of EMI on higher education. Moreover, the case of Canadian higher education is discussed (section “The Linguistic Landscape and Diversity at Canadian Universities”) to contextualize this issue in a geographical context.

The Influence of Globalization

Globalization has been perhaps the most salient phenomenon in the contemporary human civilization at least since the 1960s, which could be defined from sociological and economical perspectives. Sociologically, it refers to human interactions and linkages across the globe among individuals as well as groups through wide-ranging human activities in cultural, educational, and professional domains of social life. Economically, globalization represents an increased interdependence as well as synchronization of economies, transnational trading of goods and services, and capital transfers. Going beyond the common and traditional economy-oriented understanding of globalization, Tomlinson (1999) conceptualized various linkages as well as interdependence through a comprehensive spatial view, that is, deterritorialization as the culture of globalization, as in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1972/2004) original theorization (also Ford & McMullin, 2016). This view lays emphasis on the globe as a common space or a singular entity and the interdependence, either direct or indirect, of people from all parts of the world. Thus, globalization has profoundly affected the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions of human civilization, and this impact continues to exert itself by making global transformations of unprecedented dimensions in almost all sectors of human life, such as higher education. The causes, effects, and ideologies (e.g., neoliberalism) of globalization have been extensively studied over decades in various disciplines of social sciences.
To adapt to the complex realities of globalization, educational institutions aim to equip students, who are now members of a globalized world, with relevant knowledge, skills, tools, and dispositions (Foskett, 2010; Jiang & Zhang, 2019; Kirkgöz, 2009). In a higher education context, the phenomenon of globalization has determined a substantial role for the university (Brown, 2019; Hu, 2019; Knight, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hiliard, 2004), and the significance of linguistic capital (i.e., language of the academia) for communication, collaboration, and social connectivity of global academia can hardly be overemphasized in an immensely diverse world. Thus, the impact of globalization on the university is examined here, as follows, specifically in two interrelated spheres: mobility of knowledge and people.

First, the mobility of knowledge produced and developed by university communities has global dimensions in terms of research, practice, and innovations. Universities are considered as incubators of new knowledge that are connected through a wide range of professional and academic networks (Barnett, 2005; Brown, 2019; Fallsis, 2013). For instance, research activities in academia and industry are interlinked, and in spite of varying sizes, policies, and governance mechanisms, universities acquire fiscal resources by producing and disseminating research by means of offering training, publishing materials, supporting industry and corporate sectors, and providing intellectual leadership both locally as well as internationally. In this process of education and research, universities are virtually connected through the systems of communication or “global research circuits” (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007, p. 5) to exchange ideas, best practices, and innovations. With global coverage and universal accessibility, members of the university community reap enormous benefits of digital technologies by connecting with the global scholarship (e.g., research, publications, equipment, and innovations). The success and productivity of a university is now largely determined by global engagement whether for the quality of education or academic research. In other words, as Foskett (2010) has emphasized, universities cannot exist and function without partaking in knowledge mobilization as well as responding to scientific developments, for example, instance, and adapting to prevailing socio-economic trends. Communication technologies have played a vital role in mobilizing knowledge and forming impactful linkages as well as partnerships among universities in a digitally networked world molded by the process of globalization. Therefore, the unprecedented scale of knowledge mobilization signifies a marked effect of globalization on the university.

Second, the impact of globalization is evident in the mobility of people and super connectivity among communities across universities. In fact, both institutional- (or macro) and human-level (micro) connectivity and collaboration within universities is complementary (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Ford & McMullin, 2016). For example, faculty participates in the professional discourse of respective fields by attending conferences, publishing materials, collaborating on projects, and offering consultations as well as teaching beyond their institutional affiliations, and the professional discourse is extended through research and practice by contributors from around the globe. Professional associations of academics in all fields have extensive outreach and global membership. Similarly, university students at all levels extensively take part in study abroad and academic exchange programs. Now the movement of international students is taking place in almost every region of the globe, albeit unevenly, far beyond the traditional centers of higher education located in a few developed countries (e.g., Australia, France, and the United Kingdom, the United States). At present, universities in countries such as Brazil, China, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, and Turkey are also populated with international students enrolled in a range of academic programs of varying length, focus, and specialization.

Under the impact of globalization, the number of national students at universities is growing. According to an Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2013) report, the number of international students worldwide doubled between 2000 and 2011 with about 4.5 million tertiary-level students studying abroad in diverse countries, and the report shows a rapidly growing trend. Similarly, the number of international faculty, researchers, and scientists at universities is exponentially rising. This movement of people is also supported by a number of funding sources, fellowships, awards, and grants from governments, associations, and universities. For instance, U.S. Fulbright program in North America, EU Erasmus program in Europe, and the Japan Exchange and Teaching program in Asia are a few large-scale people mobility avenues to mention. These programs, like myriad of other scholarships offered by institutions, governments, and international organizations all over the world, support international exchange of students, faculty, and professionals in the realm of higher education.

Although the institution of the university has been international since its inception, the breadth and depth of international linkages and mobility in present time is unprecedented under the influence of globalization (Barnett, 2005; Ford & McMullin, 2016; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Against the backdrop of global university education landscape and communication, English has become a major lingua franca of academia (Baker, 2016; Hu, 2019; Jenkins, 2014; Pennycook, 2017), and the adequate linguistic capital of the academic community seems to be a prerequisite for wider connectivity, linkages, accessibility, and collaboration. In spite of various limitations and complexities involved, globalization of higher education has necessitated a language (or languages) that global academic community can utilize in international mobility as well as in participation in professional discourse.
**The Impact of English as “a” Medium of Instruction**

Being a de facto lingua franca of global academia, the English language has been largely shaping communication in the modern-day university since the 20th century, and EMI is a repercussion of English as a lingua franca (ELF) or vice versa. According to Jenkins (2014), ELF refers to the use of English when the users have different first languages. ELF is a sociolinguistic practice, which sometimes is viewed as a distinct linguistic variety that fulfills communicative needs (e.g., Kubota, 2020). To understand the issue of ELF, it is helpful to use Foskett’s (2010) classification of universities into five categories related to transnational outreach and subsequent linguistic diversity of universities (or the need for EMI). First, domestic universities that focus on local or national contexts, second, imperialist universities that actively recruit international students but do not develop their structure and services. The third category is internationally aware universities, which aim at altering the culture and structure but do not have an international profile, and the fourth category is comprised of internationally engaged universities that pursue internationalization by making their curriculum and research agenda globally oriented and seek international partnerships. The fifth category is a small number of internationally focused universities that have a strong international engagement in terms of achievements and cultural transformations at the university. In fact, this classification places universities along a continuum with domestic and international extremes.

A popular trend that currently many universities are following is to become internationally focused institutions, and it is closely linked with the use of EMI. Jenkins (2014) found that universities in many non-Anglophone countries, such as Argentina, China, Germany, Malaysia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, were undergoing a transition to some forms of EMI in pursuit of internationalization and global partnerships (also Hu, 2019; Hultgren, 2014; Knight, 2004). For instance, European universities in Sweden offer 764, Germany 763, and Spain 378 master’s programs fully or partly employing EMI (Dimova et al., 2015). Therefore, the relevance of English as the requisite linguistic capital for higher education is fast increasing across the world. A major example is China’s exponentially expanding higher education, which shares similarities with the American university system. In fact, EMI programs at universities are fast increasing in the entire Asia-Pacific region (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Marginson (2016) considered this scenario a manifestation of the Americanization of higher education (i.e., institutional scope, structure, and function), which also entails the use of EMI in major academic disciplines. Now access to, as well as mobility across, higher education institutions is increasingly associated with the acquisition of linguistic capital, that is, adequate proficiency in English in Anglophone and non-Anglophone contexts. This unfolding scenario is reflected in the use of standardized English language tests all over the world. Students, researchers, and faculty have to demonstrate their competence in English to become competitive to gain acceptances to higher education institutions, which are essentially internationalized. International mobility opportunities, such as grants, fellowships, and scholarships, require competence in English, set by administering institutions, based on international standardized examinations (Baker, 2016; Hu et al., 2014). For example, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and Cambridge English Language Assessment are a few widely used international examinations for assessment of English. Cambridge University’s assessment subsidiary service alone has over 5 million test-takers each year from 130 countries, and about 20,000 universities and various organizations use Cambridge test scores as proof of English language competence (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2017). Such standardized English examinations are mandated not only by universities in Anglophone countries but also in non-Anglophone regions, such as in many Asian and European countries. These developments assign English (being a major academic lingua franca) a role of the gatekeeper for access to and achievement in higher education, and therefore, English has become valuable linguistic capital at universities in a globalized world.

A recent large-scale study by Dearden (2015) mirrored the gate-keeping role of English on one hand and the lingua franca role on the other by mapping globally the depth, the breadth, and future trends of EMI. The study covered 55 countries on all continents through a survey with a qualitative component. The findings showed that EMI was more prevalent in the private than public sector universities (i.e., 90% of private universities and 78.25% of public universities used EMI), which gave private institutions a competitive edge, and that EMI grew dramatically during the previous decade. In spite of the prevalence of EMI, public opinion was unfavorable and considered it controversial or a difficult situation. However, a vast majority of universities were admitting international students in at least some number, and, perhaps, EMI was an essential component of those internationalized universities in the countries surveyed. Universities were increasingly becoming international, and in the future, EMI was reasonably predicted to further prevail in higher education, which is consistent with the general trend globally (Baker, 2016; Jiang & Zhang, 2019; Pennycook, 2017) in non-Anglophone contexts.

To assess the impact of English as an academic lingua franca and its intensification through EMI, both opportunity and challenge propositions need to be taken into account as Dearden’s (2015) study has also highlighted. English being the academic lingua franca offers higher education institutions unique opportunities to internationalize and benefit from super connectivity as well as knowledge mobilization in the global academia. The EMI practice equips students,
faculty, and researchers with a linguistic resource that is inevitable for growing transnational mobility, collaboration, and research productivity. Moreover, universities now have global outreach as well as influence or power that remarkably contributes to resource development in the face of prevalent underfunding of higher education, especially in the Western countries. However, rapidly expanding EMI across the globe potentially leads to English linguistic hegemony, social inequality or injustice, and limited access to higher education in non-Anglophone regions, which is an instance of the issue of linguistic capital that Bourdieu (1986) had discussed.

Scholars have vehemently argued about the emerging English linguistic imperialism in the guise of EMI across the world. Building on his work on linguistic imperialism, Phillipson (2015) cautions that “English can threaten local creativity and national unity if policies that allow English to expand entail the dispossession of the linguistic capital” of non-Anglophone countries’ national languages (p. 37). Other scholars (e.g., Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Hultgren, 2014; Ljosland, 2014; Morrison & Lui, 2000) have also drawn attention to the fast pace of Americanization as well as Englishization, which are not mutually exclusive, of contemporary higher education that is affecting almost all spheres of communication within and across universities, such as publications, curricula, teaching, and research supervision. Therefore, the impact of EMI on internationalizing universities is convoluted that entails opportunities and challenges side by side, but it can be surmised that the ever-increasing interaction as well as diversification of higher education communities across the world is also linked with Englishization. For instance, ethno-linguistically diverse campuses of Canadian universities present an example of how the issue of linguistic capital is relevant to higher education.

The Linguistic Landscape and Diversity at Canadian Universities

From within the traditional Anglophone world, Canada boasts many well-established and prestigious public universities and colleges. These campuses are populated with ethno-linguistically diverse academic communities from all over the world. The number of international students and researchers has been growing over the past several decades, which is “part of Canada’s political agenda” (Tsushima & Guardado, 2015, p. 241). Unlike other traditional Anglophone countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, Canada is an officially bilingual nation-state. It is pertinent to note that these countries “can be said to be both Anglophone and multilingual or in some of their cities, more multilingual than Anglophone” (Lin, 2020, p. 204, emphasis in original). From this perspective, conceptualization of English in Canadian higher education as EMI is relevant, and similarly, Fenton-Smith et al. (2017) use EMI for educational institutions in Australia. On Canadian university campuses, a large number of students, faculty, researchers, and staff are from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds from within Canada as well as other countries. The requisite linguistic capital in higher education is comprised of competence in primarily English but also French in some specific regions.

According to a report by Statistics Canada (2016), international students made up 11% (i.e., 124,000) of all students, but 46% of graduate students, at university campuses around Canada in 2013–2014, which was 7% higher than in 2004–2005. The current number of international students (as of December 31, 2018) has reached 572,415, which is an increase of 16% compared with 2017 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2018). The number of international students continues to grow steadily every year at Canadian institutions of higher education. A vast majority of these students attend universities in Anglophone regions of Canada. However, several colleges and three major universities (i.e., McGill University, Concordia University, and Bishop’s University) located in French-speaking Quebec too use EMI. In addition, the University of Montreal, a French-medium institution and the second largest university in terms of student body in Canada (University of Montreal, 2020), also offers programs in English and values bilingualism as institutional policy.

English language competence at a standard level is a prerequisite to being admitted at Canadian institutions of higher education, except those offered in French. The most common evidence to meet this precondition by universities is a standardized test score, such as an IELTS and TOEFL, which, in fact, is “a deadly assumption” by universities of students’ academic language ability (Gunderson et al., 2014, p. 48). Although the cultural and linguistic diversity of university communities is rising, English has a gate-keeping value for all international students and immigrant Canadians (e.g., Guardado, 2012; Marshall et al., 2019). The standardized tests can be considered as instruments of the gate-keeping role the English language has been playing.

A shadowy sector of teaching English as a second language (ESL) and wide-ranging related services have emerged at (and around) higher education institutions that prepare students lacking required English language competence at a considerable cost (e.g., conditional admission courses to meet the English language benchmark for admission). These post-secondary ESL schools often enforce English-only policies, thus, disenfranchising students and stigmatizing their multilingual repertoires as well as identities by turning those irrelevant to socio-academic life at higher education institutions (Kubota, 2020; Preece & Marshall, 2020). As findings by Grayson (2009) suggest, individuals with higher English proficiency not only have more chances of accessing higher education as students, researchers, and staff but also meeting
role-specific performance goals within universities. A relationship between access to higher education and high income in the Canadian context is well documented (Fortin et al., 2012), and the gate-keeping role of English needs to be considered in the analysis of cultural capital in higher education and its relationship (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986), inter alia, with the financial capital and social mobility.

In response to globalization and increased competition for attracting international students, according to a Statistics Canada (2016) report, Canada is reasonably behind other Anglophone countries, but “Canadian institutions and different levels of government within Canada strategize in order to attract international students and compete with other countries in this respect” (p. 11). Nevertheless, Canadian higher education is marked with greater linguistic and cultural diversity than ever before due to, for instance, a very high rate of immigration. However, linguistic diversity on campuses is considered by key stakeholders, such as university administrators and faculty, a challenge to be addressed, and this assumption is based on a deficit premise of bi- or multilingual speakers (e.g., Lin, 2020; Okubo et al., 2020).

Utilizing a powerful and innovative conceptual framework of individual network of practice, Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) analyzed academic socialization of a cohort of South American students at a Canadian university. The participants were academically high achievers, and their success was mediated in the social world around them rather than solely a cognitive outcome. The role of Spanish, their first language, and ties to Spanish speakers were crucial to both social and academic purposes within the university. Similarly, Wei and Zhu Hua (2013) earlier studied a social network of Chinese university students in the United Kingdom who harnessed their individual linguistic resources for academic success. Therefore, linguistic diversity is a strength for individuals as well as institutions, and it needs to be recognized as relevant linguistic capital and valued for inclusiveness to tackle, what Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) considered, an undesirable process of elimination and marginalization of the disadvantaged classes in higher education (also Ferragina, 2010).

Canadian higher education institutions like those in other Anglophone countries offer EMI exclusively and represent a monolingual Anglo-centric academic culture (other than Francophone higher education institutions). In fact, “despite Canada’s multicultural nature, Canadian society operates from a monolingual lens” (Galante, 2020, p. 249). Therefore, similar to other Anglophone countries, higher education in Canada is not an exception to, as Kubota (2020) has noted, “the persistent ideology of monolingualism, normativity, and essentialism” (p. 304). In an effort to attract more international students and researchers as well as to extend international linkages, Canadian institutions seemingly use EMI, inter alia, as a competitive advantage. However, these institutions have potential to be in step with the multicultural Canadian society wherein linguistic diversity is an integral component. For instance, some universities such as the University of Montreal and the University of Ottawa are successfully utilizing bilingual medium of instruction in many programs, which mirrors the official bilingualism. The concept of a multilingual university has been closely examined in the field of higher education (Baker, 2016; Okubo et al., 2020), which was prompted by the growing diversity at universities and a realization for harnessing its potential instead of resisting it. However, a multilingual university is more a concept than a practical reality in terms of policy and curricular practices. As mentioned earlier, multilingualism in Canadian higher education is limited to bilingual programs in French and English, which is only offered by a handful of institutions.

Extending the legacy of bilingualism, Canadian universities and colleges can take steps to open up opportunities for linguistically diverse Canadian society, especially Indigenous communities and new immigrants for maintaining languages and enhancing linguistic capital. A study by Grayson (2011) found a relationship between the acquisition of social capital, linguistic capital being a subset, in particular English language ability, and the low academic achievement of first-generation immigrant students at three major Canadian universities. These students were underprivileged due to inadequate social (and linguistic) capital and were possibly marginalized in the wider society. Similarly, Gunderson et al. (2014) drawing upon extensive research on English language learners in Canada note that these students have generally less opportunities of entering as well as academically succeeding at major universities. This scenario also limits these learners’, who are immigrants and international students in increasing numbers, chances to access higher education. Moreover, a study by Klapwijk and Van der Walt (2016) emphasize an English-plus model that acknowledges learners’ linguistic resources, which strengthens their linguistic capital, because excluding learners’ languages from the academic work “creates a very artificial environment where students cannot use the resources they have at their disposal” (p. 80). Therefore, to utilize multilingual educational opportunities, learning a second or third language can be introduced at institutions to foster and raise the visibility of linguistic diversity of higher education communities.

In view of the hegemony of English in higher education and the limitations of EMI-based curricular practices, plurilingualism has appeared over the past few decades a strong and natural response to, inter alia, address this hegemony and potential marginalization in higher education. Since the early developments in Europe, plurilingualism represents a paradigmatic shift in understanding linguistic capital not only in K-12 contexts but also at the university (e.g., Preece & Marshall, 2020). In fact, plurilingualism affords both a theoretical lens for language use and policy as well as a pedagogical approach to teaching practices. From this perspective, multiple linguistic resources in educational settings are viewed as a strength rather than a deficit or constraint that
could only be overcome by EMI. Universities in traditional Anglophone countries, such as Canada, are now having “increasingly more multilingual/multicultural teaching, research and administrative staff” and university communities are “diversified both in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (Lin, 2020). Thus, the plurilingual approach offers a new paradigm to reassess linguistic capital at Canadian universities.

Scholarship on plurilingualism as a curricular practice at Canadian universities have highlighted that student engagement, identities, and learning are considerably strengthened. For example, Marshall et al. (2019) emphasized that plurilingualism was “as an asset across the disciplines in Canadian higher education” (p. 17). Similarly, Galante’s (2020) study on plurilingualism in two higher education settings showed that new immigrants and international students in Canada benefited from pluralistic practices. Scholarly work on plurilingualism is fast growing. A recently published edited volume by Lau and Van Viegen (2020) has presented a wide range of scholarly work on plurilingual approaches and theories, especially in Canada, and a Special Issue of *Language, Culture and Curriculum* (2020) has published a number of articles on utilizing plurilingualism in teaching and learning in Canadian and British higher education contexts. Although considerable interest and fast-growing scholarship on plurilingualism in higher education, especially in Canada, have laid a solid conceptual foundation, considerably more work is needed in terms of policy and curricular practices, such as in educational assessment teaching materials. A detailed analysis of plurilingual approach as a remedy for EMI or English-dominated higher education is beyond the scope of this article.

**Conclusions and Implications**

From a historical perspective, the issue of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) has remained central to the scope and functions of the institution of university since its emergence in multilingual Europe. Owing to socio-political realities of that age, Latin fulfilled the scholarly needs of the evolving but vibrant academia for centuries when (international) students from all over Europe attended universities. Although it is hard to assess the impact of this predominant academic lingua franca on multilingual students’ access to university and their educational development, competence in Latin was a required capital for academic success and employment. With the expansion of the university across the globe, English became a widespread lingua franca of academia that continues to play a powerful gate-keeping role (e.g., Galante, 2020; Hu et al., 2014; Hultgren, 2014; Pennycook, 2017). The thrust of globalization along with associated socio-economic complexities and ideologies led to profound transformations in the university system in a world marked with super complexity, such as knowledge production and mobilization globally and highly diverse academic communities (e.g., Barnett, 2005; Brown, 2019). Thus, the significance of the relevant linguistic capital in the global academia needs to be interpreted through different theoretical, curricular, and policy perspectives.

To foster linguistic vitality on one hand and accessibility to higher education on the other, scholars (e.g., Baker, 2016; Lin, 2020; Okubo et al., 2020; Pennycook, 2017; Preece & Marshall, 2020) have emphasized cultivating the multilingual linguistic repertoires of the members of the university community and incorporating multilingualism. Therefore, higher education institutions need to consider the intricacy and multifacetedness of global sociolinguistic reality of English. Countries such as Canada make an important case in point due to growing diversity in the wider society as well as in higher education institutions. In fact, Canadian institutions can leverage multilingualism to become competitive within the Anglophone world and to offset the increasing dominance of EMI in higher education.

English is a foremost or dominant lingua franca of global academia (or the social capital), but several other languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish are being employed as medium of instruction across the globe. Futuristically, a multilingual university as well as plurilingualism-based approaches could potentially offer unparalleled opportunities for access to higher education, knowledge mobilization, and transnational academic collaboration with greater inclusivity. To establish the feasibility of plurilingualism and a multilingual university, the future research agenda can focus primarily on how language vitalization (i.e., promoting as well as maintaining local languages) and the EMI-based globalization are not mutually exclusive in curricular practices (i.e., co-existence rather than competition). Moreover, considerable work is needed to re-envision linguistic capital at the university through curricular innovations as well as pedagogical frameworks, especially for educational assessment and standards.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

**ORCID iD**

Shahid Abrar-ul-Hassan [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9361-9387](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9361-9387)

**References**

Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 3*, 290–305.

Andres, L. (2016). Theories of the sociology of higher education access and participation. In J. Côté & A. Furlong (Eds.),
endeavors for equitable language in education (pp. 303–321). Springer.

Lau, S., & Van Viegen, S. (Eds.). (2020). Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative endeavors for equitable language in education. Springer.

Lin, A. (2020). From deficit-based teaching to asset-based teaching in higher education in BANA countries: Cutting through “either-or” binaries with a heteroglossic plurilingual lens. Language, Culture and Curriculum, 33, 203–212.

Ljosland, R. (2014). Language planning confronted by everyday communication in the international university: The Norwegian case. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 35, 392–405.

Macaro, E. (2018). English medium instruction. Oxford University Press.

Marginson, S. (2016). The dream is over: The crisis of Clark Kerr’s California idea of higher education. University of California Press.

Marginson, S., & van der Wende, M. (2007). Globalisation and higher education (Working Paper No. 8). OECD Publishing.

Marshall, M., Moore, M., James, C., Ning, X., & Santos, P. (2019). Plurilingual students’ practices in a Canadian university: Chinese language, academic English, and discursive ambivalence. TESL Canada Journal, 36, 1–20.

Morrison, K., & Lui, I. (2000). Ideology, linguistic capital and the medium of instruction in Hong Kong. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 21, 471–486.

Mortensen, J., & Haberland, H. (2012). English—The new Latin of academia? Danish universities as a case. International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 216, 175–197.

Okubo, K., Cole, C., Elkader, N., Carozza, N., Wilkinson, C., Wotton, C., & Vasic, J. (2020). “English-only is not the way to go”: Teachers’ perceptions of plurilingual instruction in an English program at a Canadian university. TESOL Quarterly, 54, 980–1009.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2013). How is international student mobility shaping up? Education indicators in focus (No. 14). OECD Publishing.

Pecorari, D. (2020). English medium instruction: Disintegrating language and content?. In S. Dimova & J. Kling (Eds.), Integrating content and language in multilingual universities (pp. 15–36). Springer.

Pennycook, A. (2017). The cultural politics of English as an international language. Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (2015). English as a threat or opportunity in European higher education. In S. Dimova, A. Hultgren, & C. Jensen (Eds.), English-medium instruction in European higher education (pp. 19–42). Walter de Gruyter.

Preece, S., & Marshall, S. (2020). Plurilingualism, teaching and learning, and Anglophone higher education: An introduction. Anglophone universities and linguistic diversity. Language, Culture and Curriculum, 33, 117–125.

Scott, J. (2006). The mission of the university: Medieval to postmodern transformations. The Journal of Higher Education, 77, 1–39.

Statistics Canada. (2016). Education indicators in Canada: Fact sheet (Report No. 81-599-X). http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-599-x/81-599-x2016011-eng.pdf

Suarez-Orozco, M., & Qin-Hiliard, D. (Eds.). (2004). Globalization: Culture and education in the new millennium. University of California Press.

Tomlinson, J. (1999). Globalization and culture. The University of Chicago Press.

Tsushima, R., & Guardado, M. (2015). English language “education” or “industry”? Bridging parallel discourses in Canada. In L. Wong & A. Dubey-Jhaveri (Eds.), English language education in a global world (pp. 239–250). Nova.

University of Montreal. (2020). Among the world’s best. https://admission.umontreal.ca/en/student-info/choose-udem/among-the-worlds-best/

Wachter, B., & Maiworm, F. (2014). English-taught programmes in European higher education: The state of play in 2014. Lemmens.

Wei, L., & Zhu, H. (2013). Translanguaging identities: Creating transnational space through flexible multilingual practices amongst Chinese university students in the UK. Applied Linguistics, 34, 516–535.

Zappa-Hollman, S., & Duff, P. (2015). Academic English socialization through individual networks of practice. TESOL Quarterly, 49, 333–368.