



Edited by Robert Wilkinson and René Gabriëls

# The Englishization of Higher Education in Europe

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Robert Wilkinson and  
René Gabriëls*

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# 1 Introduction

The tension between monolingualism and multilingualism

*René Gabriëls and Robert Wilkinson*

## Abstract

The tension between monolingualism and multilingualism has left its mark on the cultural history of Europe. Current public and academic debates about the Englishization of higher education pitch proponents of the monolingual ideal of a common language that promotes communication against advocates of the maintenance of linguistic diversity that does more justice to the multicultural reality and enriches life. Notwithstanding the differences between European countries, the switch from an initially monolingual curriculum to a bilingual and sometimes multilingual curriculum in higher education has led to debates about the consequences of the Englishization for the quality of higher education, cultural identity, inequality between stakeholders and the opportunities to express concern about this process.

**Keywords:** Englishization, higher education, monolingualism, multilingualism, glocalization, linguistic justice

## 1 One language versus linguistic diversity

In Europe, a paradise of one language for all people has long been placed in position against a world of linguistic diversity. In Christianity and Judaism, multilingualism<sup>1</sup> is even seen as a punishment from God. Both religions cite

1 Unlike monolingualism, which refers to contexts where collectives communicate with each other through only one language, multilingualism refers to contexts where collectives communicate with more than one language. Perhaps it makes more sense to speak of a monolingual ideal, because in practice there are rarely, if ever, contexts in which collectives only communicate through one language.

the Bible: the uniform language existing before the construction of the tower of Babel – the *lingua adamica* – came to be replaced by multilingualism because God was angered by human arrogance. Before God's anger, 'the whole earth had one language and the same words', but to punish human arrogance he 'confuse[d] their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech' (New Oxford Annotated Bible, 2010, Gen. 11:1-9).

Advocates of multilingualism are often a minority in European cultural history. They could present Mithridates (135-63 BC), the king of Pontus, as their hero (Trabant, 2003). Not only was he the last serious adversary of the Roman Empire, but he also spoke 22 languages, or according to some legends, as many as 50. While the Romans demanded of the peoples they ruled (with the exception of the Greeks) that they adopt their language, the polyglot Mithridates mastered the language of the peoples he conquered. His name is echoed not only in a tragedy by Racine and an opera by Mozart, but also by the Swiss scholar Conrad Gesner in the first encyclopaedia on some 130 world languages: *Mithridates sive de differentiis linguarum tum veterum tum quae hodie apud diversas nationes in usu sunt* (Mithridates, or on the differences between the languages, both ancient and now used by different nations), published in 1555 (Trabant, 2003). This Protestant humanist opposed the monolingualism of the Catholic Church, symbolized by Latin, and made, in the spirit of Mithridates, a clear plea for multilingualism.

In the 19th century, Johann Christoph Adelung and Johann Severin Vater followed in the footsteps of Gesner. They wrote a detailed overview of the different languages in the world under the title *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde mit dem Vater Unser als Sprachprobe in bey nahe fünfhundert Sprachen und Mundarten* (Mithridates or general linguistics with the Our Father as a language sample in almost five hundred languages and dialects), published between 1806 and 1817 (Adelung & Vater, 1806-1817/2019). However, in the same century, language began to play a major role in nation state building, with a single language declared the standard at the expense of other languages. Language became a tool of political governance to establish a unified nation. At the beginning of the Italian unification (1848-1871), only two percent of the population spoke Italian, leading the nationalist political leader Massimo d'Azeglio to say: 'We have made Italy, now we must make Italians' (Maher, 2017, p. 76).

Since the 19th century, the construction of a national identity took place largely through the adoption of a standard language. Nationalist language policies entail a drive for monolingualism that is often accompanied by legislation that pursues a standard language and represses regional dialects and minority languages. In France, for example, regions were subject to



Francization (*francisée*) that entailed the marginalization of Alsatian, Breton, Catalan, and Occitan (Maher, 2017, p. 81). Today, the European Union (EU) tries to protect these and other regional languages and to give shape to multilingualism. Further, 25 states have ratified the Council of Europe's *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML), adopted in 1992.

Although many states enforce single language policies in administration, education and law, no state succeeds in being totally monolingual. To underline the tension between the monolingual ideal that is being pursued and multilingual practices, Yildiz (2012) elaborates the postmonolingual condition. This tension has left its mark on the cultural history of Europe to this day. One argument in favour of the monolingual ideal is that the diversity of languages leads to confusion and thus hinders communication. This problem could be overcome by learning other languages, which of course requires effort. An alternative argument for multilingualism is that learning other languages enriches life with novel perspectives on reality and does justice to linguistic particularities of regions and migrants. A plea for multilingualism could be based on the notion, traced back to Wilhelm von Humboldt, that language is not merely a means of conveying information, but as 'the cultivating organ of thought' (*das bildende Organ des Gedanken*) also expresses a 'worldview' (*Weltansicht*) that is constitutive for the cultural identity of a collective (Humboldt, 1836/2010). This implies that learning another language enables people to see the world as others might see it.

In the worldwide discussions about the increase in English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes in higher education, the tension between monolingualism and multilingualism plays an important role (Tsou & Kao, 2017). This book bears witness to this and shows that in many European countries the switch from an initially monolingual curriculum to a more multilingual, most often bilingual, curriculum has led to public debates. In Estonia and Latvia (Soler & Rozenthal, this volume<sup>2</sup>), for example, there was a debate about linguistic hierarchies in higher education, questions on the quality of higher education and the role of legal measures applied to manage language matters at universities. It is noteworthy that in Switzerland the use of English in public schools at a primary and secondary level was subject to more controversy than it was at institutes of higher education at the tertiary level (Studer & Siddiq). In Italy it was the national Academy for the Italian language that sparked a debate after the renowned university Politecnico di Milano proposed to implement a unilateral use of English

2 Authors without dates refer to chapters in this volume.

in MA and PhD courses (Murphy & Zuaro). This book shows that in many other European countries there were public debates about the introduction of EMI programmes. However, there are exceptions. In Russia (Belyaeva et al.) there was no public debate and in Croatia (Drljača Margić) the debate concerned only the replacement in the media of Croatian expressions by English expressions and not the increase of EMI programmes. The latter is due to the fact that, in contrast with other European countries, relatively few EMI programmes are offered in Croatia. But in most countries these programmes led to public debates. Although the contexts of these debates varied with each country, it was not uncommon for them to be conducted in the same wording.

## 2 Aspects of Englishization

In recent years, the worldwide growth of EMI programmes in higher education has been increasingly discussed in terms of Englishization. This can be defined as the process in which the English language is increasingly gaining ground in domains where another language was previously used. In line with this definition of Englishization, six related aspects of this process can be distinguished that play an implicit or explicit role in public discussions about this.

The first aspect concerns the domain where English is displacing another language. In addition to the domain of education, it concerns the domains of politics, culture, and economics. The European Union (EU) is a good case for studying the Englishization of the domain politics (De Swaan, 2010, pp. 69-71; Van Parijs, 2011, pp. 6-17). While French was still accepted as the language in which politicians and civil servants communicated with each other in the 1950s when the EU was established, this language became relatively quickly replaced by English in 1973 with the EU's expansion. The Englishization of the cultural domain refers to the increase of consumption of English-language films, literature and music in a context where these cultural phenomena were articulated in the native language or a language other than English. Le Lièvre points out that France consciously protects its own film and music industry against Englishization, usually perceived as Americanization. With regard to the Englishization of Belgian culture, van Splunder points to differences between Wallonia and Flanders, because in the former region English-language films are dubbed and in the latter region subtitled. The Englishization of economics implies that the vernacular language



of communication in companies and economic transactions is being increasingly replaced by English (Boussebaa et al., 2014; Pierini, 2016; Tietze, 2004). This development is mainly seen as the result of economic globalization. Although this book focuses on the Englishization of higher education, it is important to consider that this domain intrudes upon the other three domains. The domain loss in education, that is, when the vernacular language loses status due to the favouring of English, may have far-reaching consequences for the maintenance of the culture. Soler and Rozenthal point out that in Estonia, so-called culturalists, as opposed to internationalists, fear that the Englishization threatens their culture.

The second aspect of Englishization concerns the stakeholders in the process. Within each domain where Englishization occurs, different stakeholders operate who may have contrasting and conflicting interests. Lasagabaster reports that students were more reluctant than administrative personnel and teachers towards compulsory EMI programmes, especially 'those students whose mother tongue was Basque, who were much more concerned about the alleged negative impact of English on Basque.' But the Englishization of a domain can also have consequences for stakeholders who operate outside it. For example, the Englishization of higher education concerns not only obvious stakeholders such as students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff, but also the citizens and shopkeepers who live and work in the city where a university is located. Citizens can be afraid of losing their language-bound cultural identity when English gets the upper hand, while retailers can hope for additional earnings.

The third aspect of Englishization affects the language policy of a country, public institution, or company. Language policy<sup>3</sup> can stimulate or restrict Englishization. Nordic countries, for example, have established language policies based on parallel language use to protect the national language and minority languages (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2007). Dimova, Hultgren, and Kling underline that in response to concerns that parallel language use has downgraded the position of other foreign, heritage, and minority languages, 'more recent interpretations view its potential in promoting and normalizing the presencing of multiple languages in higher education.' It is not uncommon for there to be a gap between official language policy and language practice. For instance, Sweden is officially a monolingual country, but in practice this is different (Kuteeva et al., 2020, p. 4).

3 Much of what we refer to as language policy here reflects policy as stipulated in official policy documents, which Spolsky (2004, 2007) categorizes as management. Language policy also is formed by language practices and language beliefs.





The fourth aspect of Englishization, legislation, relates closely to language policy, but should be distinguished from it. New legislation can give way to Englishization or, on the contrary, restrict it. When the French government, according to Le Lièvre, wanted to create more possibilities for EMI programmes with the Fioraso law, this led to fierce resistance. In Italy and the Netherlands, Englishization was the subject of a lawsuit (Pulcini & Campagna, 2015; Edwards, 2016). In Europe, Englishization is not only about national legislation, but also about European legislation that offers both possibilities and restrictions.

The fifth aspect of Englishization concerns the material resources used in various domains. Englishization also means that English-language films, literature and music and icons of Anglophone culture are perceived in other cultures, which may imply the downgrading of products of some cultures. If EMI programmes predominate in higher education, does that mean that academically relevant sources in languages that have not been translated into English are still used? The question is whether EMI undermines cultural diversity. The production of material resources in the first language (L1) will be reduced if, as suggested in Latvia, PhD candidates have to produce their research in English, thus reducing the range of local research topics covered (Soler & Rozenvalde).

The sixth aspect of Englishization concerns its normative dimension. Englishization is an evaluative-descriptive term; it is by no means a neutral concept. In public controversies about Englishization, the term acquires negative connotations for various stakeholders (Rivlina, 2013). Murphy and Zuaro point out that the Italian word for Englishization – *Anglicizzazione* – ‘is mentioned solely in connection with the negative effect on other languages, which leads to monolingualism and subservience to Anglophone culture.’ Because the burdens of Englishization are often not fairly distributed in reality (Boussebaa & Tienari, 2019; Jackson & Primecz, 2019), its normative dimension can be addressed in terms of linguistic justice (Alcalde, 2015). The implicit normative assumptions that underlie language policies and the public judgments about Englishization can be made explicit and critically examined on the basis of a well-founded idea of linguistic justice (Van Parijs, 2011).

The aim of this book is to describe, explain and assess the differences and similarities between European countries with regard to the Englishization of higher education. To this end, we asked eminent scholars to write a contribution on the Englishization of higher education in a specific country. Their analyses build on existing research into Englishization that has intensified over the last 15 years (Boussebaa & Brown, 2017; Earls, 2013; Hultgren &



Thøgersen, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018a; Tam, 2009 and 2019).

Research into the Englishization of higher education investigates three levels: micro (everyday research and education at the faculty level), meso (the university and the immediate environment), macro (nation state and the global context). At the micro level, questions relate how practitioners perceive the quality of education, the nature of knowledge, disciplinary differences and the impact of affect in EMI (Block & Khan, 2020; Hunter & Lanvers). At the meso level, questions concern the effects of Englishization on the immediate surroundings of the university, where services both within and outside the university may need to become bilingual or multilingual (Belyaeva et al.). At a macro level, questions address Englishization against the background of global developments. Gustafsson and Valcke, for instance, link it to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Research at this level delves into the commodification of academic research and higher education as well as the balance of power.

The three distinct levels are interrelated. A macroscopic perspective is indispensable for an explanation of phenomena that take place at the micro and meso level. Certainly, when it comes to the increase in EMI programmes, the relationship between the meso and macro level is often discussed in the context of the internationalization of higher education (cf. Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Gürtler & Kronewald, 2015; Pulcini & Campagna, 2015; Shimauchi, 2018; Tejada-Sánchez & Molina-Naar, 2020). Internationalization and Englishization are not two sides of the same coin, rather two different processes. It is possible to have internationalization without Englishization. The Spanish language, for example, is not only used in higher education in Spain, but also in Latin America and serves the international cooperation of universities. Conversely, Englishization can occur without internationalization, for example in the Commonwealth (Van Parijs). In addition, Murphy and Mengistu (2020, p. 95) emphasize that Ethiopia is ‘an intriguing counter-example of the idea that internationalization is synonymous with Englishization.’

### 3 The globalization of EMI

The global dispersion of EMI can best be described in terms of glocalization. The concept of glocalization indicates that the global intensification of dependencies beyond national borders in different domains goes hand in hand with the articulation of local particularities (Robertson, 1992,



pp. 173-174). This global-local nexus can also be applied to the worldwide dispersion of EMI (Alsagoff, 2010; Shi, 2013). In this case, glocalization means that universities across the world offer EMI programmes, but they do so in their own way. This implies that Englishization differs according to time and place. This volume presents several examples of localized varieties of the Englishization of higher education in Europe. In Belgium, for example, because of the language conflict conducted there, there is more reluctance towards the Englishization of higher education than in Austria, where it is hardly a topic of discussion (Dannerer, Gaisch & Smit; Van Splunder). Nevertheless, there are also similarities between the various European countries. The concept of glocalization can yield a better understanding of how English is adapted in different contexts. Glocalization underlines that English becomes modified in the different parts of the world and often generates interesting hybrids (Alsagoff, 2010).

Localized expressions of English by non-natives may not meet the assumed standard English, but they are unavoidable. The kinds of English used in communication are often very different from the English taught in classrooms and that of English L1 speakers. Efficient communication among non-English L1 speakers can occur through hybrid forms or translanguaging (Gustafsson & Valcke; Le Lièvre). The concept of glocalization presupposes that there is a tension between the local and the global. This is by no means a process that runs smoothly and is free from conflict and resistance. Global forces to meet certain standards often lead to local resistance.

The fact that there is local resistance to a global phenomenon such as Englishization shows that it is not useful to speak of linguistic imperialism, because this concept assumes that a language is imposed top-down and there is little or no room to do something bottom-up against it. Phillipson, who coined this concept, argues that 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). The concept of linguistic imperialism presupposes an imperial power that intends to impose its language policy on third parties. However, the reality looks different. It is true that Englishization involves specific power relations, but the power of some agents (for instance the British Council, the IMF and the World Bank) has never been so totalizing that no other agents have the possibility of establishing countervailing powers. Actors do have possibilities, however limited, to resist the language imposed on them and to partially shape it themselves.

In contrast to the concept of linguistic imperialism, the concept of glocalization does justice to the linguistic dimension of the agency-structure



problem, which concerns the extent to which individuals and collectives act as free agents or are determined by socio-economic and other structures (Giddens, 1984). Whereas the concept of linguistic imperialism suggests individuals and collectives locally cannot withstand global structures pushing Englishization, the concept of glocalization underlines that Englishization is not a unidimensional but a multidimensional process in which the global and the local must be conceived as dialectically interconnected. This dialectical interconnectedness is based on the assumption that agency and structure are complementary and mutually constitutive forces – that is to say that the actions of individuals and collectives are influenced and constrained by structures, but that their actions can change these structures to some extent. Simultaneously, the structures changed by Englishization shape and constrain the actions of individuals and collectives, and they have the ability to empower and to inspire resistance. For example, at the Politecnico di Milano in Italy, teachers and students were successful with their opposition to a majority decision of the senate to offer all MA programmes and PhD courses in English (Pulcini & Campagna, 2015; Quick, 2021, p. 59). Agents can freely discuss and consciously alter the linguistic landscape in which they operate. It is not clear *a priori* that they cannot make a change in a specific linguistic landscape, because of Englishization.

#### 4 Crucial issues

The worldwide discussion about Englishization is usually about its consequences. This mainly concerns four related issues: quality, cultural identity, inequality and voice. What are the consequences of Englishization for the quality of research and education at universities, the cultural identity of a region or country, the inequality between stakeholders and their voice? These crucial issues, addressed in various contributions to this book, deserve a brief explanation.

A recurring point of discussion is the suggestion that the increase in EMI programmes in higher education harms the quality of research and education. In public debates about Englishization it is often suggested that the language proficiency of non-native researchers and students could never be good enough to articulate linguistically the nuances necessary for science (Le Lièvre; Soler & Rozenvalde; Wilkinson & Gabriëls). Moreover, proficiency in the L<sub>1</sub> would be damaged by Englishization. Many students trained in EMI will find jobs where command of the spoken and written L<sub>1</sub> must be at a high level. This applies, for example, to doctors, psychologists, lawyers

and managers who have to use the local L1. In order to safeguard the local L1 a country could offer, alongside the EMI provision, programmes in this language for international students. In Germany, some programmes require international students to engage in German language classes, increasing their opportunities in the attractive German job market (Hunter & Lanvers). Meanwhile, in countries such as Austria (Dannerer, Gaisch, & Smit) and Russia (Belyaeva, Kuznetsova, Nikiforova, & Suchkova), there are hardly any quality assurance policies with regard to English proficiency. In various countries there are tests, accreditation procedures and certificates (Dimova, Hultgren, & Kling; Gustafsson & Valcke; Lasagabaster; Van Splunder).

Assuming that the identity of individuals and collectives is largely based on language, Englishization is associated with identity (Preece, 2016). Englishization is perceived as a threat to cultural identity in countries and regions that were unwillingly forced to use a foreign language and were liberated from the imposition by historical developments (Lasagabaster; Soler & Rozenvalde; Van Splunder), but also in smaller countries and regions that have not experienced previous imposition (see also Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018b). Englishization has an impact on the input that academics give directly or indirectly to the art, culture and social life of a country, because that depends to a great extent on a shared language. Englishization could create an even (larger) cultural gap between the academic and non-academic world. In Denmark, the question has been raised concerning how those who do not have a sufficient level of English proficiency are able to gain access to scientific knowledge that is mainly disseminated in English (Dimova, Hultgren, & Kling). Another problem concerning cultural identity is whether Englishization will lead to the disappearance of French, German, Italian, Swedish, and so on, as academic languages. For cultural identity, the input of the humanities and to a somewhat lesser extent the social sciences is perhaps more important than that of the natural sciences. But Englishization is not necessarily a threat to the identity of a country or region. In higher education, EMI programmes enable various stakeholders to communicate across cultural boundaries and diversify their identity. People who, in addition to their L1, use English to communicate cross-culturally have a linguistic repertoire that reflects a multicultural rather than a monocultural identity (Gustafsson & Valcke).

The issues of both cultural identity and inequality show that discussions about Englishization relate not only to higher education, but to society as a whole. The question is whether Englishization entails the emergence of new enclaves in which some are privileged and others marginalized. Does this process create a cleft between Englishized students who can move around the world as nomads and socially less advantaged students who

are confined to their own state or region? The opportunities to follow EMI are not equal within and between countries. Within countries English may be an additional barrier for students who already find studying in the L1 a challenge. In Italy research indicates that students from higher social classes benefit more from EMI than students from lower classes (Murphy & Zuaro). In a country like Croatia, for example, there are fewer options for following EMI programmes than in Denmark (Dimova, Hultgren, & Kling; Drljača Margić). However, some argue that when certain conditions are met the use of English can contribute to greater equality (Van Parijs, 2011).

In practice, stakeholders who are involved in Englishization or who bear its consequences often have little opportunity to voice their concerns about language policy. The possibilities to voice opinions regarding Englishization may be frustrated by top-down language policies that prevent stakeholders from being heard (Le Lièvre; Soler & Rozenvalde; Van Splunder). The contrast is substantial between the top-down discourses of policymakers and the bottom-up discourses of 'those endowed with less or no institutional power to influence the extent of English used, but who may nevertheless have strong attitudes to it' (Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018a, p. 5). There is a democratic deficit if stakeholders do not have possibilities to shape the language policy to which they are subject. Democracy implies that those affected by policies have the opportunity to significantly set their mark on it. Top-down language policies do not give all stakeholders this option, certainly not those outside the academic world. With regard to the last point, it can be pointed out that Englishization undermines the democratization of knowledge 'by inhibiting the development of a lexicon that keeps track, in the local language, of scientific advances and by hindering the flow of knowledge and ideas between universities and the rest of society' (Van Parijs).

Notwithstanding differences between Europe and other continents regarding Englishization, it is noteworthy that crucial issues such as quality, cultural identity, inequality and voice are the subject of academic and public debates all over the world (Tam, 2009; McIlwraith, 2015; Tejada-Sánchez & Molina-Naar, 2020). Similarly, there is also an increase of research into Englishization in Africa, Australia, Asia and America. Analysing developments beyond Europe would help avoid a Eurocentric view of Englishization.

## 5 The political economy of Englishization

A macroscopic perspective is indispensable for explaining the phenomena of Englishization described above. For example, the tremendous growth of EMI



programmes at a micro-level and the language policy developed at a meso level can only be properly understood if they are linked to what happens at a macro level. Linguistic and other phenomena at the macro level influence the actions by individuals and collectives on a micro and meso level, which could subsequently lead to (new) phenomena at the macro level, that is, the global language system. The possibilities and constraints of individual actors regarding the use of language on a micro and meso level depend on the way the global language system is structured. The political economy of Englishization studies the nature of the interdependencies between and within these levels and looks for explanatory factors for English increasingly gaining ground in domains where another language was previously used.

Individuals often prefer the English language because it provides them with greater communicative advantage than any other language (De Swaan, 2001). Their preferences and the choices based on them with regard to English cannot be seen in isolation from the way in which the economy is structured. Since the late 1970s, the global economy has been structured in line with neoliberal principles, influencing language policies and practices at the local level (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012).

The concept of neoliberalism is a contested concept because there is disagreement about its meaning (Biebricher, 2021; Harvey, 2007; Peck, 2010). To avoid conceptual hair-splitting, neoliberalism may be defined as the idea that the economic order and the political order contribute best to the welfare and freedom of all under the conditions of the deregulation of financial market, the privatization of public services, the flexibilization of the labour market, the reform of the welfare state by reductions of public expenditures, the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital, the maximizing of shareholder value and private ownership legally anchored. Implementing neoliberal policies influenced Englishization in general and in higher education in particular (Giroux, 2014; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2020). This is also pointed out by various authors in this volume (Dannerer, Gaisch, & Smit; Le Lièvre; Studer & Siddiq; Van Splunder; Wilkinson & Gabriëls).

Due to globalization, the sociolinguistic contexts have changed (Blommaert, 2010). In particular, the increased transnational economic dependencies and the dominant position of the United States have led to an increase in the market value of English. English is a medium that is central where economic transactions take place. Because neoliberalism highly values the free movement of goods, services and capital, international organizations and transnational corporations support the learning of English. The assumption is that it is not only organizations and corporations that benefit from a

high level of English proficiency, but individuals too, because English will contribute to increasing their job opportunities.

Higher education has become more receptive to and serves as an agent of Englishization, because neoliberalism transformed the classical university into an entrepreneurial university (Bok, 2003). The entrepreneurial university is characterized by the commodification of education and research (Radder, 2010). In a global academic market, universities compete to attract the best students and scholars and capitalize on their successes. Rankings, for instance, are an important indicator for universities in determining their competitive position. Because the degree of internationalization is one of the indicators in the rankings, universities attract as many international students as possible. To do so, they offer more and more EMI programmes.

The more universities are modelled on companies, the more university administrators become managers (Boomkens & Gabriëls, 2008). The rise of New Public Management (NPM) plays an important role in the context of higher education. NPM requires academics to have the habitus of a *homo economicus* who knows how to capitalize the acquisition and transfer of knowledge and not the habitus of the classical *homo academicus* (Münc, 2011, pp. 94-131). Where the *homo economicus* prevails, language is seen as an instrument, merely as a medium to transfer information to another person in an efficient manner. This would seem to invalidate objections to Englishization. On the other hand, those who use language as the bearer of a specific cultural identity may not easily support Englishization.

The political economy of Englishization draws attention to the consequences that the allocation of a resource such as language has for the quality of education, cultural identity, inequality and voice. As mentioned before, quality of education is mainly about two issues: the question of whether proficiency in English provides sufficient quality of education and research and the question whether Englishization implies that people can no longer express themselves at a high level in their L1. If language is central to people's identity, then the neoliberal push towards Englishization could be perceived as a threat to their identity. Englishization, as Boussebaa and Brown (2017) suggest, contributes to identity regulation that turns locals into Anglophones who have internalized the values of entrepreneurship. The growing socio-economic inequality inherent in neoliberalism is reflected in the fact that access to EMI programmes is often limited to those who can afford it. English functions as a gatekeeper and can increase the difference between those who master this language and those who do not (Price, 2014, p. 586). This may explain why in many countries the call is getting louder



to democratize higher education and to involve more stakeholders in the development of (language) policies.

## 6 Linguistic justice and democracy

The phenomena of Englishization in higher education and the politico-economic explanation merit an assessment. Public controversies about and research into Englishization are by no means neutral. The negative connotation surrounding the term Englishization in various contexts indicates that this is a normatively loaded issue (Lasagabaster). For the assessment of Englishization in higher education, the concepts linguistic justice and democracy can be used.

Linguistic justice deserves more attention in the research into Englishization of higher education than it has received so far, because the consequences of language policies may lead to inequalities that are perceived as unfair by those involved. Gustafsson and Valcke argue that universities should commit to policies that contribute to social justice. Assessing the fairness of language policies and practices that promote Englishization entails describing and justifying ideas about linguistic justice.

Without entertaining the various (liberal, communitarian and other) theories on linguistic justice, only three interpretations of linguistic justice distinguished by Van Parijs (2011) are mentioned here, because they offer good starting points for the critical assessment of Englishization in higher education.

The first interpretation is linguistic justice as cooperative justice. Since English functions as a public good that enables people who speak this language to communicate with each other, their cooperation is fair if the burdens are distributed fairly. The crucial issue now is what, according to this interpretation of linguistic justice, is the most defensible criterion. According to Van Parijs, the criterion of equal cost-benefit ratios underpins this interpretation of linguistic justice, and this requires a contribution from Anglophones, whether or not in the form of a linguistic tax.

Van Parijs considers the second interpretation of linguistic justice, namely as distributive justice, of greater importance. In this interpretation, based on an egalitarian conception of global distributive justice, language is not seen as a public good, but as an individual asset that in principle contributes to everyone having an equal chance of achieving a good life. However, the growing dominance of English language is based on inequalities of opportunities. In view of language policies and practices, the best way to

deal with this is 'by accelerating the dissemination of the lingua franca beyond the elite of each country' (Van Parijs, 2011, pp. 115-116).

The third interpretation of linguistic justice, namely as parity of esteem, views language not only as a communication tool, but also a marker of identity. This notion of justice is based on the idea that language is constitutive of the collective identity of those who master it and expect their language to be treated with equal respect. It would be unfair if people are stigmatized for not being proficient in English. To do justice to linguistic diversity and avoid the dominance of a language, Van Parijs proposes a territorially differentiated coercive linguistic regime in which the coercive rules differ from place to place (Van Parijs, 2011, pp. 133-137). His proposal is not uncontroversial. Some scholars argue that his idea of a territorially differentiated coercive linguistic regime does not do justice to the frequent incongruence between territory and language. Moreover, multiple language groups may claim the same territory, and there are Englishes with different statuses and linguistically hybrid settings (De Schutter & Robichaud, 2015; May, 2015).

The concept of linguistic justice could be applied to the assessment of language policies and practices in higher education. Does Englishization frustrate burden sharing? As a linguistic community, does higher education offer equal opportunities for everyone? Do students and staff in higher education feel that there is parity of esteem with regard to the prevailing linguistic regime?

Linguistic justice touches upon democracy. After all, without linguistic justice it is impossible to speak of fully-fledged democratic conditions at the micro, meso, and macro level. For a democracy to function properly the members of a political community must share a common language and possess a corresponding linguistic competence. A common language is important for a shared political culture and ensures a kind of affinity among citizens. However, political practice often shows a tension between a common language and the maintenance of linguistic diversity. A democracy benefits from a common language because it contributes to establishing equal opportunities for citizens to participate in public deliberation and decision making. National states or the European Union must establish one or more official languages for this purpose. However, if a majority or hegemonic language is selected as the official language, it could jeopardize the participation of some citizens.

A crucial question is whether the language policies that drive the Englishization of higher education are democratic or are the result of a top-down implementation that is inherent to New Public Management



(Dimova, Hultgren, & Kling; Gustafsson & Valcke). Democracy means self-government, that those affected by policies should have some say in them. In the case of EMI, stakeholders should have the rights and possibilities to shape the language policy to which they are subject. However, at all levels policymakers take 'shortcuts that bypass public deliberation about political decisions', which erodes 'the fundamental commitment of the democratic ideal of self-government' (Lafont, 2020, p. 3). The hierarchies of languages (De Swaan, 2001) as well as ideologies that hide the gap between official policy and practice and the top-down implementation of EMI programmes (Hultgren et al., 2014; Dannerer, Gaisch, & Smit; Le Lièvre) may be reasons to question the democratic legitimacy of language policies.

## 7 The legacy of Mithridates

Returning to the beginning of this introduction, the EU has set great store by the legacy of Mithridates, but the Englishization of higher education in Europe shows that in practice there is still much to be desired. In some countries more than others, Englishization is perceived as both an opportunity and a problem. For example, many contributions in this volume note that the quality of education suffers from insufficient English proficiency among students and teachers. Furthermore, the status of the national language, so important for cultural identity, social cohesion, and democracy, would be affected by Englishization. Moreover, Englishization would widen the gap between academia and society and would make English a barrier to less advantaged citizens. As long as these problems are not resolved, as evidenced by various public controversies in Europe, there is a chance that the proliferation of EMI programmes will be politicized.

Because of the problematic sides of Englishization, there is a great temptation to reverse this process. But that is impossible (Van Parijs). For the time being, Englishization is an irreversible process that can at most be managed in certain directions. From a sociological perspective, Münch (2007, pp. 10-34) raises three related reasons for this. First, the functional adaptation of higher education leads to ever closer global markets of education and research. Second, the institutional path dependence entails that every step that actors take on an academic path reduces the chance that they will take an alternative path, because the costs (money, status, and power) of a turnaround will only increase. Third, the functional adaptation and the institutional path taken are legitimized and consolidated by a language ideology that uses a specific vocabulary (namely that of New



Public Management in which ranking, competition, internationalization and excellence are key concepts).

Taken together, the functional adaptation, the institutional path dependence and the language ideology ensure that Englishization will continue for the time being. This does not mean that nothing can be done about the problems raised (Dimova, Hultgren, & Kling; Drljača Margić; Gustafsson & Valcke). For this, from the point of view of democracy, all stakeholders affected by Englishization should have a voice, and not only those in academia.

Taking account of the legacy of Mithridates means recognizing that power relations make up the linguistic landscape and that language conveys a certain world view. The difference between disciplines comes into play here (Cierpich-Kozieł & Mańczak-Wohlfeld; Le Lièvre; Van Splunder). The content conveyed, especially by the humanities and social sciences, is vested in the local culture and language. Domain loss as a result of Englishization in the humanities and social sciences is anything but conducive to innovative input to the local culture and language, as well as their reproduction. Mithridates embodies Humboldt's idea that language is not merely a means of conveying information but expresses a world view that shapes a culture.

Human beings are self-interpreting animals that are embedded in one or more cultures (Taylor, 1985, 2016). Language is no mere communication tool but discloses the world in which human beings live. Mithridates understood that learning another language does not mean appropriating the same tools. Learning another language is actually the appropriation of a shared linguistic world disclosure. And that can be very enriching.

## 8 An outline of the contributions

The contributions of this book examine the Englishization of higher education in various European countries. It is impossible to discuss all European countries. Nevertheless, this volume provides a relatively good picture, because countries from Eastern, Western, Southern, and Northern Europe are represented. Of course, the following outline cannot do justice to the richness and complexity of each contribution.

Van Splunder (chap. 2) argues that English has gained a foothold in higher education despite all kinds of government restrictions. Englishization has sparked a public debate in Belgium on identity, equality, and justice. An analysis of this debate and research into EMI shows that Englishization may 'mean internationalization and access to the world', but 'does not mean access to the whole world.' Soler and Rozenvalde (chap. 3) address the



way in which Estonia and Latvia have publicly debated the opportunities and threats of the Englishization of higher education. Despite interesting differences between the two countries (for example with regard to the use of Russian in universities), there are fundamental similarities. In both Estonia and Latvia, language-related issues have played an important role in the nation-rebuilding process, and universities must appropriate the top-down language policies of the state. Public debates concern whether the Englishization of higher education affects other spheres in society and whether academia should primarily serve state interests.

Lasagabaster (chap. 4) addresses the impact of Englishization on multilingual Spain where officially bilingual universities play a key role in revitalizing the minority languages Basque, Catalan and Galician. Some perceive Englishization as a potential Trojan horse that might erode the results of four decades of revitalization. Besides this, other linguistic strains caused by Englishization are highlighted, such as the consequences of low level of English proficiency of teachers, students and administrative staff, and disciplinary differences regarding the importance of English. Le Lièvre (chap. 5) sketches an ambivalent picture of the Englishization of higher education in France. This picture is the result of an ongoing debate between the proponents and opponents of EMI programmes who, despite their different perspectives, have in common that they are blind regarding translingual practices. In practice, the linguistic landscape in France is characterized by hybrids, code-switching, and code-mixing rather than by clearly separate and distinguishable languages. Studer and Siddiqi (chap. 6) analyse legal, strategy and policy documents to ascertain how the increased use of English in Swiss higher education has been addressed by policymakers at national and institutional levels. They discuss the concern whether English in Switzerland has become the fifth national language in addition to the four official national languages (German, French, Italian and Romansh). With respect to multilingualism and internationalization, there is a remarkable difference in the way in which institutions in the German-speaking and French-speaking parts of Switzerland assess Englishization: while the former do so pragmatically, on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis, the latter principally do so from the perspective that language gives expression to the cultural identity of a community.

Dimova, Hultgren, and Kling (chap. 7) adopt a longitudinal perspective to the Englishization of higher education in Denmark that shows a shift over time from a critical to a constructive approach. Initially, the alleged consequences of the increasing use of English were critically examined, such as domain loss, inequality among the general public regarding a



sufficient level of English proficiency and a threat to the cultural heritage based on Danish. In Denmark, the critical approach has given way to a constructive approach that assesses Englishization pragmatically, recognizing that the expansion of EMI is inevitable and practical solutions regarding its implementation must be found. Murphy and Zuaro (chap. 8) investigate how the ideas of internationalization and Englishization are conceptualized in academic research on higher education in Italy. While the concept of internationalization is used in a neutral way, the concept of Englishization is endowed with negative connotations (by portraying it as a monolingual and hegemonic process that threatens cultural identity and involves injustice). However, based on Englishization as the medium of instruction, internationalization can 'represent a bridge to other cultures and a way of making Italian academic culture more accessible to international audiences, rather than a threat to its identity.'

Belyaeva, Kuznetsova, Nikiforova and Suchkova (chap. 9) argue that it is inappropriate to apply the concept Englishization to higher education in Russia, because the use of English is not far-reaching enough. Moreover, in Russia there is an incongruity between the language policy at the national level and the language policy at the level of higher education institutions. Although EMI is slowly but steadily acquiring more status in the European part of Russia, and there is evidence that other territories of the Russian Federation will follow this trend, it is noteworthy that in the Far East and elsewhere, Chinese is becoming increasingly popular.

Valcke and Gustafsson (chap. 10) analyse the way in which two universities in Sweden have undertaken curricular reform and managed the opportunities and challenges of teaching and learning through English. Both case studies show that in practice educational dynamics can differ from university to university and it makes sense to adopt the concept EMEMUS: English Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings (Dafouz & Smit, 2016). However different the multilingual university settings at the two Swedish universities, they both show that it is important to develop the multicultural sensitivities of the teaching staff in view of classrooms that are more inclusive and equitable. Wilkinson and Gabriëls (chap. 11) note that in the Netherlands there is an incongruity between the discourse of the university administrators and the critical voices of eminent scholars and intellectuals during a public controversy about Englishization. One explanation for this incongruity is that administrators of Dutch universities manage according to the guidelines of the neoliberal New Public Management and therefore defend other interests than those who publicly question the consequences of Englishization for Dutch culture and society. Although the Englishization of

Dutch higher education also meets the interests of students who consciously choose EMI programmes, many of them believe that this process results in Anglophone cultural dominance and harms Dutch culture.

Cierpich-Kozieł and Mańczak-Wohlfeld (chap. 12) describe the phenomena of what they call an English-Polish alliance, which amounts to the equalization of the status of English and Polish as languages of instruction. Features of this alliance include the strong growth of EMI programmes, publications in English and the increased importance of this language in job competition. Englishization in Polish higher education is subsumed under the concept of internationalization, which has led to increased status for EMI programmes. Based on analyses of policy texts and statistical data, Dannerer, Gaisch, and Smit (chap. 13) present a differentiated picture of the Englishization of traditional research universities and universities of applied sciences in Austria. It is noticeable that the issue of language in general, and English in particular, is under the radar in Austria, suggesting a lack of awareness that EMI may undermine the use of German in higher education. This corresponds to a utilitarian view of language inherent in Austrian policies.

From an in-depth investigation into EMI at the University of Rijeka in Croatia, Drljača Margić (chap. 14) concludes that no one thinks English should replace Croatian. Only a small minority of teachers and students express concerns about the future status of Croatian in higher education and that EMI will spur a brain drain. This might be because the overall adoption of EMI is rather low with only 3% of study programmes in English. Hunter and Lanvers (chap. 15) report research into how students and teachers experience the affective dimension of Englishization in German institutions of higher education. This research is unique because there are no studies that have examined the impact of affect in EMI on both students and teachers. Although anxiety over proficiency was present among most students and teachers, international students and teachers show a more positive affect towards EMI than local students and teachers, apart from those international students who are more concerned about face-saving.

In the epilogue of this book, Van Parijs (chap. 16) asks himself whether the Englishization of higher education in Europe is a problem and, if so, whether there is anything that can and should be done about it. Higher education confronts many challenges such as the quality of education, access of less advantaged students, the widening gap between academia and society, and the weakening of the national language that is so important to culture and identity. Internationalization entraps immense costs, often invested in Englishization. Addressing these issues is a balancing act: 'a fragile, conflict-ridden balance between giving enough place to English

not to fall behind and protecting the local languages against domain loss and slow agony.'

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## About the authors

RENÉ GABRIËLS is a lecturer in philosophy at Maastricht University (Netherlands). His research concerns social philosophy, sociolinguistics, philosophy of language and sociology of stratification. He focuses on democracy, inequality, human rights, linguistic justice, poverty and the relation between semantics and pragmatics, with current research on English-medium instruction (EMI) at universities and on food banks.

ROBERT WILKINSON is a visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Philosophy at Maastricht University (Netherlands) and conducts research on English-medium instruction (EMI) and multilingualism. He previously worked at Maastricht University's Language Centre, and earlier in Scotland, Czechoslovakia and France. He is currently chair of the ICLHE Association.

