

Assessment and EMI: Challenges and Opportunities

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Assessment and EMI: Challenges and Opportunities

Introduction

Challenges...

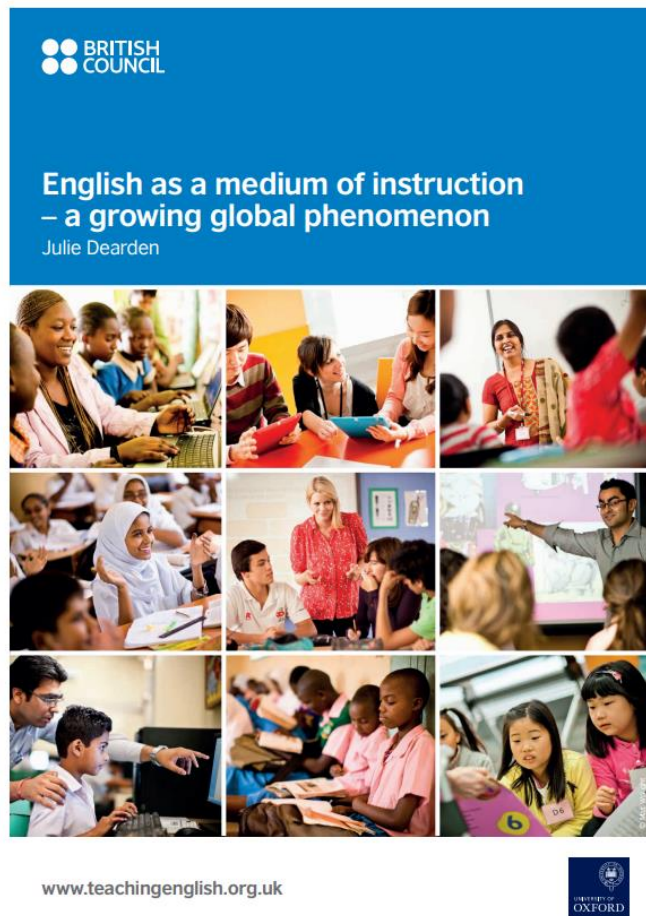
1. What is EMI?
2. Language Assessment and EMI
3. Research into EMI Assessment Practices

...and opportunities?

4. Where do we go from here?

1. What is EMI?

Assessment and EMI: Challenges and Opportunities



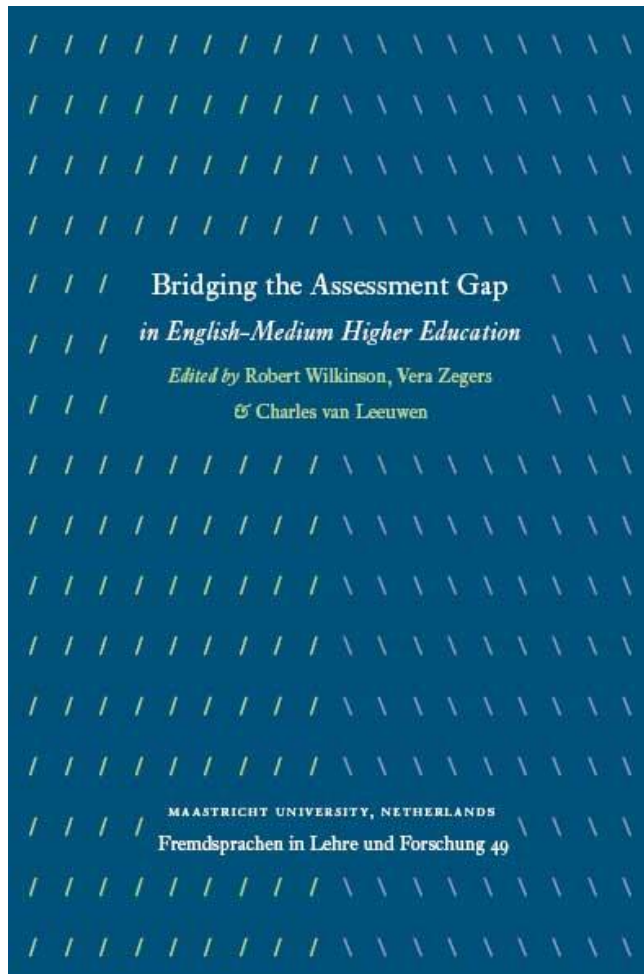
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What is English-medium instruction (EMI)?

“The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English”
(Dearden, 2015, p. 2).

2. Language Assessment and EMI

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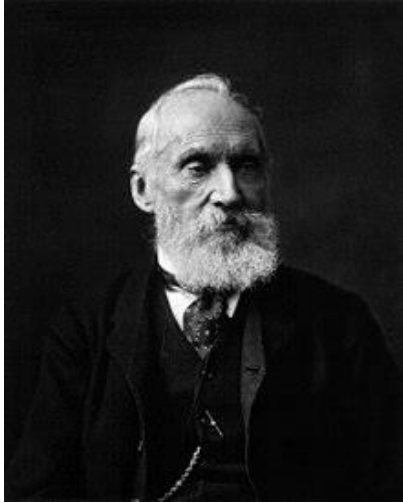
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Assessment and EMI

“the fact that education takes place through a language that is not the students’ mother tongue (and, in many cases, not that of the educators either) seems to have little influence on the assessment processes. Nor does the fact that students are learning both disciplinary content and language seem to influence the process”

(Wilkinson & Zegers, 2006, p. 30).

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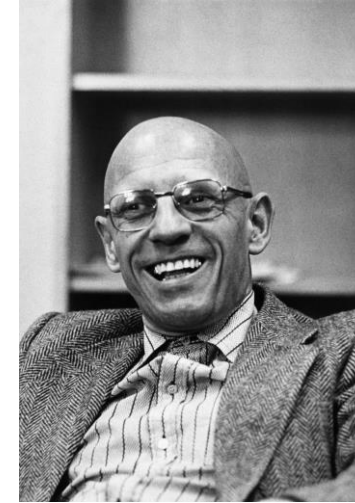


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William Thomson, 1st Baron Kelvin (1824 – 1907)

"I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely in your thoughts advanced to the state of Science, whatever the matter may be."

— Baron Kelvin, Electrical Units of Measurement, 1883



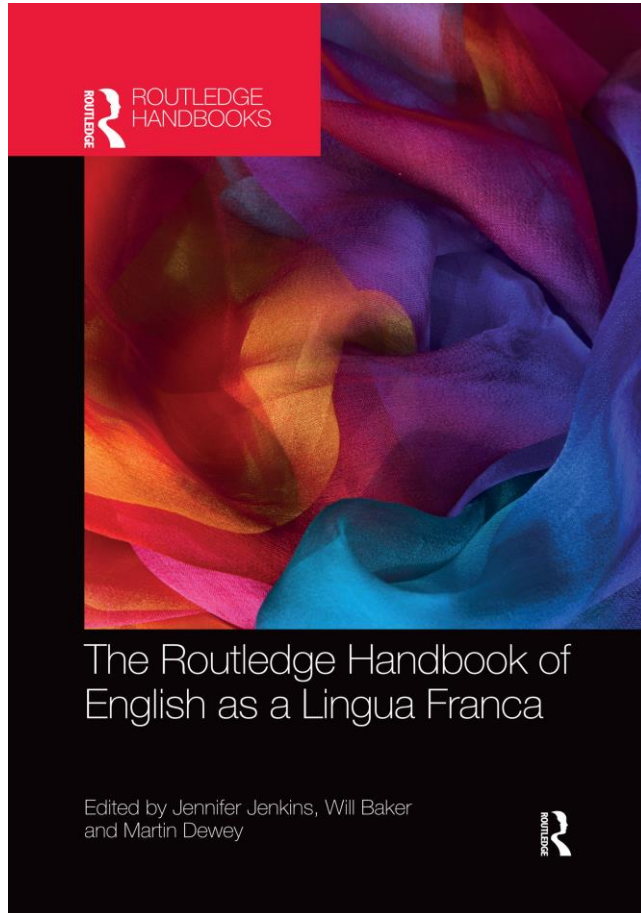
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Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984)

"The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements."

— Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, 1975

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EMI and Assessment: a site of epistemic tension?

“The sociolinguistic reality of English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication represents one of the most significant challenges to language testing and assessment since the advent of the communicative revolution”

(Harding & McNamara, 2017, p. 570).

Harding, L., & McNamara, T. (2017). Language assessment. In J. Jenkins, W. Baker, & M. Dewey (Eds.), The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca. Routledge.

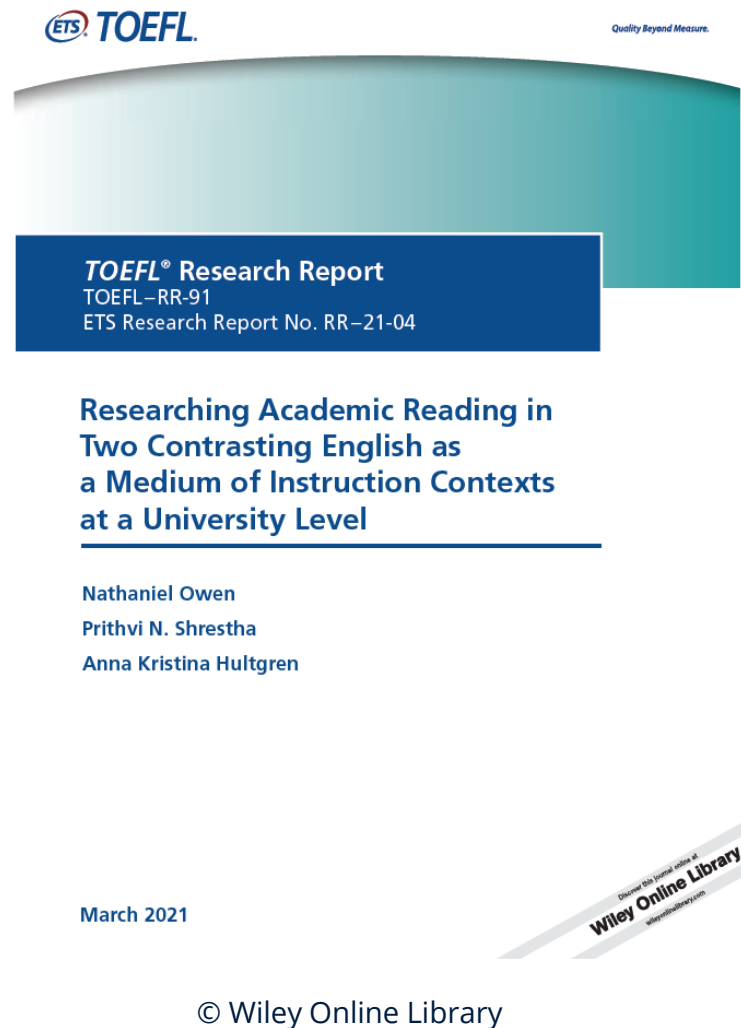
3. Research into EMI Assessment Practices

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Student EMI entry requirements

- Requirements vary by country and institution
- IELTS/TOEFL
- school leaving certificates
- Institutional entrance exams and preparatory courses
- Often different pathways for domestic and international students
- Influenced by national policies
- Unclear what cut scores should be
- Few studies on predictive validity of using entry tests for EMI programmes

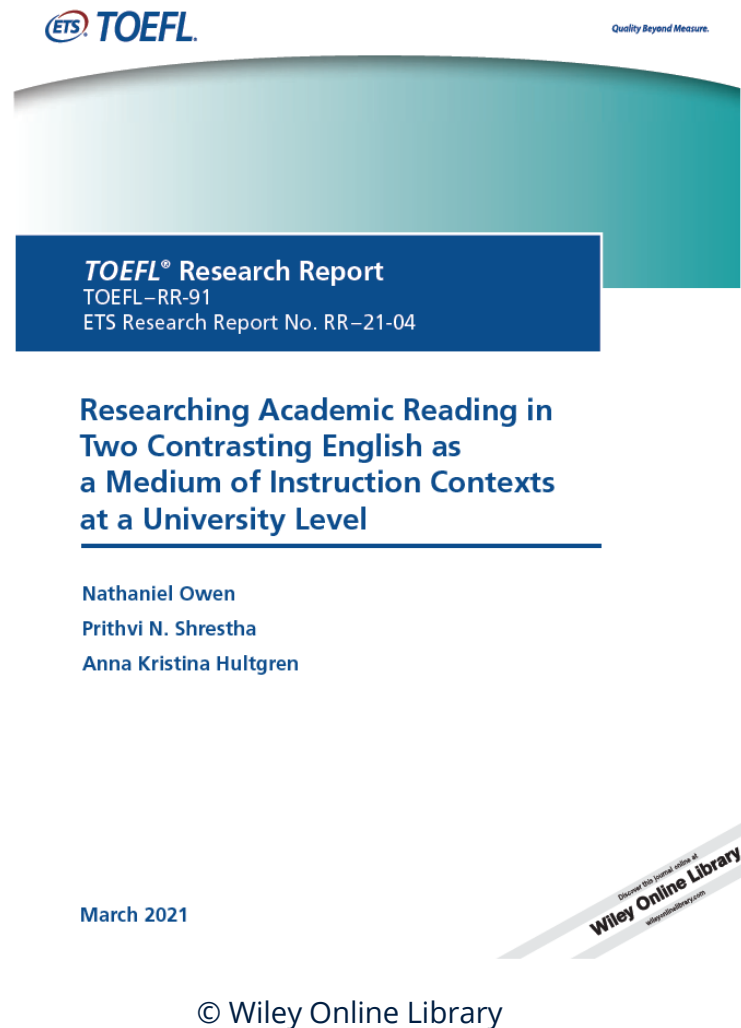
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Using standardized tests in EMI contexts

- **Comparative analysis of academic reading in two EMI contexts (Nepal and Sweden).**
- **Mixed methods research to explore the role of high-stakes testing in EMI contexts and implications for standardized tests such as the *TOEFL iBT*.**
- **Reading logs, standardized test, questionnaires and interviews.**

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Using standardized tests in EMI contexts

Students positive about...

- Alignment between reading skills represented by the test and those required for their courses

Students uncertain about...

- Using a high-stakes test to make claims about reading ability

Students split regarding...

- Predictive validity

Students strongly agreed about...

- Test content and face validity

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Assessing lecturer language proficiency

- Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff (TOEPAS).
- Simulated lecture for lecturers at the University of Copenhagen.
- TOEPAS scores do not affect lecturers' professional status in their units (e.g., institutes, departments, research centres).
- designed to assist unit leaders' (e.g., program leaders, department heads) decision-making related to EMI course assignments and to raise lecturers' awareness about their own English skill strengths and weaknesses.
- Holistic score on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, lecturers receive a video recording of their performance and extensive written formative feedback on their language skills.

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Assessing lecturer language proficiency

- Dimova and Kling (2018) found that...
 - EMI lecturers found that they were confident in their ability to use domain-specific vocabulary, but...
 - they stated it was difficult to express nuance.
 - focusing on general English vocabulary development beneficial for lecturers to improve classroom communication;
 - formal accuracy and native-speaker norms were inappropriate targets;
 - The test was suitable for both certification and professional development.

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Assessing lecturer language proficiency

- Lecturers' perceptions of the TOEPAS:
 - Most perceive it as a positive experience & value the training possibilities
 - Some reticence about impact on professional status
 - assessment of the language proficiency of university teaching staff is a controversial issue
- Relationship between pedagogy and language
 - 'Linguistic pedagogy' (Dimova and Kling, 2018)
 - EMI lectures as a specific ESP approach to professional learning

Dimova, S. (2017). Life after oral English certification: The consequences of the Test of Oral English Proficiency for Academic Staff for EMI lecturers, *English for Specific Purposes*, Volume 46, 45-58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2016.12.004>

Dimova, S. & J. Kling. (2018). Assessing English-Medium Instruction Lecturer Language Proficiency Across Disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly* 52(3):634-56. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.454>

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Assessing lecturer language proficiency

"...for lecturers, professors, academics and researchers who face the challenge of teaching their academic subject through English Medium Instruction (EMI). The courses are multidisciplinary with participants who teach Business, Finances, Economics, Engineering, Sciences and Humanities."



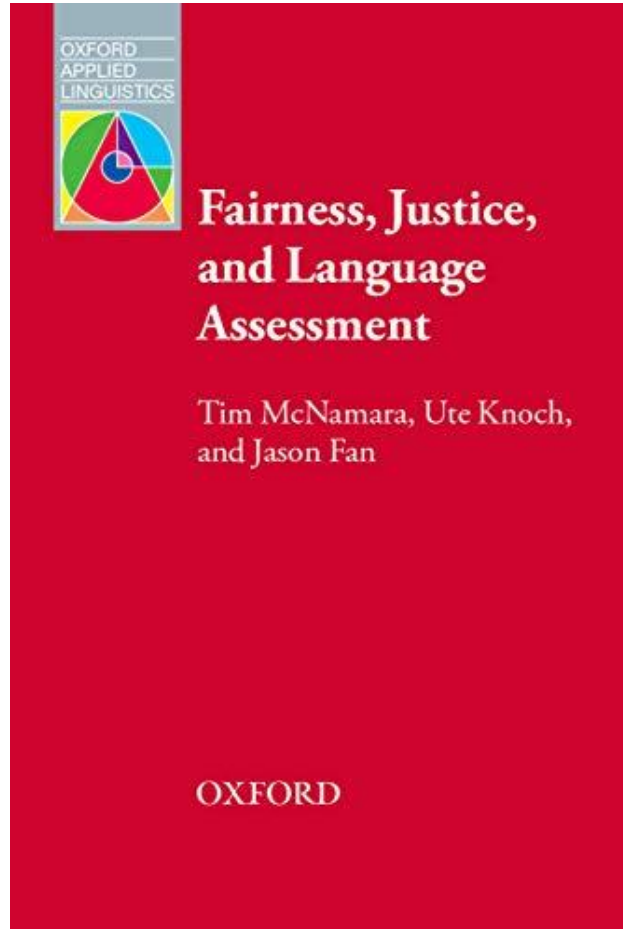
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Formative feedback has gained popularity as part of oral English assessment and EMI training programmes but very little is known about their effectiveness (Dimova, 2017).

4. Where do we go from here?

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Fairness in EMI assessment

“the growing awareness of the nature of English as a lingua franca communication overturns all the givens of the communicative movement as it has developed over the last 30 or 40 years. The distinction between native and non-native speaker competence, which lies at the heart of the movement, can no longer be sustained”

(McNamara, 2014, p. 21)

McNamara, T., Knoch, U., & Fan, J. (2019). *Fairness, justice, and language assessment: The role of measurement*. Oxford University Press.

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Bridging the gap

- EMI assessment practices occur between spaces occupied by large-scale standardized testing and classroom assessment.
- Move towards contextually situated language assessment.

Dimova, S., Yan, X. & Ginther, A. (2020). *Local Language Testing: Design, Implementation, and Development*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492242>

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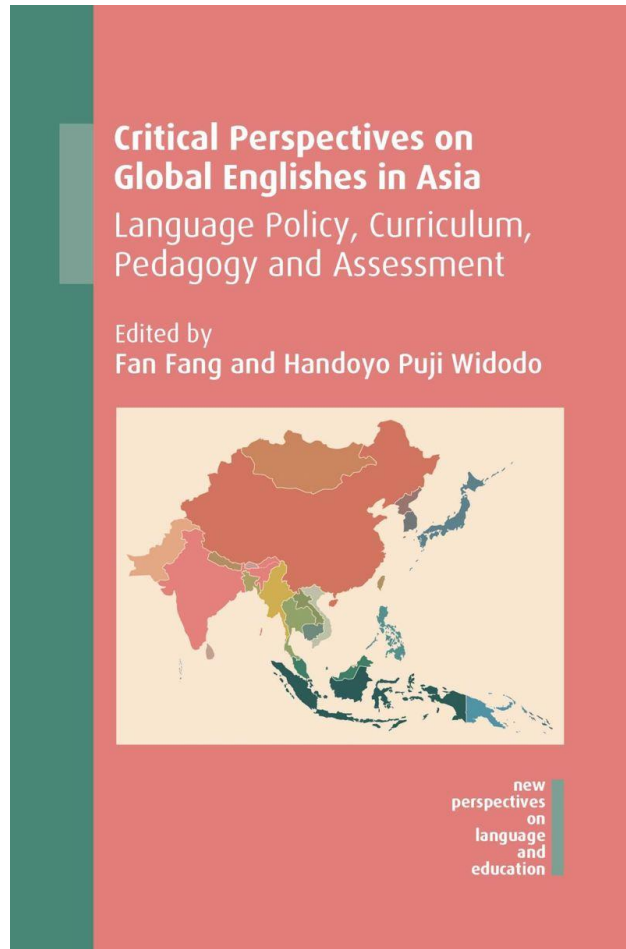
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Bridging the gap

- Test development subject to local resource availability
- Embed test results within instructional practice
- Test data used for program evaluation and research
- Responsive to specific institutional needs and contexts

Dimova, S., Yan, X. & Ginther, A. (2020). *Local Language Testing: Design, Implementation, and Development*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492242>

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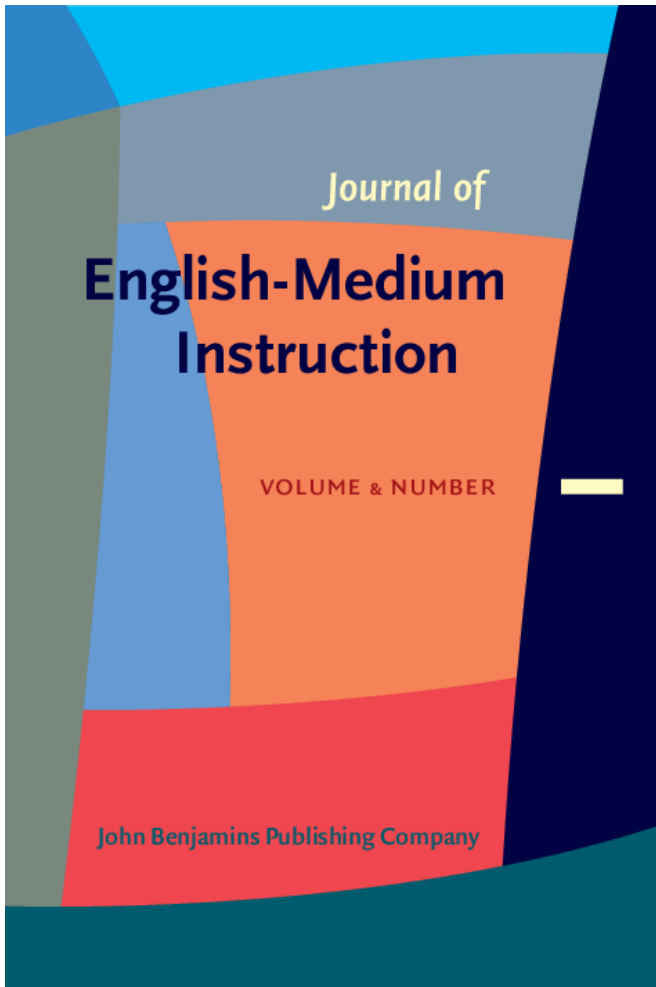
Increase focus on global Englishes in high-stakes tests

- **NS standards inadequately defined**
- **(As) many NS Englishes as NNS Englishes?**
- **NS proficiency has enormous variability**
- **NS standard – possible or desirable?**

Concluding thoughts: Global Englishes and local language testing

- Focuses on the needs of the test takers in a variety of contexts
- *Learning* English for global reasons, *using* English for local reasons (Brown, 2019, p. 73).
- Global English Standard (GES) (McKay & Brown, 2015)
 - Recognition of standardised grammar
 - Allows for some local dialectical variation
- “Do it, but do it with care, and never stop talking about it” (Shohamy, 2001, p. 161, Fulcher & Davidson, 2007, p. 142).

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Thank you!

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With thanks to my fellow authors!

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