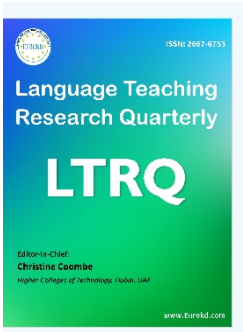

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The Influence of Jack C. Richards on My Personal Journey from EFL to EMI: A Narrative Exploration

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Abstract

Jack C. Richards (2021) suggests that language teacher identities are shaped by their past experiences, teacher education and language proficiency. His recent publications in English Medium Instruction (EMI) (Richards & Pun, 2022a; 2022b) inspired reflection on my multiple teacher identities. In this paper, I offer a narration of past experiences as a language learner and a non-native English-speaking teacher. As part of this narration, I reflect on the shift from being an English as a Foreign Language teacher (EFL) to being an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) teacher. While making this shift from EFL to EMI, I was searching for the meaning of what it means to be a "good language teacher" (Barkhuizen & Mendieta, 2020, p. 1). I propose that the transition was a natural evolution to respond to the global EMI trend. Richards' work not only provided a systematic examination of the emergence of global EMI programs, but it continues to have a profound impact on my dual roles as language and content specialist.

Keywords: *English-Medium Instruction (EMI), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Reflection, EMI Pedagogy, Teacher Identity, Narrative*

Introduction

My first encounter with the work of Jack Richards was in the Spring of 2000, as an international student, from Taiwan, enrolled in a Master's program at New York University, studying Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). One of the courses was entitled *Observation and Seminar in Second Language Teaching* and the course instructor had adopted

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the book *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* by Richards and Lockhart (1994). As student teachers, we were trained to observe classrooms and reflect on previous teaching and learning experiences in class. Although I had a year of teaching experience, this training was new to me. It had a profound impact on my professional development, especially related to the importance of reflective teaching. I came to realize that a reflective orientation was beneficial to my professional teacher identity (e.g., Wu, 2014).

My second encounter with Richards' work was when I began my career, in Taiwan, as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturer, teaching various language subject courses at five universities. Two of the universities had adopted language learning books by Richards, including the *New Interchange* series (Richards et al., 1997) for general English courses, and the *Tactics for Listening* series (Richards, 1995) for listening courses. Both *New Interchange* and *Tactics for Listening* were widely adopted by English language programs at various universities in Taiwan to facilitate student communication in English (Richards, 2006). The *New Interchange* series developed by Richards, focused on a communicative language teaching approach and transformed English language learning in higher education in Taiwan. Recalling my university experience of learning English in the U.S., the focus was always on reading rather than oral English proficiency. However, after being exposed to Richards' communicative language teaching approach, I was able to apply his ideas to my teaching strategies. Richards' books were inspiring for a novice teacher like me. It was a progressive way to teach English courses for college students and adults.

The teaching package developed by Richards (2006), consisted of student textbooks, workbooks, teaching manuals, and cassettes. These materials greatly reduced course preparation time. This allowed time to search for supplementary materials, such as films, songs, and jazz chants, and develop classroom activities, such as role-playing and information-gap activities to engage students in learning English.

My third encounter with Richards' work occurred quite serendipitously when I was tasked to be the administrator at my university to promote EMI. Richards had just released his latest book *Teaching and Learning in English Medium Instruction* (Richards & Pun, 2022a). As usual, the language in his book was concise, and it guided me to examine various types of EMI programs by specifying their features and purposes. Unlike most of his previous publications which were designed for language teachers' professional development, this publication by Richards and his colleague Jack Pun, challenged both TESOL and EMI teachers to address language learners' needs. The authors explained that the emergence of EMI can be traced to content-based instruction for TESOL-trained professionals. To fully understand EMI pedagogy, the teacher must have a solid understanding of TESOL pedagogy first. In other words, as Richards and Pun (2021) explained, EMI is an umbrella term which encompasses all forms of language- and content-integrated learning, and EMI teachers would ideally be both language- and content-focused. (See Table 1)

Table 1

Personal Influence of Jack C Richards' Work

My teacher identity in higher education	My encounters with Jack C Richards' work	The perceived influence of Richards' work	Trends within higher education contexts in Taiwan
An EMI teacher/ administrator	*Teaching and Learning in English Medium Instruction (2022)*	A systematic review of EMI types across various contexts	A top-down approach to promote EMI and a need for EMI pedagogy
An EFL lecturer	*New Interchange* Series (1997) *Tactics for Listening (1995)*	EFL learning materials that apply Communicative Language Teaching in higher education	Lack of proficiency-based English materials and communicative teaching practices
A graduate student in MA TESOL program	*Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms (1996)*	Teacher reflection on teaching and learning	Focus on teaching methods rather than teacher reflection

The emergence of EMI overlaps with EFL in a homogeneous student population of all non-native English speakers (Du & Jackson, 2018; Yuan, 2020). Students' motivation for learning English has evolved through their transition from EFL to EMI courses (Du & Jackson, 2018). This raised a number of questions, such as:

(1) How would the role of English Language Teachers (ELT) evolve in order to teach EMI courses?

(2) What pedagogy would EMI teachers use?

(3) What are good teaching practices in EMI?

Literature Review

Teacher Identities

Identities are how individuals understand themselves and express who they are in relation to others. More specifically, language teachers' identities have been studied by scholars because of their impact on themselves, other teachers, students, administrators, and perhaps most importantly their development of language curriculum (e.g., Richards, 2021; Téllez & Varghese, 2013). According to Richards, teacher identities are informed by who they were in the past, who they are now and how they continue to be perceived as teachers. These aspects include commitment, self-esteem, self-efficacy and agency. A TESOL teacher's identity is continuously constructed by his or her previous experiences, teacher education, and language proficiency.

Norton's (2000) explanation of teacher identities takes into consideration how power influences language learning with respect to gender, social class, and ethnicity of teachers and students. It is important to explore how teacher identities are constructed through classroom interactions. Norton further notes that "a person's identity will shift in accordance with changing

social and economic relations" (Norton, 2000, p. 8). For teachers, it is not enough to ask who they are but also what they desire to do with their resources or capital.

Barkhuizen and Mendieta (2020) also explore language teachers' identities and note that they are not static; they can change depending on different contexts and roles. In their research, they report that language teachers' professional identities are shaped by their personal identities, as well as the institutional and community contexts in which they teach. They illustrate the changing nature of teacher identities in a narrative about a teacher who shifted roles from being a part-time teacher, to a full-time teacher, and finally to a teacher leader. In each of these roles, his identity as a teacher changed based on what he was required to do. For example, Barkhuizen and Mendieta (2020) explain that as a teacher leader, his identity became that of a change agent because he was responsible for implementing a new language learning program with his fellow teachers. To do this, he was leading in the wake of change, and demonstrating the spirit of a good language teacher.

Huang (2019) reports that EMI teachers from the disciplines of law and humanities perceive their identities as educators in global and local contexts**.** In other words, the way in which teachers justify or reflect on their use of EMI suggests that their national and/or ethnic identities influence the way they approach language learning in their respective academic fields. Huang's (2019) study suggests that a narrative approach is useful to explore how EMI teacher identities are shaped through their professional paths.

Teachers' Reflections

Teaching, in general, is a complex process that involves various conceptualizations. Richards and his colleague, Charles Lockhart, state that "critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 4). This also applies specifically to EMI teachers. It is necessary for teachers to reflect on their teaching philosophies, principles, theories, and practices in EMI courses. Richards and Pun (2022a) continue to encourage this kind of reflection in EMI teachers.

The teaching effectiveness of EMI can be examined through two types of evaluations: accountability-oriented and discovery-oriented. While accountability-oriented evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of EMI courses with statistical measurements, "discovery-oriented evaluation is concerned with understanding different dimensions of an EMI program, such as how it is understood by teachers, learners, and other stakeholders" (Richards & Pun, 2022a, p.6). The use of teachers' narratives (reflections) is an example of discovery-based evaluation. Through teachers' reflections, issues that they face with curriculum, teaching procedures, content materials, and interactions with students can be expanded and integrated into professional development designed specifically for EMI teachers (Richards, 2002).

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a way of knowing through a person's narrative how their past experiences have influenced/created who they are now and/or the circumstances in which they find themselves. Although narrative inquiry is well established in the social sciences (Riessman,

2008), it is still in its infancy in TESOL studies and not widely accepted as "real" research because it cannot be quantified (Barkhuizen, 2011). Labov (2003) states that there is value in being able to see the reality of the circumstances as experienced and reported by the narrator and how this gives the reader insight into the narrator's "norms that govern the assignment of praise or blame; and in more serious cases, the narrator's complicity in the events themselves" (p. 63). Although this narrative, about my personal journey from EFL teacher to EMI teacher is not oral, per se, it encompasses the qualities that Labov considers methodologically important in narrative inquiry: "personal experience employs temporal junctures in which the surface order of the narrative clauses matches the projected order of the events described" (p. 63).

I ask myself these questions: Why narrative inquiry? What kind of narratives do I have? It is through narratives that I am able to present my evolution from an EFL teacher to respond to the global EMI trend. I realized that my narrative project presented in this paper is not just my personal journey, but a grander story that illustrates the nature of EFL teachers who have been experiencing the changes occurring in language education from the 1990s to the present time. I realized that my personal narrative can be valuable for young scholars to see how reflective teaching practices are crucial at different stages of a teachers' career path, from a pre-service teacher to an in-service teacher to an administrator.

Validity of Narrative Research

Narrative inquiry may be seen as less academic than other forms of research such as observational or experimental because the data cannot be quantified. As noted by Labov (2003) the weaknesses of a personal narrative is that the only information available about the reported circumstance(s) is in the narrative itself, which can be problematic when it comes to issues of validity and reliability. In a personal narrative, Polkinghorne (2007) also indicated that peoples' narratives tend to "project a positive self-image to others" and "may have filtered out the parts of their experiences that they want to keep to themselves" (p. 481). Could there be any distorted memories or untold stories? Up to this point in time, I have kept all the writings of Richards as references of his influence and value. Furthermore, my narrative is deliberately written to project the positive impacts of Richards' work on my own professional growth and development, and I honestly try to present my growth, weaknesses, and struggles throughout my teaching experiences in this paper.

Results

Identity Shift from EFL to EMI

My identity shifted from an EFL teacher to an EFL administrator when I became the director at the Center for English Language Teaching at my university. I was accountable for students' English proficiency which was measured by reaching the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level B2. However, those who met the CEFR B2 were bored with pure language courses. Thus, beyond the general English courses that were required, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), two new elective courses were proposed: Workplace English, and Academic Writing. The courses (General English, ESP and EAP) would be categorized by Richards and Pun (2021) as concurrent support

models, in which additional language supports were accessible for EMI students to develop their disciplinary language and academic literacy.

Meanwhile, I was invited to teach EMI courses offered by other departments and centers on campus, such as *Cross-cultural Communication: Taiwan Image* (offered by the General Education Center) and *Cross-cultural Communication and Negotiation* (offered by the graduate program of international affairs). Both courses were categorized as EMI courses at the university and I felt much more satisfied teaching these courses for two reasons. First, the student population was more heterogeneous since it consisted of both international and domestic students, similar to the classrooms I attended in the U.S. that were very heterogeneous, and I observed that cultural diversity created an advantage for students' language learning. Second, because of my doctoral training, I tried not to perceive myself as an EFL teacher but an educator using English as the *lingua franca* in the classroom, which allowed me to see how ELF was situated in a global context.

The EFL context at my university changed with an increased number of international students. Many of these students were from Asian countries, but there were also students from North America and Europe. Specifically, there were culturally and linguistically diverse students from Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, The Czech Republic, Belgium, France, Finland, Mainland China, and Mongolia. I find that as classrooms becomes more culturally diverse, it creates a challenging task for EMI teachers to interact with students since the only shared language is English.

I was considered to have sufficient qualifications to teach EMI courses based on my study abroad experience in an Anglophone country for six years where I became proficient in English. Furthermore, my research in cross-cultural communication assisted my professional development related to the content of the course (Wu, 2018). Richards and Pun (2022a) did not specify EMI teacher qualifications even though they highlighted the importance of professional development for teaching EMI. They left the decision-making process about what constitutes qualified EMI teachers to individual universities.

Teaching in EMI

My EMI teacher identity was affirmed when teaching *Cross-cultural Communication: Taiwan Image*, in which I could situate my teacher role in both international and local contexts. This course was designed to meet the needs of international students. This was a time when dozens of international students came, every semester, from our partner universities overseas. This influx of non-Taiwanese students played an important role in the internationalization of the domestic students who could not afford to study abroad. Conversely, the international students benefited greatly because they wanted to understand Taiwan culture and integrate into Taiwanese society. I believe that this course truly reflected the purpose of EMI, in which English was used as the *lingua franca*. The international students who enrolled in the class had multiple motives for taking the course and varying levels of English proficiency, whereas the main motive of the domestic students was to learn EFL. Ultimately, what made it a perfect EMI course was that the only language the students had in common was English.

It was my belief that historically informed cultural norms and values were important for both domestic and international students, so I focused on Taiwan's social, economic and political development since 1949. The textbook adopted was *Why Taiwan matters: Small island, global powerhouse* (Rigger, 2014). Through Rigger's (2014) perspective, not only could international students have a better understanding of Taiwan's history and culture, but domestic students could also see, from an outsider's point of view, how their history and culture shaped them.

Similar to my teacher training, students were encouraged to reflect on their intercultural encounters. Domestic and international students collaborated with each other to present their perceived differences between Taiwanese culture and their home cultures. The way students of other cultures made meaning of Taiwanese culture provided another opportunity for domestic students to see how their identities were influenced by their culture (Norton, 2000).

To facilitate students' disciplinary literacy, Richards and Pun (2022b) suggest that *concepts*, *tasks*, and *genres* are essential for EMI teachers to develop for their courses to ensure that students acquire disciplinary literacy as well as English proficiency. I reflected on how these could be done. The key concepts included were *self/other, cultural differences, ethnic, conflicts, prejudice,* and *stereotypes.* The tasks included self-reflection on a critical cultural incident that illustrated their intercultural interactions, and a project of interviewing international students on their observations of the local culture. This type of thinking required students to evaluate their past intercultural encounters and their own taken-for-granted cultural values. Finally, the textbook's genres used included exposition and critique.

Richards and Pun (2022b) suggest a variety of teaching approaches that focus on communicative teaching. Preparing this EMI course was similar to the kind of preparation that a language teacher would do, including an internet search, self-designed teaching materials, PowerPoint Slides, visual aids, and so on. Also, while teaching, group work and classroom language adaptations were used to simplify academic language. As group work has been a common practice for EFL teachers, it was also applied to my EMI classrooms. What was new to me was team teaching with teachers from other disciplines (Richards & Farrell, 2005). For example, to substantiate the content knowledge on Taiwanese folk music and the Indigenous cultures, I collaborated with two other teachers. One was a music professor who introduced the students to Taiwanese folk music. The other teacher was an expert on Taiwan's ethnic diversity of aboriginal tribes. This teacher accompanied the class on a field trip to visit the Indigenous Culture Park where she was the English tour guide and interpreter. The students were asked to write down their field trip reflections, and international students were impressed by seeing the cultural and linguistic diversity in Taiwan.

Richards and Pun (2022b) explain that "EMI teachers and students may have different expectation about the nature of academic genres" (p. 230). The genres of a book may be different from the academic language used in class. For example, one of the greatest challenges when teaching an EMI course was to find materials to fit students' levels of English and content knowledge. This was not an easy task when the course was about the local context of Taiwan. As previously mentioned, I chose Rigger's (2014) book; however, the language seemed too difficult

for the students to comprehend. I needed to simplify the language and provide PowerPoint slides to scaffold students' learning.

Intercultural Communication

English as the *lingua franca* in the classroom serves as an authentic context for intercultural communication (Jenkins, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2004). In EFL contexts, students whose native language is not English come from various backgrounds. They need to be able to communicate with each other in English effectively. Therefore, in an ELF context, fluency and accuracy may not be as important as comprehension and intelligibility (Jenkins, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2004). Ideally, both international and domestic students learn from each other and share their knowledge and beliefs. Conversely, the classroom could also be a place where stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination may occur.

When I taught a two-semester course, *Public Speaking*, which consisted of 60 per cent local students and 40 per cent international students from France, Japan, and Korea, one anonymous student who had given course feedback on the student evaluation form wrote (in Chinese), "it is my hope that, no matter who we are, international or local students, the teacher could treat us equally in terms of grade evaluation and assignment" (translated). I was very upset with this at first because it felt like the student, who was presumably a local student, was accusing me of discrimination. Since it was anonymous, I assured the same group of students, at the beginning of the second semester of the course, that as an educator, I was committed to providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of where they came from. However, I know that treating international and local students equally, in the same classroom, can be a challenge because it requires deliberate and intentional planning of learning activities and tasks that create opportunities for all types of students to engage in intercultural interactions (Lee et al., 2019).

The EMI literature tends to contrast English language specialists (i.e. EFL) with content specialists (i.e. EMI) (Macaro, 2018). However, these two professions are not mutually exclusive because it is possible to be both an EFL and an EMI teacher. My research interest in cross-cultural communication studies inspired me to prepare the EMI course content with the literature in cross-cultural communication for the students (Wu, 2018). I believed that students could develop critical consciousness of stereotypes, discrimination and prejudices when they socialized with people from other cultures. Additionally, it was through the process of sharing cultural similarities and differences that students affirmed their own bilingual (or multilingual) and bicultural (or multicultural) identities and respect for other cultures.

When presenting Taiwan history about the civil war, I was intentionally aware of the domestic students who may have different ethnic backgrounds. I wanted to be very sensitive to the different connotations between China and Mainland China and whether Taiwan is perceived as *a region*, *province* or *country*. International students needed to learn that a discussion on politics with Taiwanese people is not socially appropriate, due to the political and ethnic sensitivities of the multicultural population.

Students' respect for individual values and cultures were demonstrated through understanding the ethnic diversity of Taiwan. International students were expected to know that Taiwan does not have homogeneous demographics. Its population consists of Mainlanders, Southern Min,

Hakka, multiple groups of indigenous people, and even the recent immigrants from Southeast Asia and China. Students learned to respect each other through intercultural differences and even conflicts. As cultural miscommunications were inevitable, due to lack of knowledge, students were asked to reflect on their cross-cultural experiences, particularly those moments with frustrations, difficulties and even failures.

Students' Course Feedback

The average student evaluation of the course was 4.25 out of 5. Most students thought the course was meaningful for their learning. One student affirmed the value of the course by writing: "As a local student, I strongly suggest that this kind of course can be opened as much as possible." (Fall semester, 2018). Other positive feedback included comments on the course such as "interesting" and "easy to understand." However, one student responded that she felt that the course "wasted her time." Richards and Pun (2022b) refer to this negative type of response as one of the challenges of teaching multilingual EMI courses.

The Good EMI Practices

As a teacher consultant, I was invited to observe what was considered to be "good" EMI teaching practices at a prestigious public university in Taiwan. I came to realize that the meaning of good EMI practices can be very different. I recall a peer observation I had earlier this year at a public research university. The presentation of the models of EMI practices were meant to impress professors from other universities who were doing peer observations (Richards & Farrell, 2005). However, I was shocked to witness an online EMI course, which was video-recorded, in which the instructor, a native English-speaker, lectured for 20 minutes without his camera on. The lecture he delivered did not connect to the PowerPoint slides being shown, nor did he have any type of interaction with his students. The video showed that he could demonstrate his knowledge of the content fluently in English but he had no awareness of his students, who were not native English speakers.

As I reflected on this incident, I realized that this university's representation of good EMI practices only included excellent English proficiency and outstanding expertise in one discipline. However, I knew from reading the works of Richards, specifically *Teaching and Learning in English Medium Instruction* that good EMI practices include much more than English proficiency and knowledge of the subject matter. They include teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions. They also include a focus on students' academic literacy as opposed to conversational English. Students should be equipped with the ability to communicate their academic languages and skills in English upon completion of an EMI course.

Yet, with Richards' dedication to language teachers' professional development, I believe that his work is very timely because of his observations of the lack of EMI pedagogy. There is a need for universities to address features of good EMI practices in their own contexts.

Discussion

EMI and the Changing Nature of Higher Education

In the context of higher education, my role and identity shifted from an EMI teacher to an EMI administrator. In the role of administrator, my identity is now focused on how to promote EMI at

the university level. Some of the challenges I am facing in this new role include finding the most effective EMI models; ones that would be beneficial for different stakeholders, such as teachers and students. It is complicated because it requires considering the implications of a language university transitioning from focusing on EFL to focusing on EMI.

The proposed typology in Richards' work conceptualizes various EMI programs for policy makers in order offer effective and meaningful implementation. The typology helps with the understanding of the different dimensions of EMI, such as its purposes, curriculum models and assessment. For example, my university's approach to providing EMI access includes offering concurrent language supports whereas other universities may adopt preparatory models. Through my readings of Richards' work, I was able to see how the EMI program implementation in my college may be different from that of other colleges and universities. Furthermore, I am able to see my dual role as an English subject teacher *and* an EMI teacher. Not only do I see myself as "an English proficient teacher," I am also an "English competent", "certificated" and "EMI trained" teacher.

Richards and Pun (2022b) have commented on the concept of native-speakerism in EMI as they note, "the emphasis on proficiency has led to the question whether native-speaker ability is the pre- requisite for effective teaching in English" (p. 124). They argue that a native or near-native speaking EMI teacher's classroom may be too teacher-dominated with very limited opportunities for student interactions in class. Nevertheless, I could understand how the native-speakerism phenomenon would continue to be problematic in EMI/EFL settings. For example, in an EFL context, I recalled Ahn's (2019) study that implied that just being a native speaker of English is what constitutes a good language teacher in Korea. The nationality of an English teacher, particularly from Anglophone countries, seems to perpetuate native-speakerism in EFL teachers and this has extended to EMI teachers.

To sum up, I began to wonder who qualifies as a *good* EMI teacher? Should an EMI teacher at a university not only be proficient in English, but also have an advanced degree as a way to demonstrate his or her disciplinary knowledge? Should a good EMI teacher be culturally sensitive to the diversity of students in the class?

As I reflected on this, I thought about how Barkhuizen and Mendieta (2020) described what it means to be a good language teacher and how it relates to identity:

> A 'good teacher' identity emerges from the lived experiences of teachers; how they have practiced as teachers in the past. They will have beliefs and feelings about their practice and so will others who have observed them teach or witnessed their work. But being a good teacher also has implications for the future. Knowing who we are and imagining who we want to be affects what we desire to do in the future. (p.3)

I found this description to be especially relevant to the identities of EMI teachers because of the challenges they will continue to encounter as EMI emerges as a new way of language learning. Furthermore, knowing that the identities of EMI teachers are underexplored, this

description reasons that what EMI teachers learned in the past will impact their practices in the present and in the future.

Conclusions

My TESOL journey represented the changing role of English language educator in higher education during the past three decades—from communicative to cognitive learning; social to academic language learning. Richards' publications have accompanied me throughout my journey as a graduate student in TESOL, as an EFL teacher/researcher, as an EMI teacher/researcher, as an EMI teacher consultant, as an administrator, and even as a policymaker for my university. I realized that my teaching transition from EFL to EMI may not be unique as the global EMI expansion has created a strong demand for EMI teachers. More and more teachers may play the role of both language and content specialists with great challenges in response to the role of English as a global language. Teaching EMI in a multilingual setting seems to be more promising as I perceive myself as a bilingual teacher and make students' intercultural interactions meaningful.

Regardless of the courses I teach in higher education, I consider my dual role (as EFL and EMI teacher) to be essential to prepare students' academic literacy for taking EMI courses. University students also need to develop disciplinary literacy through academic genres. With the influence of the work of Jack Richards and my experience as an English language teacher, I believe that more TESOL professionals are moving beyond their roles as language specialists to develop new identities as language *and* content specialists. As Richards and Pun (2022a) explain in their book, TESOL professionals should be aware of the shifts in pedagogies that have to take place in order to effectively teach EMI courses. These are the kinds of shifts I had to make on my journey from being an EFL teacher to becoming an EMI teacher.

Finally, Richards not only helped me systematically examine the global emergence of EMI programs but also his philosophies and strategies have had a profound impact on my dual role as language and content specialist. Jack C. Richards has dedicated his academic career to the professional development of language teachers and he continues to serve as an excellent role model for me to lead the change for my university, my teachers and my students.

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Ethics Declarations

Competing Interests

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