

The effect of EMI on university students’ English proficiency and content learning— a case study on the transportation management field

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Abstract

Based on the subjective opinions of teachers and students, literature argues that English-medium instruction (EMI) enhances students’ English proficiency but may jeopardize content learning. To verify the arguments objectively, this research chose a transportation course for experimental design. The course offered by an instructor (the author) had one class in Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) and one in EMI. Both classes took the intermediate General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in the early and late semester respectively. Paired samples t-test inspected the GEPT performance between the pre- and post-tests for the EMI and CMI classes. Independent samples t-test and ANCOVA examined the performance in the GEPT and content exams between the classes. EMI experts and students surveys were carried out to present more viewpoints. The results show that 1) the EMI students were better in English proficiency, 2) both classes made progress in English listening but not in reading, and 3) both classes may not have significant differences in content learning. The findings suggest that instructors assign sufficient reading tasks to enhance content learning and reading proficiency.

Keywords: English-medium Instruction (EMI), English Proficiency, Assessment