Instructors’ Perspectives on English-Medium Instruction in Taiwanese Universities

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Using English as medium of instruction (EMI) in countries where English is not the first language has been a growing trend in the recent decades. In an effort to draw international students and promote campus internationalization, Taiwanese universities have started to offer English-medium courses; yet, little systematic research has examined their implementation and even less is known about the views and experiences of instructors teaching such courses. This interview study of 22 national and private university instructors focuses on three aspects of EMI teaching: instructors’ motivations for offering English-medium courses, perceptions of student learning and teaching strategies adopted in EMI teaching, and views of the current EMI policy in Taiwan. Findings suggest that teachers offered English-medium courses for a variety of reasons, yet all the motivations seem to point to the global status of English in today’s academic and professional world. The interview data also show that code switching was used as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate student learning and manage student-teacher relationship. As to the impact of English-medium teaching, although some participants were optimistic about students’ English improvement, others raised concern about its detrimental effect on subject knowledge learning, particularly in students of lower English proficiency and learning motivation. An implication of this result is that students’ preparedness for classes in English, including their general English proficiency and skills in English for discipline specific academic purposes, has to be carefully considered when any EMI policy is formulated at either national or institutional levels.

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