Modifying Language Use and Teaching Strategy in All-English Language Classes: Perceptions of Students from Two Mixed-Major Freshman English Classes in Taiwan

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While the English-only policy in general English courses including Freshman English has been implemented in many universities in Taiwan for quite some time, issues regarding students’ receptiveness to and comprehension of English lectures and course contents often raise doubts as to whether such practice is pedagogically justified. The present study first provided an overview of English medium instruction (EMI) in subject courses in certain Asian countries and compared the common challenges faced by instructors and students in both EMI content and language courses. Since few studies have looked into how students of different disciplinary majors who may take EMI courses in other subject courses perceive the use of English as the sole medium of instruction in English language classes, this study aimed to investigate the extent to which students in mixed-major Freshman English classes understand the instructor’s lectures and messages delivered in English and the modifications that instructors can immediately adopt to improve learning outcomes. Questionnaire responses from 84 students of 20 different academic majors were analyzed and in-class observations of students were combined with questionnaire responses to inform the instructor on possible modification in the language and teaching strategies used in class. Follow-up interviews with selected students at different levels of language proficiency were arranged after teaching modification had been implemented for two months. The interviewees felt that they experienced improved comprehension when code-switching was employed, but they also believed that the English-only policy need not be abolished as long as the instructor closely monitors students’ level of understanding. The findings offered implications for other English medium content-area courses and suggested that instructors of language and content courses