Perceptions and beliefs toward English as a Medium of Instruction: Exploring Motivation, Cognitive and Learning Skills, and Academic Competence

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1. Introduction

Many higher education institutions in Korea are faced with the issues of making English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) mandatory in teaching and learning. The issues can be more devastating to the individuals whose English is not the first language or the language they feel comfortable with. There have been mixed opinions about what students or professors should do or could do to enhance the importance of implementing EMI policies in higher education institutions in Korea or offering English Mediated Classes (EMCs). In light of what has been investigated by other universities in Korea, there have been divided and quite contrasting opinions on mandated EMI policies in post-secondary education in Korea. Some researchers have proposed that implementing EMI policies should be carefully done with different elements such as professors teaching competence and English proficiency, students' learning competence and English proficiency, and the merits and the strengths of the courses when offered in English.

2. Background

Studies have shown that motivation and learning strategies are important factors influencing the outcome of the student learning, managing their academic and personal stress, cognitive strategies in dealing with academic problems, computer literacy and the competence in dealing with technological and digital learning environment[2], [3], [4], [5]. Expectancy-value theory posits that individuals who place values to succeed and expect to perform well tend to actually do well in their intended outcomes[1].

Faculty and students in Korea are encouraged to teach and take those English Mediated Classes (EMCs) regardless of how comfortable they are with teaching or taking EMCs or their overall teaching and learning competence. The importance of examining students' motivation and learning skills in relation to their beliefs on the EMI has led us to investigate the potential bases to be served and addressed in implementing EMI in higher education. The research questions examined are as follows:

1) Are there relations between the views on English as a Medium of Instruction and the learners' motivation?
2) Are there relations between the views on English as a Medium of Instruction the learners' academic outcomes?
3) Are there relations between the motivation of the learners and the academic outcomes?

3. Method

3.1. Sample

The participants are the students enrolled in a private university. The purpose of the present study will attempt to make generalizations based on the results from this sample, and it will be useful to understand the perceptions and the beliefs of college students toward English as a Medium of Instruction which is one of the debatable topics in many higher education institutions in Korea.

Sample (N=120) was drawn from a 4-year higher education institution in Gyeonggi Province in South Korea. The participants were taking English classes programmed and provided by the international language center. The data were collected from the fall semester of 2013. Because the survey was administered as part of class activities, the data collection took about 2 months to complete.

3.2. Survey and Instrumentation

The participants were given the survey consisting of 81 items on Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), demographic questions, and beliefs and the perceptions on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). The study is threefold: 1) MSLQ and 2) questions on English as a Medium of Instruction, 3)the outcome of the learning. MSLQ consists of 6 subscales on motivation and 9 subscales on learning strategies. The MSLQ has been widely used in many countries and has been translated into different languages. Its reliability and validity have been proven to be relatively sound depending on the samples that researchers have used. The MSLQ can be used to assess one's motivation and learning or for self-evaluative purposes.

The MSLQ consists of 6 motivation subscales on intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, task value, control of learning beliefs, self-efficacy for learning and performance, and test anxiety as well as 9 learning subscales on rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, metacognitive self-regulation, time and study environment management, effort regulation, peer learning, and help seeking. The general questions on EMI includes items on their perceptions on EMI, the mode of EMI (e.g., blended learning and teaching), and the class activities (e.g., class discussion). We also included student learning outcome for the purpose of the present study.

3.3. Analysis

The coded data have been analyzed with SPSS 17.0. The frequency analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, independent-samples t-tests, internal consistency reliability, correlation analysis for the relevant variables considered in the present study.

4. Results & Discussion

Of 120 students, the majority of them were freshmen (41.6%), and the rest of them were sophomore, junior, and senior students (58%). About a little more than half of the participants were female (n=68). The results of the correlation analysis show that those with higher test anxiety have more negative views on taking classes in English (r=-.203, p<.05) and those with higher self-efficacy have more positive views on taking classes in English (r=.262, p<.05). The overall learning outcome was also positively correlated with being able to use motivation and cognitive strategies (r=.185, p<.05)

Independent samples t-tests were performed on MSLQ scales, preferred instructional assistance, and perceptions on EMI by 1)gender, 2)experience of taking EMCs, 3)current enrollment status with regard to EMCs, 4)future enrollment plan on taking EMCs. The results showed that overall those who have taken EMCs reported 1)significantly higher levels of comprehension in listening, speaking, writing, and grammar; 2)more willing to choose free participation style for class discussion, 3) higher expectancy and values on taking classes in English, 4)higher outcome results in their class performance. The p values for these variables ranged from .001 to .05.

The reliability analyses were performed to check the internal consistency. Cronbach alphas ranged from .68 to .91. Further results on 1)the students' motivation, cognitive and learning strategies; 2) the relations to their learning outcomes; and 3) their preferred modes of class participation will be shown in the presentation material.

5. Conclusion and Implication for Future Research

The implications of the present study in the context of designing curricular content in EMI need to be carefully examined. The present study shows that student motivation and cognitive strategies are related to dealing with fear against or having a controlled belief on English as a Medium of Instruction. The present study also shows that student learning outcomes are related to their motivation and cognitive strategies. Future EMI studies point to the direction of ways to create, design, and plan EMI in less stressful and more effective ways in which both faculty and students can enjoy English as a Medium of Instruction.

The present study demonstrated that in designing curriculums or courses offered in English faculty, students, and administrators need consider multifaceted factors related to EMI or EMC. When individuals put values and expect to perform well in both teaching and learning subjects and material covered in English, they also seem to perform well. The findings from the present study support some of the important notions highlighted in expectancy-value theories, self-efficacy, and self-regulation theories.

6. References

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