

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

專論

may collaborate with one another to improve learning outcomes.

Keywords: English-medium instruction (EMI), Freshman English, code-switching

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Introduction

English as a global language is widely adopted in international economic, political, scientific, technological, and cultural exchanges (Crystal, 2003). In higher education, it is also recognized that the top universities of the world are situated in major English-speaking countries such as the US and UK. These universities, albeit unwittingly, often set the standards of teaching, research, and even ways to run the school for their counterparts in other countries (Lo, 2009). Graddol (2005) predicts that by 2050 English will become a second language for a large number of people around the world; in terms of the number of speakers, English is expected to be in fourth place, after Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, and Arabic. Given the important status that English enjoys in international exchanges, its adoption has become quite popular in lectures delivered in universities and colleges across the globe, especially in countries where English is not the students' native language (Wilkinson, 2004). English as a medium of education has been implemented not only in English language courses but content area courses, such as engineering and medicine, primarily due to the fact that English is the language of science and academic communication (Coleman, 2006).

Well aware of the pivotal role that the English language plays in global communication, many East Asian nations, like Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, have all shifted towards policies of early initiation of English language education – the inclusion of English teaching in their elementary school curricula (Butler, 2004). The role that English education assumes in Taiwan is evident in the government's decision over the last decade of changing twice the grade level at which Taiwanese students start to learn English (Chang, 2008). Though English is not and has never been an official language of the country, the fact that children in Taiwan are required to begin learning English as early as the first grade in elementary school suggests that English is not only a dominant global language but may likely become a dominant language of education in Taiwan.

As far as English-medium instruction (EMI) for subject courses in higher education is concerned, there appears to be a growing trend in Taiwan to teach courses in different disciplines in English (Chang, 2010; Huang, 2012; Yeh, 2012), though with mixed results, due to the popular goal among universities in Taiwan to become more “internationalized.” In addition to these increasingly popular

English-only content area courses, a practice that has been in place for quite some time in colleges and universities in Taiwan is the requirement for all new entrants to take Freshman English, a course that is designed to continue honing students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities in English. Students in a typical Freshman English class are often comprised of learners from different disciplinary majors whose English language proficiencies, learning backgrounds, and interests and motivation are quite dissimilar. More importantly, Freshman English is taught in "all English" as stipulated in the course syllabi of many universities in Taiwan. This policy has created disparities in students' learning experience and outcomes. For instance, students who had been exposed to more English language instruction would presumably have an easier time understanding an "all-English" lecture. In contrast, those who had been accustomed to the grammar-translation teaching method whose focus is on explanation of grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary, and translation of texts (Brown, 2001) would likely have a more difficult time in class.

Over the last decade, several studies initiated by scholars in Europe and Asia (e.g., Byun et al., 2011; Coleman, 2006; Huang, 2012; Yeh, 2012; Yumei, 2010) have investigated the effectiveness of EMI in content areas at universities in countries across the world where English is not the official language. However, very few research have explored how university students of different disciplinary majors perceive the use of English as the sole language of instruction in English language classes. Further, prior studies which explored the adoption of EMI in English language classes and the pedagogical adjustments that teachers had made to accommodate students did not examine students' perception or the level of receptivity of such adjustments through follow-up interviews after teaching modifications had been carried for a certain period of time. And although it may appear that the challenges non-native English learners face in English content-area courses and language courses are different, previous EMI studies (e.g., Evans & Morrison, 2011; Flowerdew, Li, & Miller, 1998) have attributed students' unsatisfactory performance in EMI content courses to their low command of English. A similar concern pertaining to students' inability to comprehend lectures delivered in English was raised by university instructors teaching EMI subject courses at both public and private universities in Taiwan (Yeh, 2012). Hence, if non-native English speakers can remove the language learning barriers they encounter in general English language classes, they will likely have a better chance of success in content courses which are also delivered in English.

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Proponents of the monolingual approach in the L2 classroom claim that L2 learning is best achieved through maximum exposure (e.g., Cook, 2001). Swain and Lapkin (2000) ascribe to the view that using students' mother tongue in the language classroom will limit their opportunities of using the L2 target language. Despite most English language educators' insistence on using English as the sole language of instruction, teachers and researchers (e.g., Miles, 2004; Tang, 2002) can attest to instances where students suffer from poor comprehension of lectures delivered in English. Hence, it seems that certain modifications and adjustments should be made to better accommodate students in the all-English language classes.

The current study aims to explore the extent to which students in mixed-major Freshman English classes comprehend all-English lectures, how they perceive the practice of using English as the sole language of instruction, and the possible changes instructors can make to improve learning outcomes. Since these students will likely take EMI courses in their respective departments and might also experience challenges arising from inadequate English proficiency, this study first briefly reviews research regarding the adoption of English in higher education across some Asian countries including South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the challenges faced by these countries' students as a result of the implementation of EMI, and examples of EMI instructors' coping strategies. Next, modifications used by language class teachers to accommodate students will be discussed. The researcher will then compare effective teaching and learning strategies in both EMI content and language classes in order to gain insight into common problems faced by students and explore pedagogical strategies adopted in the two types of EMI classes.

The main interest of this study deals with how students from different disciplinary fields perceive the EMI language class and the pedagogical strategies that instructors can use to complement English medium teaching. By doing so, the researcher hopes that lessons learned from English language classes enrolled by students of a diverse range of disciplines may shed light on both teaching in EMI language classes and subject courses that are targeted towards students from different academic disciplines.

The current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How well do the students in mixed-major Freshman English classes

comprehend lectures in an all-English teaching environment?

2. What are students' perceived benefits of and gains in an English-only class?
3. What kinds of modifications should instructors of Freshman English make to facilitate student learning and what other teaching and/or learning strategies can complement an "all English" class to better improve students' comprehension?

Literature Review

English-Medium Instruction in Asian Countries and Pedagogical Strategies that Facilitated Teaching in EMI Subject Courses

Over the last decade, EMI has gained momentum in Asia. Countries that were previously colonized by English-speaking countries/cities including Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, and Singapore were the first ones to widely adopt EMI (Altbach, 2004; Miller, 2007) in higher education; other Asian nations such as China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan have also jumped on the EMI bandwagon in recent years (Chang, 2010; Jon & Kim, 2011; Tsuneyoshi, 2005; Yumei, 2010). Although the gains of EMI, as recognized by Smith (2004), outweigh the losses, English language instruction in these Asian countries also encountered many of the similar problems experienced by their counterparts in other nations.

In Hong Kong, for example, the fact that the majority of students speak Cantonese out-of-class but attend universities which stipulate the use of English is still creating challenges for both instructors and students. One of the main findings in Miller's (2007) study involving a lecturer's behavior and students' perception of his behavior in an EMI content class at a university in Hong Kong suggested that students preferred a flexible policy over an all English-medium policy so that they can use English with the foreign lecturer but Cantonese with their peers. Evans and Morrison (2011) collected survey and interview data regarding students' language use in-class and out-of-class at Hong Kong Polytechnic University between 2000 and 2010. The results indicated that despite students' greater use of English in lectures and seminars, instructors on some occasions were still pressured by students to speak Cantonese. Also, students generally displayed unwillingness to speak English in lectures and would use Cantonese in small-group discussions.

In South Korea, EMI in content areas in universities has been found to result

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in little or no interaction between professors and students, lack of feedback on incorrect English usage provided to students, and more comprehension difficulties for freshmen and sophomores (Byun et al., 2011). Drawing opinions from students and professors in English medium subject courses at Korea University, Byun et al. (2011) found that implementation of English-only policies should consider students' fields of major and future career plans as well as their English language abilities and the local professors' level of English proficiency. On the other hand, the positive effects associated with the EMI policy at Korea University, as identified in the same study, was its contribution to improving students' English proficiency and increasing the school's attractiveness to foreign student and professor recruits.

This wave of internationalization in higher education through instructing content courses in English has also swept universities in Taiwan, with an increasing number of higher education institutions now offering content courses in English (Chang, 2010; Huang, 2012). Students surveyed in Chang's (2010) study did not seem to have a high level of comprehension of the EMI lectures but felt that the courses contributed to elevating their English language proficiency, particularly in listening. Huang (2012) examined how students, teachers, and administrators perceive the implementation, design, and effectiveness of English medium curriculum in content area on a university campus in Taiwan. Findings showed that students have shown improvement in cultural awareness, global views, maturity in problem solving abilities. The study also suggested that better collaboration between language and content area teachers as a form of teacher training combined with modification in curriculum design would ensure better success of EMI course implementation.

In response to challenges facing EMI content area instruction and learning, instructors in EMI subject courses have attempted to adjust their teaching strategies. Code-switching, the use of both students' L1 and L2, was a strategy identified in many content area classrooms (Ariffin & Husin, 2011; Flowerdew et al., 1998; Taha, 2008; Yeh, 2012). As to situations where code-switching was adopted, managing student-teacher relationship and supplementing English-medium teaching in the form of providing translations, explanations, elaborations, and sharing jokes were identified (Flowerdew et al., 1998; Taha, 2008). Other pedagogical strategies included slowing down the delivery rate, simplifying the language, checking students' understanding frequently, and providing specialized terms and their

translations in advance (Yeh, 2010; Yeh, 2012).

Using L1 and Input Modifications in L2 Language Classrooms to Facilitate Learning

In order to make the second language learners feel more at ease in the L2 language classroom, several researchers argued that the use of L1 can facilitate the learning of a second language. Atkinson (1987) believed that some appropriate uses of L1 in L2 language classes include checking comprehension, cooperation among learners, checking for sense, and development of useful learning strategies. Auerbach (1993) also suggested that in addition to serving the purpose of checking students' comprehension, the mother tongue can be used to achieve several purposes in L2 language classrooms: negotiation of syllabus and the lesson; record keeping; classroom management; scene setting; language analysis; presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling; discussion of cross-cultural issues; instructions or prompts; and explanation of errors. Miles' (2004) study involving low-level Japanese male students studying English at a university in England showed that the use of L1 may in fact facilitate learning of L2 in certain situations. Schweers (1999) surveyed both teachers' and students' attitudes toward the use of mother tongue (Spanish) in English classes at the University of Puerto Rico and discovered that they were quite favorable toward using Spanish in the classroom. As high as 88.7% of the surveyed students in the study felt that Spanish should be used in their English classes. The top four appropriate uses of Spanish were to explain difficult concepts, define new vocabulary items, check for comprehension, and help students feel more comfortable and confident. A more recent study (Kieu, 2010) that examined the use of Vietnamese in English language teaching in Vietnam found that as long as L1 is not overused and its use is adapted to the context of different classes, it could potentially enhance learning outcome. In particular, the researcher pointed out that L1 could be used in a situation like explaining difficult terminologies.

According to other researchers (Bacon, 1992; Markham & Latham, 1987; Sadighi & Zare, 2006; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994), enhancement of listening comprehension in second language classrooms may be realized by helping students make connections to their previous/background knowledge. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) and Teng (1998), for example, found that EFL learners in Taiwan demonstrated better comprehension when they listened to passages about their own culture than to passages about American culture. On the other hand, Hatch (1983)

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noted that repetition is an effective strategy in second language learning and teaching as it gives learners more time to process information and helps clarify the relationship of syntactic forms. In addition to investigating the effect of prior knowledge and listening proficiency on EFL listening comprehension, Chiang and Dunkel (1992) also examined the effect of input modification in the form of repetition of information and paraphrase on listening comprehension. Results of their study showed that students at the high intermediate listening proficiency level rather than those at the low intermediate proficiency level benefited from the modifications. Chang, Chang, and Kou (1993) looked at students' perceptions about L2 listening. They discovered that Taiwanese college students found speeches that were delivered at a rapid speed to be most challenging and would use repeated listening as a coping strategy. Chang and Read (2006) investigated the roles of four different types of listening support (topic preparation, vocabulary instruction, repetition of the input, and preview of the questions) in designing listening tests for 160 students enrolled in a required listening course at a college in Taiwan and concluded that the provision of information about topic and the repetition of input were the two most effective types of support. More specifically, they found that though EFL learners with high and low listening proficiency benefited the most from topic preparation, those with low listening proficiency were not helped by repetition of input. Hence, they suggested that introduction of background knowledge or relevant topic could be included to enrich activities related to input repetition to increase its effectiveness for low listening proficiency learners.

As reviewed above, regardless of whether students are learning in the context of EMI content or language class, they all face similar challenges arising from their generally low English language proficiency which prevents them from fully comprehending lectures delivered in English. Adjustments of teaching strategies adopted by EMI instructors in these two types of classes included code-switching, frequent check of comprehension, input modification, and supplementary materials (e.g., listening support). Given that studies related to English-medium language classes involving students from different majors are dearth, and due to the fact that none of the prior studies had used research results to apply immediately to teaching practice, the current study explores factors hampering EFL students' comprehension of English-medium instruction in the Freshman English class and strategies that the instructor may readily adopt upon recognizing these problems.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study comprised 84 freshmen (37 male and 47 female) from two Freshman English classes at a public university in Taiwan. There were a total of 93 students in the two classes, but nine of them were either absent or opted not to participate in the study on the day the questionnaires were distributed. The university grouped freshmen into three different levels of Freshman English classes based on students' English test performance on the General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT). GSAT is a main measuring stick for admission to colleges and universities in Taiwan. The 84 students in the present study belong to the second level. Such grouping arrangement had been made because their English test scores on GSAT fell within the 25-75 percentile range of all admitted freshmen to the university in that year, which is roughly equivalent to the elementary level (CEFR¹ A2) to upper-immediate level (CEFR B2). These students came from 20 academic departments or five colleges and were taking this class to fulfill their General Education course credit requirements. The mean age of the students at the time the present study was being carried out was 19 (SD = 1.25). Over half (64.3%) of the students began to learn English between the ages of 10 and 13. Though students were asked to indicate the type of English proficiency tests ever taken and the scores achieved, only 42 out of the 84 respondents actually reported the type of the test taken. Among these 42 students, six forgot their scores although they had all taken the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in Taiwan. According to the self-reports of the remaining 36 students, they had either taken the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) or GEPT, the two kinds of popular English proficiency tests in Taiwan, and their scores ranged from TOEIC 300 (CEFR A2 level) to GEPT High-Intermediate first stage level (CEFR B2 level). The students' demographic backgrounds are summarized in Table 1.

¹ CEFR refers to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, a guideline used to describe foreign language learners' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The CEFR divides learners into six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. Language learners at the A2 level are considered beginners, while those at the B1 level and B2 level are intermediate and upper-intermediate foreign language learners respectively.

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Table 1 *Demographic Information of the Participants*

	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	37	44
Female	47	56
Total	84	100
Academic Majors		
Applied Mathematics	6	7.1
Business and Management	6	7.1
Chinese	9	10.7
Computer Science and Information Engineering	6	7.1
Counseling and Guidance	2	2.4
Culture and Natural Resources	4	4.8
Drama	5	6
Early Childhood Education	4	4.8
Ecoscience and Ecotechnology	1	1.2
Education	3	3.6
Electrical Engineering	3	3.6
English	1	1.2
Fine Arts	5	6
Greenery	4	4.8
Information and Learning Technology	5	6
Materials Science	2	2.4
Music	7	8.3
Physical Education	1	1.2
Public Administration and Management	8	9.5
Special Education	2	2.4
Total	84	100
Starting Age of English Learning		
Before 5	1	1.2
Between 5 and 9	22	26.2
Between 10 and 13	54	64.3
Not provided	7	8.3
Total	84	100

The Instructor and the Course

In this study, the researcher fulfilled multiple roles: instructor, participant observer, and interviewer. The instructor had received her bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees majoring in English language and education-related subjects and had had over five years of experience teaching Freshman English and other English language courses to students in Taiwan.

The Freshman English course was a two-semester course that all freshmen must take upon beginning their studies at the university. During the academic year that the present study was carried out, there were a total of nine Freshman English classes offered to students grouped in the second level; each class had an average of fifty students representing the five different colleges of the school. There was no uniform textbook or teaching material adopted by instructors of the nine level 2 classes. The researcher selected a primary textbook that is designed for students at the elementary/pre-intermediate to intermediate English proficiency level (CEFR A2-B1).

As stipulated in the Freshman English course syllabus, "all English" was the language of instruction in class, therefore the instructor spoke only English to the freshmen in the first semester. The students, on the other hand, were encouraged to ask and respond to questions in English; however, such demand was not mandatory.

Instrument

Data were collected mainly by means of a questionnaire consisting of both closed- and open-ended questions and follow-up interviews with selected voluntary participants. The instructor's observation of students' learning and progress in class was also used to supplement findings in the research. The questionnaire consisted of a total of eleven items and was worded in Chinese and later translated by the researcher into English for purposes of presenting the findings in English. The translation was checked by an experienced translator for faithfulness. The first nine items were statements to which participants have to respond based on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1); they were designed to elicit students' perceptions of the use of English as the medium of instruction in class. In particular, statements one to six asked students to judge how well they understand the English spoken messages and listening materials delivered in class and whether they would make any efforts to

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improve their listening ability outside of class; statements seven to nine aimed at examining their views on the use of English and Chinese in class. These statements were formulated based on the instructor's observation of students' reactions to all-English class sessions during the first semester of the course as well as discussions the instructor had had with other instructors teaching the same course². The remaining two items on the questionnaire were open-ended questions. The first one was aimed at exploring students' views toward what they thought were the benefits associated with an all-English class and the second one asked what factors they felt that the instructor would need to pay attention to if an English medium class were to be implemented truly effectively.

In addition to the above items, all students were asked to respond to brief background questions including academic major, gender, age, starting age of English learning, and score on any English proficiency test they had taken before. Semi-structured interviews were arranged as a follow-up to the questionnaire responses. Based on students' expression of willingness to participate in an interview lasting about 10 minutes, which was listed as the final question in the questionnaire, the researcher set up one-on-one interviews with selected students. The purpose of the interview was to seek a more comprehensive understanding of how individual students perceived the use of English as the language of instruction in the Freshman English course and what possible challenges they were facing and the measures they were adopting to cope with such difficulties. Through the interviews with students the instructor hoped to gain a better understanding of students' reactions to teaching strategy adjustments made in class. Thus, the following questions were posed to each interviewee:

1. Do you support the EMI policy?
2. Do you sense any change in your level of comprehension of class lectures after the instructor started to use more Chinese to teach the class?

² Prior to preparing the questionnaire, the researcher talked with four other Freshman English instructors and inquired about their students' general receptivity to the use of English for instruction in class. The statements in the questionnaire were formulated based on similar concerns raised by these instructors as well as the researcher.

3. What was your greatest challenge sitting in an English lecture class last semester?
4. What suggestions do you have to offer to the school and/or the instructor in implementing the English medium education policy?

As the participant observer in the present study, the instructor participated in each class session and observed students' learning, performance, and progress over a two-semester period. Therefore, the instructor's account of how an all-English Freshman English class was received by students also shed light on the overall effectiveness of an English-medium Freshman English course.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher distributed the questionnaire to students in two Freshman English classes at the beginning of the second semester of the two-semester course. The researcher informed the students beforehand that whether or not they chose to take part in the study would not affect their grades in the class or relation with the instructor. Students were given twenty minutes to respond to all eleven items listed on the questionnaire. After collecting the questionnaires and examining students' responses, the researcher selected nine students from respondents who indicated willingness to accept a follow-up interview with her. In order for the views of students from various disciplines and proficiency levels to be well-represented, the nine students were picked from four out of the five Colleges at the university. The 84 respondents' levels of English language proficiency were also reflected by the nine students as their English proficiency, based on self-reports in the questionnaire, ranged from the CEFR A2 to B2 levels. Students from one College were not selected as none of them consented to participate in the follow-up interview. All interviews were conducted about two months after students had completed the questionnaire. The two-month lag allowed the instructor to make some adjustments to her teaching in response to students' opinions expressed on the questionnaires.

Students' scale ratings of the nine statements on the questionnaire were processed by the SPSS to gain descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and standard deviations of results relevant to the research questions. Answers to the two open-ended questions (questions 10 and 11) were categorized, translated into English, and analyzed. The recorded interviews with nine students were transcribed and translated into English. Common themes emerging from student responses were then examined. All translated materials were checked by an experienced translator.

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The instructor made notes on her observations of how well students were accommodating to English-medium instruction implemented in the first semester and to the code-switching instructional practice carried out in the second semester. In particular, the instructor wrote down how students responded to questions aimed at checking their comprehension as well as how they reacted when they didn't seem to fully comprehend the instructor's lecture or questions. The validity of this study was established by collecting research data through the triangulation method, that is, data were collected from questionnaire responses, interviews with respondents, and instructor's observation notes.

Results

In this section, the results of the analysis of the questionnaire will be discussed first. This will be followed by presentation of the results of the interviews that pertain directly to the questions explored in this study.

Students' Perception of their Comprehension and Opinion about the Ideal Language of Instruction in English Class

As shown in Table 2, analysis of students' scale ratings of the nine statements showed that of the six relating to English listening ability and students' efforts to improve listening, over fifty percent of the respondents agreed that they understand both what the instructor says in class (61.9%) and that they have no trouble comprehending the English recordings played in class (73.8%). However, only half of the students agreed that they feel that their English listening ability has improved since the beginning of the course. A very high percentage of students (72.6%) said they would ask other students in class or the teacher if they are unclear about something said in class. On the other hand, only 32.2% of the students would find ways to improve their listening ability outside of class by listening to English radio broadcasts or news; a mere 17.9% of the students said they would find opportunity to practice English listening and speaking with native speakers or other friends. In terms of mean ratings of the first six items, item 5 received the highest mean score (3.77) and item 6 had the lowest mean score (2.61).

Table 2 *Students' Scaling of Nine Statements*

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	M	SD*
1. I feel that my English listening ability has improved since the beginning of the first semester.	7.1%	42.9%	28.6%	20.2%	1.2%	3.35	.93
2. I understand what the English teacher says in class.	7.1%	54.8%	20.2%	14.3%	3.6%	3.48	.95
3. I understand the English recordings played in class.	10.7%	63.1%	15.5%	7.1%	3.6%	3.7	.89
4. I try to sharpen my English listening by, for example, listening to English radio broadcasts and news outside of class.	2.4%	29.8%	33.3%	25%	9.5%	2.9	1.01
5. I will ask other students in class or the teacher if anything related to the course content is unclear to me.	13.1%	59.5%	20.2%	6%	1.2%	3.77	.80
6. I will find opportunity to practice my English listening and speaking by conversing with native speakers or other friends.	0	17.9%	38.1%	31%	13.1%	2.61	.93
7. I think that Freshman English should be taught in English only.	13.1%	23.8%	41.7%	16.7%	3.6%	3.27	1.01
8. I think that Chinese should be used more frequently in Freshman English.	6%	31%	47.6%	11.9%	2.4%	3.27	.84
9. I think that Freshman English should be taught primarily in English and be complemented by some Chinese.	21.4%	44%	27.4%	4.8%	2.4%	3.77	.92

Note. SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, M = Mean, SD* = Standard Deviation

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In terms of the students' opinions regarding the language of instruction in Freshman English, only 36.9% of the students supported the idea of using all-English (Item 7) in class and 37.1% of the students thought Chinese should be used more frequently in class (Item 8). However, it should be noted that many respondents (over 40%) gave a "neutral" response to both statements. Such results seem to indicate students' ambivalent attitude toward the use of English as the medium of instruction in class. Their position on this issue was nonetheless more clearly revealed by their response to Item 9, where most students (65.4%) agreed to the use of English as the main language of instruction but Chinese as a complementary language. This figure suggests that although students did not oppose the adoption of EMI in class, they still hoped that the instructor could speak some Chinese in class.

Students' Perceived Gains in English-only Class and Suggestions Given to Instructors

Answers to the two open-ended questions were analyzed by grouping similar responses together. Table 3 shows students' responses to the two questions by listing major themes which emerged from students' comments in the order of the number of times they were mentioned in the questionnaire. The total number of these comments, however, does not correspond to the number of participants (N=84) in the study as most students raised more than one aspect of views pertaining to their perception of an all-English class. There were also five students who left these two questions blank, so any possible opinions they might have were not included.

Students' responses as presented in Table 3 indicate that training of listening ability is something that the majority of students believed to be the positive effects of an English-medium Freshman English class. Several students mentioned that an all-English class immerses them in an English speaking environment; others expressed that they have to be more attentive in an all-English class, lest they miss anything important. The following comments are actual responses given by four students.

Improve the students' listening ability and help them become familiarized with an all-English environment and be less afraid of speaking English. (S21)

An all-English class improves my English and listening ability. I didn't

understand a word at the beginning but gradually seemed to figure out what the teacher said. I never had an all-English class before so it was a totally new experience for me. (S38)

Table 3 *Answers to the Open-ended Questions*

Question/ Response	F
1. What are the benefits associated with an all-English Freshman English class?	
Ans: Training of listening ability.	52
Allows one to be accustomed to an English-speaking environment.	15
Forces students to pay attention to the lecture in class.	10
Training of speaking skills.	6
A better way to learn English more quickly.	5
Learn expressions more commonly used in daily life.	2
Improves learning of new vocabulary.	2
Improves pronunciation.	2
Help students become more familiar with different sentence structures.	2
Total	96
2. What factors does the instructor need to pay attention to in order for an English-medium class to be implemented more effectively?	
Ans: Explaining key or difficult words and sentences in Chinese.	23
Speak at a moderate pace.	20
Making sure whether students are responsive and keeping up with class.	16
Avoid using difficult English words but try to use easy terms so that all students would understand what's being said.	15
Engaging in conversation with students in class.	5
Using pictures to help students understand what some words mean.	2
Lively expression and voice.	2
Assign other readings.	1
Asking students to bring dictionary to class.	1
Total	85

Note. F= frequency

It gives students the opportunity and environment to practice expressing themselves in English. (S46)

It feels like I'm having a conversation with a foreigner. If I can comprehend more of what's being said I think my English will improve tremendously. (S70)

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As to things that students think the instructor needs to pay attention to in conducting an English-medium class, about a quarter of all respondents said that the instructor should use Chinese to explain difficult English words or sentences; and a similar number of students thought the instructor should not deliver his/her lecture at a fast pace. Quite a few students suggested that rather than saying what the instructor would normally say in usual circumstances, in an all-English Freshman English class the instructor should deliberately pick words or expressions that are simpler so that students would be able to comprehend what s/he is saying. The following statements were given by four students.

Speak slowly and repeat if s/he found most students couldn't understand some part or explain it in Chinese. Let all students join in the class and not be too shy to speak English. (S77)

The instructor should use simple English terms to explain difficult English words, thereby reducing the use of Chinese in class. Also, the instructor should speak slowly to help better comprehension on the part of students. (S57)

Since there are many students with different levels of English proficiency in the class, the instructor should try to translate everything said in English into Chinese. Although it's a bit tiring for the teacher to say something in English and provide translation in Chinese, but doing so would ensure that everyone understands the lecture. (S51)

The instructor should use Chinese to explain when students do not understand. (S63)

After the administration of the questionnaire and analysis of results from both the closed- and opened-ended questions, the instructor decided to use more Chinese, particularly when explaining difficult English words, phrases, or sentences. In other words, code-switching was implemented despite the fact that "all-English" was still the language of instruction stated on the course syllabus for each Freshman English class in the university. Furthermore, the instructor tried to slow down her delivery rate and also stopped more frequently to ask students whether or not they understood

what she said. Rather than translating most sentences delivered in class into Chinese, the instructor attempted to explain English sentences that she thought the students might have trouble understanding by using simpler terms.

Interview Responses

As stated earlier, nine students from different departments and with varying English language proficiency were chosen from those who had indicated a willingness to sit with the instructor outside of class for a short interview. Of these students, three were from the College of Education, three were from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, two were from the College of Science and Engineering, and one was from the College of Environmental Sciences and Ecology. In addition, on the questionnaire students had filled out at the beginning of the semester, three of the nine students indicated that they had achieved the Elementary level on GEPT (CEFR A2), one had scored 630 on TOEIC (CEFR B1), three had reached the Intermediate first stage level of GEPT (CEFR B1), and one had achieved the GEPT High-Intermediate first stage level (CEFR B2).

All interviews were conducted after the students had completed their mid-term exams. By then the students had already experienced the aforementioned teaching adjustment made by the instructor in the language of instruction. From the exchanges with students during the interview, the researcher discovered some common views and opinions voiced by these students. For example, eight of the nine students supported the policy of using English as the sole medium of instruction in Freshman English, although most felt that they understood a larger portion of what the instructor said in class when Chinese was also used. More specifically, they thought that the instructor's explanation of difficult English terms and concepts in Chinese contributed greatly to improved comprehension. When asked what their main challenges were sitting in an English-medium class, eight of the nine students noted that unfamiliar vocabulary impeded their understanding of sentences delivered in English to the extent that even if there were only one or two unknown words in an English sentence, their comprehension of the whole sentence would be compromised. This is why they expressed a welcoming attitude toward the instructor's adoption of Chinese to define certain English words in the second semester of the course. Two of the nine interviewed students said that they would try to infer the meaning of new words or expressions from the context, though only one of them was usually successful in these attempts. Three students said that the instructor's speech rate affected how well they comprehended the lectures. One

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student, who had been enrolled in a high school where 80% of English class lectures were delivered in English, thought that even difficult English vocabulary should be explained in English since definitions given in Chinese cannot always precisely capture the real meaning of some English words. Another student suggested that the school should group students based on department affiliation because it would make her feel more comfortable to speak up in front of fellow students who she is more familiar with.

In line with questionnaire responses garnered earlier in the semester, all nine students did not object to an all-English policy for the Freshman English course, but they generally believed the instructor should take into consideration whether most students are following what is being said. They thought that some Chinese, at least at the beginning of the course, should be used to complement the English lessons to allow students to gradually adapt to an all-English environment. In short, interviews with the nine students attested to the fact that the instructor's modification in the language of instruction used in class improved understanding of class lectures.

Instructor Observation – Before and After Instruction Modification

As the instructor of the two Freshman English classes, the researcher had the opportunity of observing closely how the 84 participants in the study were adjusting themselves over the course of two semesters. In the first semester, when only English was used in class, the instructor found that although most students were very focused on the lectures, some students sat in class with puzzled looks on their faces. The instructor would then ask if students had any questions, but a deafening silence would usually follow. Such scenario is not uncommon in English language classes in Taiwan where students often sit in class passively listening to lectures without voluntarily giving any feedback or raising questions regarding course contents.

Each of the two Freshman English classes that the instructor were teaching had nearly 50 students, which is a large class size for an English language class to operate effectively. Thus, the instructor spent the majority of class time giving lectures rather than letting students take turns answering questions or engaging in conversational exchanges with the instructor or their peers. This kind of interaction pattern might have resulted in a lack of oral practice which has the potential to enhance both students' listening skill and speaking fluency. Despite the fact that the

instructor did notice that the perplexed expression on some students' faces might signal a lack of comprehension, their unresponsiveness to the instructor's elicitation of questions did not help to remedy the situation. The questionnaire adopted in the present study was therefore administered by the instructor at the beginning of the second semester in order to gain a better knowledge of students' difficulties relating to comprehension.

After the instructor decided to use more Chinese as well as adjust teaching practices in class in response to students' opinions in the second semester, she observed that fewer students were showing perplexed expressions in class. Moreover, while in the first semester few students voluntarily responded to the instructor's questions, more students were willing to answer questions after teaching modification was adopted in the second semester. For example, on one occasion the instructor talked to the freshmen students about *GPS (Global Positioning System)* – the navigation system installed on cars. The instructor first wrote the abbreviated term on the board and asked if students were familiar with it. Some students nodded their heads while others seemed to be clueless; then the instructor tried to explain the device's functions and more students nodded or said they knew the term. Finally the instructor told students, in Chinese, the name of the device and explained its use, after which the English term was introduced to them again.

Discussion

Evidence collected from the questionnaires, interviews, and instructor observation combines to offer a holistic view to address the research questions investigated in the present study. In terms of the Freshman English students' level of comprehension of course contents in an all-English teaching environment, although the majority of students (61.9%) agreed that they were able to grasp what the instructor said in class, the fact that only about one-third (36.9%) of the students endorsed the adoption of EMI in the Freshman English class and that around two-thirds (65.4%) of all respondents supported the idea of using Chinese as a complement language makes one question whether the all-English policy is pedagogically justified. In accordance with findings in Byun et al. (2011), Chang (2010), and Evans and Morrison's (2011) studies involving content area EMI courses, students in the current study also seemed to strongly believe, however, that an all-English class would improve their listening ability and did not show a strong

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objection against the school's proposed all-English language policy for Freshman English. This is corroborated by some students' claims that the longer they were exposed to the all-English classes, the more they understood what the instructor was saying.

Based on the study's results, difficult English terminologies appeared to be a major impediment to the freshmen students who would otherwise normally understand what the instructor was saying. This is why students suggested that the instructor should use Chinese to explain difficult words, sentences, or concepts. These suggestions parallel those put forth by other researchers in both EMI content and language classes (e.g., Ariffin & Husin, 2011; Miles, 2004; Yeh, 2012). Still, others who were more in support of the all-English policy and who seemed to exhibit a genuine interest in improving their listening and comprehension skills thought that instructors should attempt to use easy-to-understand expressions in English, at least at the beginning of the course, to facilitate students' comprehension of more difficult words or sentences.

Speech rate is also a problem raised by many students in the Freshman English class who felt that if they couldn't catch what the instructor was saying, they would be very distracted and lose interest in class. This may also explain why more students noted that they had no trouble understanding the recordings played in class, which was spoken at a slower rate, than the instructor's speech in class. However, since all recordings were played twice during class sessions, so it may also suggest that students can benefit greatly if the instructor can repeat saying difficult or complicated sentences several times in the Freshman English classes. Furthermore, poor comprehension may also be attributable to the fact that, as indicated in the questionnaire responses, very few students would actually find opportunity to either listen to English language materials or converse in English with other people outside of class. In other words, for the majority of the Freshman English students in the study, the two hours of the course was the only time they had in a week to be exposed to English. A related finding in the study is that the interviewed students who said they had virtually no trouble understanding the instructor's lectures were the ones who had been immersed in all-English lessons in high school. Continual exposure to an English-speaking environment would therefore seem to elevate students' level of comprehension and possibly performance in Freshman English.

With regards to the modifications which instructors should make to better accommodate mixed-major students in Freshman English, the findings of this research demonstrate the importance of monitoring students' reactions, even tacit ones, in class very closely. Taiwanese students are not particularly apt at openly expressing their views and opinions in class (Huang, 2012); therefore, the instructor must bear the onus of finding out what their real learning needs are. Instructors also should not overlook students' non-response to questions which are aimed at checking their understanding since many students may not want to be "put on the spot" in front of students from other departments. Therefore, giving students the opportunity to provide feedback to the instructor on paper at regular intervals would be an option that can allow the teacher to gain a better knowledge of what students' individual learning challenges and needs are.

Implications and Conclusion

The current study on English used in Freshman English course in Taiwan shared similar findings with research on EMI content courses including the fact that students encounter comprehension difficulties but view English-only courses as a vehicle to improve language proficiency. The results of the current study have key implications for English medium instruction in both content area and English language courses.

For English language courses designed for students in different majors at elementary or pre-intermediate to intermediate levels of English proficiency, it would seem more appropriate for the instructor, in the first couple of months of the course, to speak English at a slow to moderate pace while at the same time checking students' level of understanding. Tests, evaluation, and feedback sheets aimed at confirming students' comprehension of materials delivered may therefore be devised and distributed to students on a regular basis during the first few months of the course. These first few months are crucial because many students would easily feel unmotivated or lose interest in the English language courses if they fail to comprehend what the instructor is saying. Using students' mother tongue in class would help to establish rapport with them (Schweers, 1999), and as suggested by several researchers (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993), students' L1 can be used to check their comprehension. For example, the instructor may ask students to translate what s/he said in L2 and go around the classroom until an acceptable

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translation in L1 is provided. Another way to check students' comprehension and at the same time provide opportunity for speaking is to ask them to paraphrase spoken messages delivered in L2. To get students to engage in oral practice in L2, efforts should be made for them to produce comprehensible input and negotiate meaning even if such negotiation of meaning entails a mix of L1 and L2. The adoption of such an "interlanguage" has actually been thought to be conducive to the establishment of the right way to communicate in L2 (Weschler, 1997). However, the instructor should always be wary and carefully weigh whether resorting to code-switching would come at the expense of slowing down students' progress in L2 development.

As for the study's implications for EMI in content area, instructors and professors of language and subject courses can work together to identify students' language learning problems and needs. For example, English language teachers may prepare a list of language related issues (e.g., some students' difficulty with understanding idiomatic expressions) that s/he faces when teaching a particular group of students. By passing the list on to professors in content areas who teach the same group or members of the same group of students, these professors can then spend more time on explanation when the same content is delivered in class. Likewise, if the content area teachers discover that students have a hard time memorizing the definition of specialized terms, the language teachers can help by teaching students to learn suffixes and prefixes that are shared by many specialized terms.

The current study investigated how the English-only policy of Freshman English in Taiwan is perceived by two mixed-major classes. In particular, the instructor researcher was interested in finding out the extent to which the students were able to understand teacher's English lectures and spoken messages delivered in class. By immediately applying students' feedback to teaching practice, the researcher found that the study allowed her to understand what students' learning challenges were and to make adjustments accordingly. While this study attempted to survey students from a wide range of disciplinary majors, it focused primarily on freshmen enrolled in two language classes. Future studies may consider eliciting the views of students and/or instructors in various language classes from different types of universities in Taiwan to examine if additional pedagogical strategies can be identified to complement EMI so as to suit the learning needs of different students.

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調整全英語課程之授課語言及教學方式： 針對臺灣兩個大一英文混班班級的研究

鄒月如*

全英語授課在臺灣多數大學的英語課程雖已行之多年，學生對全英語授課的接受程度不一令人質疑「全英語」政策的恰當性。本文首先回顧全英語授課非語言科目在某些亞洲國家之實行情況，並比較教師與學生在英語授課的科目所面臨的挑戰及有效的應對措施。有鑑於探討不同主修的學生對於英語課程使用全英語授課的接受程度較少，本研究遂針對一所大學兩個大一英文混班班級的學生實問卷。教師根據問卷結果調整授課語言，並進一步訪談學生以瞭解其對全英語授課之看法及課堂教學語言調整後的適應。研究結果顯示：大一英文學生雖不反對全英語授課但期望教師隨時注意學生反應，以學生易懂的方式進行英語授課。

關鍵字：英語授課、大一英文、語碼轉換

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