

Closing the gap: Evaluating exclusive English medium instruction in Chinese higher education

ABSTRACT

In today's globalized world, proficiency in the English language stands as a critical skill, especially in non-native contexts such as China's higher education system. This research delves into the effectiveness of exclusive English Medium Instruction (EMI) in closing the prevalent gap between language input and proficiency among Chinese undergraduates. Utilizing Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis alongside modern language learning theories, the study assesses the capacity of monolingual instruction to significantly improve vocabulary, grammar, and overall language comprehension. It distinctively evaluates the impact of EMI within the Chinese educational framework, traditionally dominated by bilingual methods. Employing a robust quasi-experimental design with first-year undergraduate students, this investigation focuses on the influence of monolingual teaching on English language proficiency, particularly measuring performance in the College English Test—Band 4 (CET-4). Results indicate a marked enhancement in CET-4 scores within the EMI group compared to controls, thus supporting the hypothesis that immersive language exposure facilitates superior language acquisition. Furthermore, this research transcends academic discussion, providing actionable insights for curriculum development, teaching strategies, and policy making to boost English proficiency in Chinese undergraduate education. By adopting global linguistic trends and tackling specific challenges of English instruction in China, our study promotes a shift towards monolingual education as a fundamental element of linguistic mastery in higher education. Ultimately, this investigation not only validates the efficacy of exclusive EMI in improving English proficiency among Chinese undergraduates but also paves the way for significant pedagogical changes in language teaching, aligning with the global communication demands of the 21st century.