Students in Transition

Myths and Reality about
English-medium Instruction

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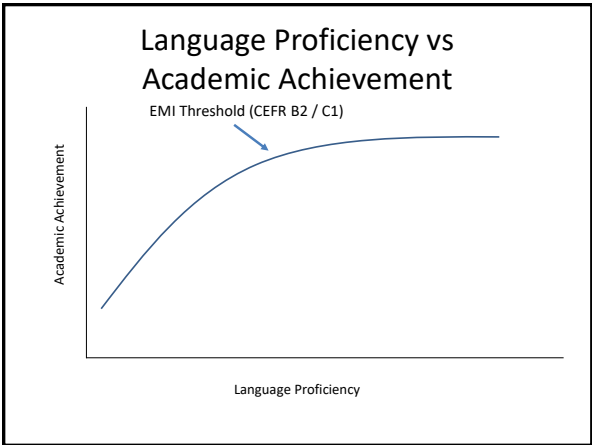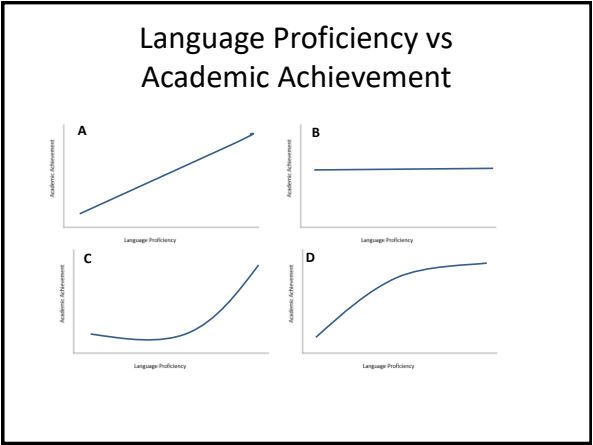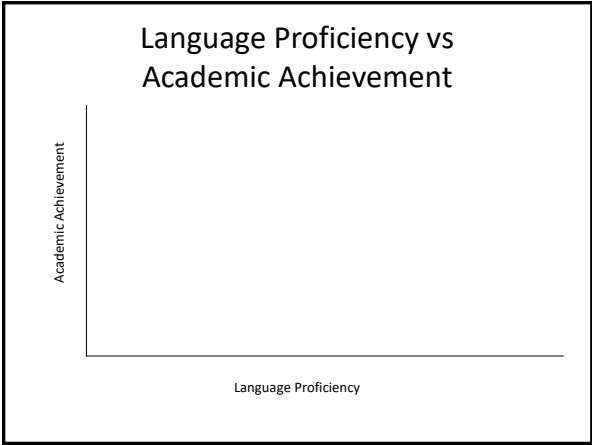
Myths Surrounding EMI

- EMI can be a substitute for EFL classes.
  - EMI students' English proficiency will develop without targeted support
  - EMI as a cheap and easy solution to internationalization

- EMI in and of itself creates internationalization.
  - EMI = Internationalization at Home

- *EMI implementation is easy.*
  - *Any faculty member that can speak English can teach EMI*
  - *Any student who can speak English can learn in EMI*

The Reality

- Most EMI students struggle and face serious challenges learning in English.

Students' Challenges

- What are some specific challenges your students face when learning in English?

Slide 1

Language Proficiency vs Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement

Language Proficiency

Slide 2

Language Proficiency vs Academic Achievement

A — Academic Achievement / Language Proficiency

B — Academic Achievement / Language Proficiency

C — Academic Achievement / Language Proficiency

D — Academic Achievement / Language Proficiency

Slide 3

Language Proficiency vs Academic Achievement

EMI Threshold (CEFR B2 / C1)

Academic Achievement

Language Proficiency

Slide 4

Language Proficiency Threshold

Overall English proficiency below CEFR B2

- Strong correlation between language proficiency and academic outcomes
- Higher drop out rate than peers in L1 medium classes
- Students with B1 can succeed with ongoing EFL support

Overall English proficiency at/above CEFR B2

- Students continue to face challenges but …
  - Variations in English proficiency only minor impact on academic achievement
  - Academic success, content uptake similar to peers in L1-medium programs

BUT, these results are from a European context. Incoming undergraduate students have better overall English proficiency than Asian students. And, many (most?) have experience with English as an academic language via CLIL in secondary school.

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Language

EMI Threshold

JAE-E Target Level

A1   A2   B1   B2   C1   C2
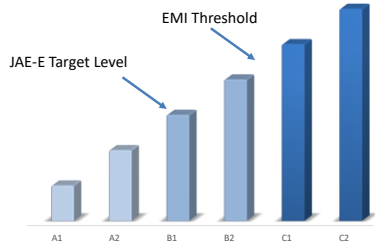
Language Proficiency Threshold

- Using L2 as an academic language without sufficient proficiency → superficial learning, misunderstanding, assumptions, misplaced confidence
  - Students often believe that they understand far more than they really do understand

BICS vs CALP

- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
  - Ability to use L2 in everyday situations
- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
  - Ability to use language for academic purposes

- BICS often develops long before CALP
  - A student's apparent fluency can be deceptive

  - Less of a problem if students come out of English-medium secondary school or **use** English in secondary school

Specific Language Needs of EMI Students

- Reading and Writing

- Speaking and Listening

Students' Challenges

- What are some specific challenges your students face when **reading and writing** in English?

Volume & Depth of Reading

- Volume of reading (Selzer & Gibson, 2009; Taguchi & Naguma, 2006)
  - Typical length of reading text
    - EAP text: 1300 – 1500 words
    - Social Sciences EMI text: 7000 – 8000 words
  - EMI students prone to avoiding reading or reading superficially
    - Even more than L1-medium students

- Problems with specialized vocabulary
  - New discipline-specific words
    - Link between pronunciation and meaning
  - Discipline-specific usage of known words

- Difficulty linking ideas from different texts

Writing

- Lack knowledge of genre and text types
  - Often don't really understand assignment instructions
    - Argument, discussion, review, comparison, etc.

- Often don't understand and cannot act on feedback
  - Lack of metalanguage

- Problems with referencing conventions & paraphrasing

- Issues with higher order writing (synthesis, evaluation)
  - Difficulties linking evidence to support own ideas

Encouraging & Supporting Reading

- Quizzes (online, f2f)
- Reading groups / reading circles
  - Assigned roles for each member
- Reader's guide
  - Pre-reading outline, vocabulary study list
  - Leading questions to highlight key points

Writing Support

- Sample essay bank
- Writing center
- Tutors
- Very explicit instructions

- More detailed (but less complex) feedback

Students' Challenges

- What are some specific challenges your students face when **speaking and listening** in English?

Speaking & Interaction

- Prepared speaking
  – Debate, presentation, etc
- Spontaneous speech
  – Class discussion
  – Interactions with faculty
    • Asking & answering questions, responding in discussions, etc.
- Problems with discipline-specific discourses, genres, registers

Listening

- Lecture Listening
  – Unfamiliar accents
  – Problems with specialized vocabulary
    • New discipline-specific
      – Link between pronunciation and meaning
    • Discipline-specific usage of known words
  – Difficulty linking ideas from texts and lectures
  – Attention span

Supporting Speaking and Listening

- More concept checking
- Shorter lecture chunks
- More overt signposting
- Greater use of pair and group work for lecture comprehension
- Allowing quiet time for reflection
- Joint preparation of questions
- Allow questions submitted in writing
- Provide leading questions

The Role of L1

- Translanguaging
  – Initially discouraged, now more accepted in research on EMI

- Two patterns
  – Remedial L1 – use L1 when English fails
  – Strategic L1 – use L1 as part of the plan from the beginning

Support for EMI Students

- Don't try to do it all alone!
  – Seek out and build relationships
  – Strong relationships within / across departments
  – Strong relationships with language teachers