Title of Project:
Korean University Professors’ Pedagogical Knowledge and Professional Development Needs for English-medium Instruction

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Project Summary:

Importance of Research
Korea’s educational policy makers have set a course toward achieving full English immersion in teaching and learning at all levels, kindergarten through college, and are moving rapidly ahead. As a result, English-medium instruction (EMI) soon appeared as an important criterion in the national university ranking system published by a major newspaper company of Korea, under the category of “globalization.” Almost immediately the demand for more English-medium university courses, and the pressure on professors to teach them, increased. This development reflects aspirations for Korean higher education to achieve world status and attract foreign students, whose numbers are indeed growing (Hong, 2012) in response to promises that instruction will be provided in English. This sudden call for EMI in Korean colleges and university has created challenges for professors, instructors, and students, making it an urgent topic for investigation.

Research Problem
The rapid and massive adoption of EMI in Korean universities has occurred without regard for both instructors’ and students’ needs for a support system as they transition into the new plan and attempt to deal with its inevitable challenges (Shin & Choi, 2012). Previous studies in Korean context were conducted outside of classrooms and provided little insight into the realities of teaching and learning subjects in a foreign language and the specific kinds of support and training necessary for successful EMI implementation. This lack of classroom-based research on instructors’ practices, knowledge bases, and support needed to implement EMI indicates a major gap in the research literature (Tedick & Cammarata, 2012) and calls for in-depth classroom-
based research that elicits instructors’ lived experiences and constructed knowledge for teaching subjects in English to students who are mostly non-native speakers of English.

To address the research problems discussed above, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the teaching approaches and methods used by the Korean professors to teach English-medium courses?
2. What scaffolding/sheltered elements do the teachers incorporate into their instruction? How do these approaches converge or differ from Echevarria et al.’s (2012) Sheltered Instruction (SI).
3. What kinds of support and professional development (PD) do EMI teachers say they need? What kinds of further support and PD needs emerge through observations of EMI practices?

**Data Collection**
A total of six Korean university professors who were experienced in EMI and currently teaching courses in English were recruited for participation in this study. All except one professor, Prof. B, received their academic degrees in English-speaking countries in North America. Data collection consisted of two phases and three data sources: teaching observations, pre- and post-observation interviews, and documents. The goal of the first phase was to understand the research participants’ life histories with particular focus on their preparation for teaching English-medium courses. During the second phase, data were collected from classroom observations, using the SIOP to guide the observations and subsequent discussions. Document analyses triangulated information gained from the pre- and post-observation interviews, and classroom observations. The majority of the data in this study came from interviews translated from Korean into English.

**Important Findings**
For first research question, the study used Freeman and Johnson’s (1998) categories of teacher knowledge base, namely, teachers’ knowledge of themselves, of their disciplines, of the contexts in which they teach, and of the unique aspects of teaching and learning in their classrooms. The findings that emerged from applying this framework demonstrated that teachers drew their knowledge from all three sources, as summarized in Table 1.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>First Category:</th>
<th>Second Category:</th>
<th>Third Category:</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-Classroom Instructional Approaches (derived from personal, experiential and disciplinary knowledge)</td>
<td>Beyond and Out of the Classroom Efforts (derived from knowledge about contextual possibilities)</td>
<td>Language Specific Approaches (derived from understanding specific language struggles in the classroom and disciplinary knowledge)</td>
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Making content comprehensible through unpacking complex ideas
- Using visual images
- Increasing students’ readiness prior to classroom meetings
- Using homework assignments and projects to have students cognitively engaged outside classroom
- Providing handouts
- Reviewing
- Amplifying but not simplifying
- Using templates to support student presentations
- Teaching other cultures
- Co-construction of knowledge through interaction and collaboration
- Teaching with materials from publishers

English camp for students’ language learning
- English expression books for specific majors
- Content-based instruction using joint sources
- Extended office hours
- Weekend tutorial sessions

Classroom-level micro language planning
- Translanguaging (using L1 and L2 linguistic and non-linguistic features e.g. tone, gestures)
- Codeswitching (going back and forth between L1 and L2)
- Composing secret language agreement
- Compiling English expression books for specific majors
- Teaching vocabulary

Table 1: Analyses Based on Categories of Teacher Knowledge

While Freeman and Johnson’s 1998 framework helped us understand the professors’ knowledge bases and how they used this knowledge in their practice, The Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarría et al., 2012) helped us identify the types of support the professors needed. The SIOP is an observational protocol and instructional tool developed to assist instructors of content-based instruction with curriculum design and lesson planning (Echevarría et al., 2012). SIOP-based observations and post-observation discussions yielded information that helped us identify some areas in which the professors needed additional support. The five main categories in SIOP are the following: Lesson Preparation, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Practice/Application, and Lesson Delivery. The specific teacher indicators appear in Table 2.

- Developing foundations to prepare students to take on for English-medium classes.
- Moderating English language use according to students’ proficiency
- Distinguishing between content obligatory and content compatible vocabulary
- Distinguishing language and content objectives
- Teaching explicitly language learning strategies
- Creating opportunities for students to use English verbally.
- Explaining concepts extensively in English
- Developing opportunities for use of interaction and discussion for learning
- Grouping students in configurations that will provide opportunities for experiential learning
- Balancing the use of informal and formal feedback in English
- Collaborating and learning with language specialists
The research found that all instructors needed pedagogical support in undertaking EMI. However, the opportunities for such support, including collaboration with colleagues, particularly those who are language specialists were limited.

**Implications**
The most obvious implication of the research is that administrative mandates can be detrimental to effective practice, unless they are carefully planned with input from the main stakeholders and are accompanied by funding to support programs that can assist teachers and students as they adjust gradually to the changes that are brought about by the mandate. Otherwise, both instructors and students are caught in the middle of a chaotic situation with consequences that are not solely academic. One of the main reasons the researcher became drawn to the topic – was because of the high instructor- and student-suicide rates that he was reading about in the newspapers and that involved teachers who found EMI overly burdensome and students who found themselves defeated by failure due to struggles with the English language (Evans, Lee & Kim, 2014). While these are particularly dramatic situations, they attest to the dire exigencies that an ill-planned policy can produce.

Finally, the study points directly to the need for a coordinated effort by university officials to fund and support truly relevant EMI and PD programs. One immediate outcome of such an institutionalized effort could be elimination of the need for instructors and students to construct “secret pacts” (i.e., allowing use of some Korean language to enable communication among them) as EMI practices became more open and flexible. The long term outcome of such PD programs could be a repository of expertise and best practices that are both EMI- and Korea-specific. Such outcomes can be achieved through multiple efforts, including PD that focuses on both English and subject area teacher collaboration in which each individual can benefit from the expertise of the other to teach content through the English language. The content of the PD programs could also include specific content-based language teaching approaches such as Sheltered Instruction and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O’Malley, 1987). Nevertheless, the best form of PD programs are those informed by the EMI instructors themselves such as the six in this study as, “[e]ducators are at the epicenter of this dynamic process, acting on their agency to change the various language education policies they must translate into practice” (Menken & Garcia, 2010, p. 1).
References


