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**Enactment of medium of instruction
policy: Enhancement of student learning
in courses with English as a medium of
instruction**

Briefing Paper No.1

**Enhancement of Student Learning
with English as the Medium of
Instruction: Introduction**

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Enhancement of Student Learning with English as the Medium of Instruction: Introduction

This research project aims to identify the difficulties and needs in teaching and learning of EFL students and staff during the transition from a tertiary institution where the medium of instruction (MoI) is the mother tongue of the dominant student population to one that adopts English, a foreign language for the majority of the student body, as the primary language of lesson delivery. Through surveys and interviews conducted at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong, the study intends to investigate the perceptions of two groups of stakeholders of the MoI policy and provide critical insights in helping instructors and learners cope with the change. As an increasing number of tertiary educational institutes worldwide are considering the possibility of mandating English as the MoI in view of the perceived strategic value of the language for global competitiveness, this study will render implications for post-secondary institutions which aim to switch their MoI to English or are undergoing a similar change in a wider context.

This series of Briefing Papers presents information about different aspects of the project.

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The International context

In the era of globalization and internationalization, a growing number of tertiary institutions in European and Asian countries have mandated English as the medium of instruction (EMI). The goal of this shift is to improve the English proficiency of their students, and thus their competitiveness in the global society can be enhanced (Hamida, Nguyenb, & Baldauf, 2013). As this movement often takes the form of content and language integrated learning (CLIL), CLIL has received increasing scholastic attention gauging its effectiveness in English language enhancement in a number of post-secondary institutions and probing into different stakeholder's views on and concerns over its implementation.

Current debates on CLIL

In general, existing research in regard to the outcomes of CLIL courses is inconclusive. Some studies report fairly limited success or even failure in improving students' English proficiency (Lei & Hu, 2014), while others report positive results of CLIL in English language enhancement (e.g. Byun et al., 2010; Kang, 2009; Vilkancienė, 2011). Lei and Hu (2014) examined the effectiveness of a one-year EMI programme at a Chinese university in enhancing undergraduate students' English language skills by cross-referencing their scores on two high-stakes, national English tests with those of students in a parallel CMI programme. The result of the comparison shows that the EMI programme was unsuccessful vis-à-vis English learning and the authors ascribe this unexpected outcome to students' negative perceptions of EMI. Their conclusion was corroborated, in an opposite vein, by two Korean studies (Byun et al., 2010; Kang, 2009) reporting success in CLIL implementation. Contrasting with the situation in China, and also Hong Kong (Evans & Morrison, 2011), the student participants in the two Korean studies manifested a positive attitude towards EMI, which is suggestive of the mediating role of perceptions vis-à-vis learning in and of a foreign language. Other issues raised in the current literature concerned the general lack of sufficient understanding of the fundamental principles in CLIL (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011; Johnson, 2012; Snow, Met & Genesee, 1989;), which has undermined the effectiveness of the approach and vitiated language learners' "unremitting practice and effort" (Evans & Morrison, 2011, p. 159).

Methods & Case of the Project

One notable theme arises from these EMI or CLIL studies as well as other research on the implementation of newly advocated teaching approaches in different contexts is the impact of stakeholders' perceptions of and previous experience with the target practice and contextual limitations on its implementation and outcomes (e.g., Choi, 2014; Choi & Andon, 2014; Murray & Christison, 2012). Therefore, in this project the main data source was stakeholders' views and opinions on an EMI policy solicited through a survey and interviews. The case is an EMI reform in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong which has been implemented since 2012 with the goal to improve students' English proficiency, in particular as manifested by scores attained in International English Language Testing System| (IELTS). It aims to increase the number of EMI courses to at least 80% of all undergraduate courses by 2016. Findings of this research will benefit the focal institute as a whole and provide implications to other institutions newly adopting English as the medium of instruction.

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