

An Exploration into Foreign Language Medium Instruction

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**PAC3
at
JALT
2001**

**Conference
Proceedings**



**International
Conference
Centre**

**Kitakyushu
JAPAN**

**November
22-25, 2001**

Kyongju University introduced “Foreign Language Medium Instruction” (FLMI) into the curriculum in several departments within and outside language studies in 1999 as part of a theme of globalizing education. In order to have this program realized, a special FLMI teaching methods development committee consisting of 10 members from within and outside of foreign languages major was appointed by the president. The committee has developed basic guidelines for FLMI instruction through discussion and survey. In its third year, this researcher was asked to evaluate the program in general and find out perceptions of instructors and students in these courses. This study introduces the processes involved in the selection and implementation of FLMI courses in the university, reports the results of the 3-year-long projects, and set future directions for FLMI in the university classrooms.

There has been intense discussion lately as to the exclusive use of foreign languages in classrooms. With the Ministry of Education’s recommendation to teach English in English from the elementary school level effective in 2001, argument for the use of foreign language as a means of communication or instruction in the classroom is

to become more widely used in the field of foreign language education.

Even before the MOE's recommendation to use English as a means of instruction in the English classrooms, Kyongju University introduced "Foreign Language Medium Instruction" (FLMI) into the curriculum in several departments within and outside language studies in 1999 as part of a theme of globalizing education.

In order to have this program realized, a special FLMI teaching methods development committee consisting of 10 members from within and outside of foreign languages major was appointed by the president. The committee has developed basic guidelines for FLMI instruction through discussion and survey, and these guidelines have been in use by both NS and NNS instructors within the university.

In its third year, this researcher was asked to evaluate the program in general and find out perceptions of instructors and students in these courses. This study introduces the processes involved in the selection and implementation of FLMI courses in the university, reports the results of the 3-year-long projects, and set future directions for FLMI in the university classrooms.

Design Subjects

Nine FLMI courses were surveyed. 211 students were

enrolled in the courses. 5 courses were taught by NS instructors while the other four, by Korean instructors. Three courses were 'language as content' (Skills), two were 'subject as content' (Content), while the other four were mixture of the two type (Mixed). The researcher was interested in finding out in what different ways classes of different teacher type and different content type were being taught and how the satisfaction of students differed among different types of classes (Table 1).

Table 1: Information on courses

No	Course title	No. of Students	Teacher type	Content type
1	Sophomore Conversation	22	NS	Skills
2	Sophomore Conversation	15	NS	Skills
3	English-Korean Translation	26	NNS	Mixed
4	Japanese Phonology	35	NNS	Mixed
5	International Trade	17	NNS	Content
6	Tourism Japanese	27	NS	Mixed
7	Tourism Psychology	31	NNS	Content
8	British-American Culture	9	NS	Mixed
9	Intermediate Conversation	29	NS	Skills

78 male students were enrolled in the FLMI courses as compared with 123 female. This can be best interpreted by mere observation that there were more female students who majored in foreign languages or were interested in FLMI courses. Most of the students

were enrolled in their junior year. This is because most FLMI courses were being offered for junior or senior students.

Most of the students' TOEIC scores were less than 700. The school regulation regarding graduation from the English major in this university says "those whose TOEIC is above 720 shall be exempt from 4 skills exams in their comprehensive graduation tests while those scoring between 700 and 720 are exempt from 2 out of the 4 exams."

Research questions

Research questions posed before the construction of survey questionnaire were as follows:

- 1) How are instructors' and students' perceptions of FLMI different?
- 2) How are students' perceptions of FLMI different with respect to instructor type?
- 3) How are students' perceptions of FLMI different with respect to the content type?
- 4) How is students' satisfaction with FLMI different between genders?
- 5) How is students' satisfaction with FLMI different between different years?
- 6) How is students' satisfaction with FLMI different between different proficiency levels?

Survey

The survey questionnaire (see the appendix) consisted of 16 items including the instructor's use of FL in the class, use of teacher talk, use of FL textbook, teaching materials, and reference, students' use of FL in the response, discussions, reports, and tests, and students' progress, satisfaction and recommendation of courses to other students. (It is noted that the total number of students who took FLMI courses differed from that of those who responded to the survey.)

Results and Discussion

Policies concerning FLMI have not been officially changed since its inception in 1999 and individual instructors have adjusted their instruction based on perceptions of student needs, wants, etc. The researcher was interested in how FLMI was perceived by instructors and students in the year 2001. Informal guided interviews were conducted with 9 instructors and a survey questionnaire was administered to students in their classes.

General description of students' perception of FLMI

As shown in Table 2, mean score for each item ranged from the low of 1.12 (use of FL textbook) to the high of 2.60 (S's response in the FL). It can be summarized that in most classes instructor's use of target language was emphasized and it was used at the students' target

language level. Textbooks were those written in the foreign language, and materials and assignments were given in the FL, too. Tests were also made in the FL while students' use of FL in the class as well as in the test influenced their score in the final evaluation. A large majority of students showed satisfaction with the FLMI courses and wanted to recommend those courses to other students.

In the next section, comparative description of results by teacher type, and content type will be made.

Table 2: *Mean & Standard Deviation by Item*

Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Use of FL	210	1.73	.79
Input Adjustment	209	2.12	.78
Textbook in FL	208	1.12	.33
Materials in FL	206	1.41	.78
Reference in FL	208	1.56	.88
S's Use of FL	210	2.17	.79
Q Encouragement	210	1.89	.94
S's Response in the FL	205	2.60	.91
Assignment in FL	201	1.98	1.16
Test in the FL	203	1.50	.77
S's R in Test vs Grade	206	1.84	.88
FL outside of Class	206	2.40	1.02
Improvement	205	2.34	.72
Recommendation	206	2.08	.78
Satisfaction	204	2.18	.77
FL vs NL	206	2.60	.95

Differences between instructor types

• Use of foreign language

“How much of the instruction in this class is conducted in the foreign language?” showed mean difference of 1.48 and 1.97 between NS and NNS classes. This means NS instructors used more FL than NNS instructors.

• Input adjustment

“Did the instructor adjust his (her) language to fit the level of the students?” showed mean difference of 2.14 and 2.10 between NS and NNS classes. This means NNS instructors adjusted their FL to the level of their students slightly more.

• Use of textbook, materials, and reference

“Was the textbook written in the target language?” showed difference of 1.01 and 1.22, “What was the amount of other instructional materials (handouts, etc) written in the target language?” 1.16 and 1.63, while “Were reference materials in the target language?” showed the difference of 1.40 and 1.71. This amounts to the fact that NS instructors were slightly more likely to use FL textbooks, materials and reference materials than NNS instructors.

• S's use of FL

“Did the students' use of the target language affect their

course grade.” showed difference of 2.01 and 2.31, “Did the professor encourage students to ask questions in the target language?” showed difference of 1.65 and 2.10, while “Did students’ response in the target language affect their course grade?” showed difference of 2.39 and 2.78. It can be said that NS instructors were slightly more inclined toward encouraging students to respond in the FL and mark them for grading purposes than NNS instructors.

• *Assignment and test*

“Were test items written in the target language?” revealed a mean of 1.21 in the case of native speaker instructors and 1.76 for nonnative speaker instructors, while “Did the students submit their assignments in the target language?” showed the difference of 1.58 and 2.34. In both items NS instructors were more likely to give tests and ask students to submit their assignments in the FL.

• *S’s response in the test*

“Did students’ response in the target language on the test(s) (and quizzes) affect their grade?” showed a mean of 1.58 in case of native speaker instructors as compared with that of 2.08 in the case of nonnative speaker instructors. It can be said that NS instructors were more likely to check students’ responses in the test for grading purposes.

• *FL outside of class*

“Were the students expected to use the target language outside of the class time?” showed a mean of 2.35 in case of NS instructors as compared with that of 2.4 in case of NNS teachers. As can be inferred from the mean score, FL outside of class was less often used than other items. NS instructors were slightly more inclined to ask students to use FL outside of the class than NNS instructors.

• *Improvement, satisfaction, and recommendation*

“Did your target language proficiency improve through this course?” showed a difference of 2.29 and 2.39 in mean scores, “Are you satisfied with this FLMI course?”, 2.11 and 2.24, while “Would you like to recommend Foreign Language Medium Instructed courses to other students?” showed a difference of 2.04 and 2.11. It can be said that though NS courses were slightly more liked by students, there wasn’t much difference found between NS and NNS instructors in terms of improvement, satisfaction and recommendation.

It can be summarized that the difference between NS and NNS instructors were that of degree, not of kind. In most cases, NS instructors were slightly more inclined toward using FL in the class, giving tests and asking students to submit assignments in FL, and encouraging students to use FL in their responses. The only item that showed results in the opposite direction was “the

degree of input adjustment”. It was found that NNS instructors have adjusted input slightly more often than NS instructors.

Difference between class types

• *Use of Foreign Language*

“How much of the instruction in this class is conducted in the foreign language?” showed a difference of 1.45, 1.72, and 2.14 in mean scores with respect to content, mixed, and skills courses. It can be said that instructors in content and mixed courses used more English than in skills courses.

• *Input adjustment*

“Did the instructor adjust his (her) language to fit the level of the students?” showed a difference of 2.29, 2.00, 2.13 with respect to content, mixed, and skills courses. It can be said that skills and mixed courses used more input adjustment than in content courses.

• *Use of textbook, materials, and reference*

“Was the textbook written in the target language?” showed little difference as shown in the mean of 1.02, 1.23, 1.04, “What was the amount of other instructional materials (handouts, etc) written in the target language?”, little difference of 1.15, 1.59, 1.39, while “Were reference materials in the target language?” showed a difference of 1.29, 1.74, 1.57 in mean scores.

It can be mentioned that there was not much difference found between content, mixed, and skills courses in the use of FL in textbooks, materials and reference materials.

• *S’s use of FL*

“Did the students’ use of the target language affect their course grade.” showed a difference of 2.11, 2.08, and 2.41 in mean scores. This can be interpreted as saying that language-as-content courses were more generous with students’ use of native language than content or mixed courses. “Did the professor encourage students to ask questions in the target language?” showed a difference of 1.60, 1.93, and 2.18 in mean scores. This supports the first “students’ use of FL” argument that language-as-content courses put less emphasis on students’ questions asked in the FL than content or mixed courses. That is, NS instructors were more likely to encourage students to ask questions than NNS instructors. The lower mean scores of 1.60, 1.93, 2.18 compared to those of “effect of target language on grading” implies instructors tended to encourage students to ask questions in FL but rather reluctant to impose it on them by applying their performance to course grade. Finally, “Did students’ response in the target language affect their course grade?” demonstrated a mean score of 2.45, 2.61, and 2.76. It can be said that language-as-content courses were less likely to grade students based on their responses in the FL.

- *Assignment and test*

“Were test items written in the target language?” showed a difference of 1.73, 1.68, and 2.84. This means that language-as-content courses were less likely to write test items in the target language. “Did the students submit their assignments in the target language?” showed a difference of 1.13, 1.46, and 2.04. This adds to the fact that language-as-content courses were less likely to ask students to submit assignments in the FL.

- *S’s response in the test*

“Did students’ response in the target language on the test(s) (and quizzes) affect their grade?” showed a difference of 1.63, 1.73 and 2.33. This means that content courses were more likely to use tests or quizzes in FL than in the case of language-as-content courses.

- *FL outside of class*

“Were the students expected to use the target language outside of the class time?” showed a difference of 2.75, 1.97, and 2.73. Different from other items, use of FL outside of class didn’t show much difference between content classes and language-as-content classes. It is notable that mixed classes were more likely to encourage students’ engagement in the target language outside of class.

- *Improvement, satisfaction, and recommendation*

“Did your target language proficiency improve through this course?” showed a mean difference of 2.52, 2.12, 2.53, “Are you satisfied with this FLMI course?”, 2.32 2.02 2.29, while “Would you like to recommend Foreign Language Medium Instructed courses to other students?” showed a difference of 2.23 1.87 2.27. Interestingly enough, there was minimal difference found between content and language courses in terms of satisfaction, though mixed classes were found to be more satisfactory to students.

In summary, the mean score ranging from 1.5 to 2.5, most items didn’t show much difference between the content and language courses. The item that showed most difference was input adjustment as was the case between NS vs NNS instructor comparison. Instructors in the language courses used input adjustment most often out of the three types.

Satisfaction with FLMI

It was found in the previous section that though NS courses were slightly more liked by students, there wasn’t much difference found between NS and NNS courses in terms of improvement, satisfaction and recommendation. It was also found that there was minimal difference between content and language courses in terms of satisfaction, though mixed classes were found to be more satisfactory to students. In this

section, degree of satisfaction in terms of gender, year, and proficiency level will be described.

- *Comparison by gender*

“Did your target language proficiency improve through this course?” showed a mean of 2.23 in male students as compared with that of 2.41 in female group. “Are you satisfied with this FLMI course?” showed a mean of 2.01 in male students as compared with that 2.27 in the female group. “Would you like to recommend Foreign Language Medium Instructed courses to other students?” showed a mean of 1.95 as compared with that of 2.14. Finally, “If this course were presented in your native language, would your subject matter knowledge have improved more than through the target language?” showed a mean of 2.46 as compared with that of 2.69. In short, male group was reported to have made more progress in the foreign language, been more satisfied, and more likely to recommended FLMI courses to other students. However, seen from the relatively higher mean score of 2.46 and 2.69, it can be inferred that both male and female students feel reluctant to mention they would benefit more from courses in the students’ native language.

- *Comparison by year*

There wasn’t much difference found among the 4 subgroups in terms improvement, satisfaction and

recommendation. The group of Junior was found to be most satisfied while freshmen least satisfied. However, this cannot be generalized to larger populations since the population size of the freshman group was too small. What is notable here is that freshmen were most likely to say that they would have learned the content more if courses were taught in their native language, while there wasn’t much difference found among sophomore, junior and senior groups. Again, it is impossible for this to be generalized to a larger population.

- *Comparison by proficiency*

Students whose TOEIC scores were higher than 800 showed the highest degree of satisfaction, those with TOEIC of 500 or less showed the second highest degree of satisfaction, while those in-between showed a modest degree of satisfaction. As to the question “Would you like to recommend Foreign Language Medium Instructed courses to other students?”, most students whose TOEIC scores were below 800 responded ‘Yes’ or ‘not sure’. However, it is notable that those with less than 500 in the TOEIC showed a rather positive response, while other students were more likely to indicate a ‘not sure’ response. This means, as was the case with freshman students in the previous section, that the lower the students’ proficiency in the foreign language, the more desirable to be cautious in the implementation of FLMI courses.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Summary and conclusions

The results of the evaluative study are summarized as follows:

1. Both instructors and students showed positive attitudes to FLMI courses.
2. Students displayed slightly more favorable satisfaction with the NS instructor taught FLMI courses than NNS courses.
3. NS instructed FLMI courses were being implemented more in line with the guidelines offered by the FLMI research committee.
4. NNS instructors were more inclined toward 'input adjustment' than NS instructors.
5. Content-based FLMI courses had tendency to use more FL and ask students to use the FL more than language-based FLMI courses.
6. There wasn't much difference in the degree of satisfaction between content-based and language-based FLMI courses.
7. Male students showed relatively more satisfaction with the FLMI courses than female students.
8. Freshman students were least satisfied with the FLMI courses, and responded they would learn as much content if their courses were taught in their native language.
9. Sophomore, junior, and senior students showed moderate favor for the FLMI courses in the acquisition of content compared with the instruction given in their native language.
10. Students of low proficiency (below 500 in TOEIC) in the FL were least satisfied with the FLMI courses, and responded they would learn as much content if their courses were taught in their native language.
11. Students of high proficiency in the FL (above 800 in TOEIC) were most satisfied with the FLMI courses, and showed moderate favor for the FLMI courses in the acquisition of content knowledge compared with the instruction given in their native language.

Suggestions

Even though FLMI courses were introduced in the junior year, they didn't specify prerequisite courses in the freshman or sophomore years. It is also noted that a minimal level of foreign language proficiency was not specifically mentioned in the course outline of FLMI courses. This lack of guidance on the part either of instructors or office of academic affairs might have discouraged students in the lower years or of low proficiency. Therefore, it is suggested that there be prerequisite courses or enabling TOEIC scores recommended in the syllabus.

It was found that NNS instructors, being aware of

students' proficiency level in the FL, used more 'input adjustment' than NS instructors. It was also found that students of the lower proficiency were least satisfied with the FLMI while those of the upper proficiency were most satisfied, and most likely to recommend FLMI to others. Considering these two findings, it is suggested that the FLMI courses be divided into two types: language-based and content-based, with consideration of the level or year of students. It would be possible for language-based FLMI courses to be

offered to students of lower proficiency or lower years in the university with more 'input adjustment' and more 'tolerance toward the use of NL' in the earlier periods of course implementation. To the contrary, content-based FLMI courses, with more emphasis on the delivery of informative content in natural authentic FL would be offered for students of more advanced proficiency. Each of the two, or the two combined, will hopefully be able to make a significant contribution to the globalization of Korean university students.

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