

Role of EMI and Resultant Impact on Career Development of Chinese Students

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Abstract

With the ever-changing trends in internationalization of higher education in the recent past, English has been adopted as an effective medium of instruction for many students in various universities all over the world. However, with all its merits, evidence shows that English medium of instruction (EMI) is not very much popular mode of learning in universities across mainland China.

This research is an endeavor to highlight the merits of EMI and its associate linkages to career development of Chinese students. While comparing with Chinese medium of instructions (CMI), the findings of this paper have suggested that EMI has a positive impact on the career development of students. Those students who have taken courses in English medium have received better jobs and more opportunities for fair career growth.

It is further argued that EMI not only assist the individuals in shaping their better future, but it also facilitates in providing efficient labor force for the growing economies. As part of globalization, large numbers of firms are pouring into China. Resultantly, various companies are vigorously searching for graduates with high level of English proficiency. To this end, the role of EMI programs is highly significant in providing right candidates for the corporate sector. Given the need of current employers, it is highly recommended to establish more EMI programs in Chinese institutions.

Keywords: EMI, CMI, Career Development, English Based Courses, Chinese Universities

1. Introduction

Ethnically, China is such a diverse country where students come from various regions, speaking varied languages and dialects. But despite of language barriers, everyone is communicating well and that is partly because of English language. Learning English has become a new passion among young Chinese university students. Students not only learn English at schools but also outside the campus, through the internet, from music, through computer games by watching movies and from television series. Many of these students are highly mobile and in most cases migrate abroad in order to pursue further higher education.

Very little work has been done in analyzing the comparative advantage of various medium of instructions in case of China. As more and more Chinese higher education institutions are adopting English as a medium of instructions (EMI), it is increasingly important to analyze the cost and benefits of this move. Hence, this research is geared to compare the Chinese medium of instruction (CMI) with English medium of instruction (EMI) and analyze the resultant impact on the career development of Chinese students in respect of job prospects, opportunities for further education in abroad and working for modern corporate sector.

As Chinese education system is going through a transformation, more emphasis is being placed on English as medium instructions. Research has proved that the use of English medium instructions in Chinese universities lead to a better career prospects for students in comparison with students having studied in Chinese medium of instructions. Thanks to the English medium of instruction, adapted in the Chinese universities, students have been able to go abroad and explore new avenues of career path.

English medium of instructions carries numerous advantageous. Just to name a few, it is highly beneficial in

pursing higher education in abroad, it gives more opportunities to work with some of the world's biggest companies, people with better English proficiency are deemed to have higher salaries and more opportunities for career growth.

The quality of English medium of instruction in many Chinese universities is below the par and that requires fundamental overhaul. The delivery of lectures, quality of instructors, teaching material and student's English proficiency all matters when it comes to effective medium of instruction.

This paper aims to discuss the merits of English as an effective means of instruction in comparison with the Chinese medium of instruction and its associated linkages to the career development of Chinese students. The study is further organized as follows. In the next two sections, we will discuss the research design and the methodology. Section four covers the analysis and data interpretations, while section five offers findings and recommendations.

2. Research Design

English is the most popular medium of instruction all over the world. Despite its popularity, many universities have experienced difficulties in implementing the EMI. Chinese universities also face the same problem. In China, one of the issues that have generated debate is the proposed reforms of reducing the weight of English medium of instruction in Chinese Universities. This means, more weightage and more emphasis on Chinese medium of instruction rather than stress on English. On the contrary, numerous studies have suggested that the use of English medium instruction in Chinese universities leads to better career prospects of the students when compared to that of Chinese medium of instruction. Hence, this research is geared to compare the benefits and disadvantages of both medium of instructions in Chinese universities and the resultant impact on the career development of Chinese students.

2.1 Research Design

For this research, we have selected the International School of Jinan University (JNU) as the sample case for the EMI. It is worth to mention here that International School of JNU is one of the first Schools in mainland China to offer all courses in English. For this study, we have chosen undergraduate students from seven majors offered at International School (IS). The major disciplines are Finance, Certified General Accountants (CGA)-Canada, International Economics & Trade, Public Administration, Clinical Medicine, Food Quality & Safety and Pharmacy from Jinan University. For the estimates and analysis, we have used sampling techniques and the data is calculated through the IBM – SPSS" software. The sample population is based on the responses of 100 undergraduate students from the International School.

2.2 Limitations of the Study

It is imperative to note that this study has several limitations. Due to limited sampling size, the observations made for the small sample has been generalized to the graduates in China. However, several interactions on personal level have been attempted in order to get more accurate results. Owing to shortage of time, the research has been confined to few groups which presumably represent the majority of youth students enrolled in EMI programs in China.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

Table 1. International School students sectors-wise employment data (2005-2014)

YEAR	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Private Companies	1	5	9	9	9	14	8	11	18	27
Overseas Companies	4	12	18	12	10	15	24	31	25	27
SOE	1	2	4	5	1	10	9	5	8	19
Study Abroad	5	5	13	11	9	11	31	31	37	35
Study at Home	0	1	6	4	5	5	10	11	9	9
Civil Service	0	1	3	6	2	3	5	2	3	4
Public Institution	1	1	1	2	1	2	4	6	8	4
TOTAL	12	27	54	49	37	60	91	97	108	125

Source: Authors calculation based on International School Students Survey 2015

For this study, the data was mainly collected from the undergraduate students of International School (IS) of Jinan University, which is a typical case for the EMI program in China. As a comprehensive University, Jinan

University offers various majors to students in English and Chinese. Historically, Jinan University has been the top destination for overseas students. Hence, in order to attract more foreign students, JNU has started offering more courses in English. To this end, Jinan University has established International School in 2001. Initially, the School has only two majors namely, International Economics & Trade and Clinical Medicine taught in English. During 2001 to 2009, with every passing year, one more major was added. After the graduation, students of International Schools can find jobs easily partially due to the EMI program. As more students start enrolling at the International School because of its English medium of instructions, the School has started offering all courses in English.

3.1.2 Analysis: Frequencies:

		Statistics						
		Private Companies	Overseas Companies	SOE	Study Abroad	Study at Home	Civil Servant	Public Institution
N	Valid	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	11.10	17.80	6.40	18.80	6.00	2.90	3.00
	Median	9.00	16.50	5.00	12.00	5.50	3.00	2.00
	Mode	9	12	1 ^a	5 ^a	5 ^a	3	1
	Std. Deviation	7.233	8.664	5.461	13.011	3.742	1.792	2.449
	Skewness	1.122	.037	1.407	.414	-.286	.185	1.134
	Std. Error of Skewness	.687	.687	.687	.687	.687	.687	.687

Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Correlation Analysis:

		Descriptive Statistics		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
	Private Companies	11.10	7.233	10
	Overseas Companies	17.80	8.664	10
	SOE	6.40	5.461	10
	Study Abroad	18.80	13.011	10
	Study at Home	6.00	3.742	10
	Civil Service	2.90	1.792	10
	Public Institution	3.00	2.449	10

Source: Authors calculation based on International School Students Survey 2015

3.1.3 Data Set-2 Data:

Evaluation From Graduates	Fully Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Completely Disagree
Great help for development of English knowledge	43	34	19	4	-
Not much help for career development	17	36	28	19	-
Team management is much easier	28	30	38	4	-
Company is interested in English knowledge background	34	34	21	9	2
Lack of language knowledge	15	34	26	25	-
Course structure is not fit to social environment	11	19	32	38	-
Great help to find a job	47	34	9	2	-
Great help for promotion	38	38	18	4	2
If given a chance, would choose language course again	100	-	-	-	-
Very helpful for higher studies	81	17	2	-	-
Good for collecting international resources	42	34	12	12	-
Teachers' English level is important	62	28	2	-	-
Teachers' work background is important	59	30	11	-	-

3.1.4 Analysis:

Frequencies:

		Statistics												
		Great help for development of English Language	Not much help for career development	Team management is much easier	Company is interested in my English knowledge background	Lack of language knowledge	Course structure is not fit to social environment	Great help to find a job	Great help for promotion	If given a chance, would choose language course again	Very helpful for higher studies	Good for collecting international resources	Teachers' English level is important	Teachers' work background is important
N	Valid	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	1	3	4	3	3
	Missing	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	4	2	1	2	2
	Mean	25.00	25.00	25.00	20.00	25.00	25.00	23.00	20.00	100.00	33.33	25.00	30.67	33.33
	Median	26.50	23.50	29.00	21.00	25.50	25.50	21.50	18.00	100.00	17.00	23.00	28.00	30.00
	Mode	4 ^a	17 ^a	4 ^a	34	15 ^a	11 ^a	2 ^a	38	100	2 ^a	12	2 ^a	11 ^a
	Std. Deviation	17.146	8.756	14.652	14.474	7.789	12.247	21.087	17.550		41.956	15.362	30.089	24.173
	Skewness	-.386	.626	-1.465	-.230	-.381	-.152	.224	.133		1.486	.229	.396	.609
	Std. Error of Skewness	1.014	1.014	1.014	.913	1.014	1.014	1.014	.913		1.225	1.014	1.225	1.225

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Correlation Analysis:

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Great help for development of English Language	25.00	17.146	4
Not much help for career development	25.00	8.756	4
Team management is much easier	25.00	14.652	4
Company is interested in my English knowledge background	20.00	14.474	5
Lack of language knowledge	25.00	7.789	4
Course structure is not fit to social environment	25.00	12.247	4
Great help to find a job	23.00	21.087	4
Great help for promotion	20.00	17.550	5
If given a chance, would choose language course again	100.00	.	1
Very helpful for higher studies	33.33	41.956	3
Good for collecting international resources	25.00	15.362	4
Teachers' English level is important	30.67	30.089	3
Teachers' work background is important	33.33	24.173	3

Source: Authors calculation based on International School Students Survey 2015

4. Findings, discussion and suggestions:

4.1 Data Set-1

- Our findings suggest that the number of students working in private companies have increased over the past few years. This is largely due to the increasing demand of English speaking people in the private sector.
- It is further argued that the large amount of people like to work in foreign companies mainly because of better pay and perks, opportunities for future growth and further chances of career development.
- The demand for English speaking graduates working in State Own Enterprises (SOE's) has gone up significantly recently. This proves that SOE's also prefer to recruit more graduates from English Medium Instruction based institutions.
- Our study has further confirmed that “study abroad” is another powerful reason why many Chinese students like to study in EMI institutions.
- The result of our survey has indicated that the number of people who choose to study in the home country went down gradually over the last couple of year. On the contrary, the number of students study abroad have gone up steadily partly due to better economic conditions and the introduction of EMI programs in many Chinese institutions.

- Additionally, our results shows that International School graduates preference for working in government sector and civil service has declined with every passing year. Several reasons could be attributed to this trend. Some students believe working in government sector is unrewarding as the sector offers less salaries and chances for promotions are relatively slow. Whereas, private sector is more efficient, lucrative and carries fair chances of promotions.
- Research points out that the number of graduates working in public limited companies has fallen notably which is mainly due to rapid emergence of domestic private sector and influx of international companies in mainland China.
- The correlation analysis confirms that the variables chosen from the comparative analysis positively match with the introduction of EMI program introduced at the International School (IS). It is concluded that the English Medium Instruction (EMI) program is very instrumental in securing better jobs for many IS students. Hence, we strongly recommend to establish more EMI based programs throughout China.

4.2 Data Set-2

- The research proves that maximum number of respondents fully agreed that EMI is useful in knowledge development and that provides more opportunities for career growth. Therefore, more instructors are encouraged to deliver lectures in English.
- Many respondents consider the EMI is not helpful in career growth if the candidates have low level of English proficiency. Besides, success of any EMI program is not merely based on medium of instructions, rather it depends on other several factors, including, the quality of instructors, modernized syllabi, selection of courses and the learning abilities of students.
- Most respondents were not sure whether the team management gets improve through the EMI based programs.
- Several respondents believed that the EMI not essentially guarantee to secure a better position in top companies. As a matter of fact, different companies have their own selection criteria for hiring suitable candidates. Hence, apart from other conditions, medium of instructions and candidate's English proficiency also counts when it comes to recruitment.
- Likewise, many respondents consider, the EMI programs are not very popular and effective in many institutions throughout China. Partially, because of student's poor background in English. As is well know, in many parts of China, in numerous primary schools and colleges, there is dire need of qualified English instructors.
- While, the majority of respondents disagree that students graduated from EMI based institutions would have a comparative advantage over Chinese medium of instructions gradates, when it comes to hiring for corporate sector. The argument is Chinese corporate sector is such a large and diverse that it absorbs all kind of candidates irrespective of their educational background, skills, degrees and working experience etc.
- Nearly half of the respondents agreed that English medium of instruction would help them greatly in finding better jobs, as recently, most of the employers and well known companies in China are keen to recruit graduates from EMI based institutions.
- Similarly, large numbers of respondents believed that EMI is instrumental in jobs hunting, personal career development and new opportunities for future growth.
- Majority of the respondents have agreed in principal, if they have been given a second chance, they would still consider to study in EMI programs. As it provides more knowledge and opportunities for fair career growth when compared with the Chinese medium of instructions.
- Likewise, more than half of the respondents fully agreed that English medium of instruction facilitate them greatly in seeking studies abroad. As a matter of fact, for studying abroad, all non-English speaking students are required to have high level of English proficiency. In most of the cases, they need to pass IELTS or TOEFL. To this end, EMI programs support students to a great extent in improving their English level.
- Almost half of the respondents fully agreed that English medium instruction would help them in improving their connections with foreigners. This may be due to the reason that they are required to communicate or interact with various communities and inter-cultural people who may not understand Chinese language very well.

- More than half of the respondents fully agreed that instructors own English proficiency is very important in delivering lectures and communication students successfully.
- Most of the respondents believe that instructor's personal educational background is vital in transmitting knowledge to students in an effective way. That is particular very important in China as many Chinese students face difficulties in understudying lectures in English. Resultantly, we few students speak in the class and ask questions in class room.
- But for factors like English medium instruction is not of much help for career development, company is interested in the graduates' English language knowledge, and negative correlation is found in the analysis.
- Even though the factor "if given a chance, would choose language course again" has a total negative correlation, it is a good sign that the English medium instruction has a positive impact on the career development of Chinese students.

4.3 General Discussion

- Most of graduates chose to work in private companies or overseas companies. Likewise, many companies also prefer to hire people having graduated from EMI Programs. Companies believe employees with better English background will have comparative advantage in understanding the latest trends in the corporate sector. And it also expands their communications skill in interacting with wider audience.
- The results of our analysis have suggested that the use of English medium of instruction has very significant impact on the career development of Chinese students. Hence, more EMI programs possibly introduced in Chinese institutions. Initially, we recommend introducing more EMI Programs at undergraduate level and gradually upgrade to postgraduate and PhD level.

5. Conclusion

Medium of instruction is very important in effective learning. Those instructors who have better communication skills and good command over English; they are more likely to be successful in transmitting knowledge to students. Though the impact of learning is largely based on instructor's own abilities of teaching, yet medium of instructions play a vital role. In Chinese students case, there has been a mixed of rejoinder. Many students consider English medium of instruction is more successful in learning and that broadens their horizon of knowledge, offers more opportunities for overseas studies, provide more chances of working in international companies and helping in reshaping their future career. On the converse side, some students believe, Chinese medium of instruction is more effective due to various reasons. To this end, one of the powerful arguments is that people understand much better in "mother tongue". Historically, those countries who have adopted national langue as their medium of instruction have been more successful in cultivating good graduates with sound knowledge.

But with the globalization, need for English proficient candidates is growing at an accelerate rate. As China is transforming from developing to developed country, large number of companies-domestic and international, are still actively searching for candidate with good proficiency of English. On the other side, as China is getting more international, large numbers of foreign students are seeking admissions into Chinese institutions. While, the capacity of Chinese universities and institutions to offer programs English is limited. As our research confirms, there is huge potential for EMI Programs in China.

As discussed in the earlier part of this paper, it is observed that comparatively, there is less emphasis on the English medium instruction or English based courses in the Chinese Universities despite of growing demand for these programs. The analysis of this research has confirmed that many graduates like to study in English medium of instruction programs due to variety of reasons. As a matter of fact, numerous Chinese students, after the graduation, like to go abroad for further higher studies. Besides, majority of the students want to study in EMI programs mainly for finding a better job in well established companies where they can get a greater exposure to international environment. These encounters re-affirm student's belief in EMI programs which eventually lead them to a better career development path.

China has received tremendous benefits from the overseas returnee graduates. Due to international exposure, better knowledge, skills and trainings, they lead the corporate sector and contributing considerably for the better of greater China.

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