

English medium instruction in a Saudi STEM Programme

Shahd Quotah
King's College London

Abstract

The use of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) is becoming increasingly common in university programmes internationally, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In a world in which access to high-level opportunities is increasingly dependent on mastery of English, EMI has much potential to help students with their future careers in academia and beyond through a command of the scientific lingua franca. Nevertheless, the obvious dominance of English appears to be contributing to a discourse that underplays the many challenges and potential disadvantages associated with imposing instruction in a foreign language on university students whose educational backgrounds have given them very different levels of mastery of that language. Could it be that, as well as opening doors for some students internationally, the use of EMI is exacerbating the disadvantages of the already disadvantaged? And, if so, how can those problems be addressed so that the benefits of EMI can be experienced equitably across different groups of students? These are the questions that are emerging from my study of the implementation of the EMI requirement on STEM programmes at a university in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: identity, inequality, internationalization, policy, translanguaging.