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Saudi Arabia's First Choice for ESL English Language Teachers

IN THE NEWS

EMI "Doesn't Work" Without ESL

Sourced from el-gazette

Teach an adult a foreign language and content simultaneously, and they'll learn very little in either, research suggests.

Teaching academic content in a foreign language without explicit language support can be detrimental to the learning of both the subject and the foreign tongue, researchers have said.

Practices such as English as a medium of instruction (EMI) could be ineffective compared to learning language and content separately unless students have already mastered their foreign language or receive targeted support, a new study warns.

'It's safe to say that EMI doesn't work, from the data we got,' Dr John Sweller, one of the authors of the study, told the Gazette. 'If you try to teach adults a second language simultaneously with content, they'll end up with very little learning in either.'

The authors explain that learning a foreign language as an adult means acquiring 'biologically secondary knowledge', which requires explicit instruction and 'conscious effort'. Cognitive load theory, the study says, suggests that learning two things at the same time won't work – and the data seems to confirm this.

Over three experiments, each with control conditions, researchers found that reading a text only in the foreign language led to the worst outcomes for both content and language learning. In all three experiments, which involved a total of 294 French university students, participants were divided into three groups. A text about a topic relevant to the

students' course was given to the first group in the foreign language, to the second group in French, and to the third in both the foreign language and French. The foreign language was German for the three groups in the first experiment and English for the three groups of the other two experiments. The students, who averaged a CEFR B1 in the foreign language, were then asked to study the texts and to perform three tests afterwards: two language and translation tests and one content test with questions in French.

Unsurprisingly, the French-only conditions yielded the best results for the content test. However, results were higher in the language and translation tests for students who read the text in both languages. The full 'immersion' conditions obtained the worst results in all three experiments.

Language proficiency is paramount for EMI to lead to successful learning, the authors said. Dr Sweller explained, 'Ideally, you should not learn content in the L2 until your language levels are so high that you don't have to consciously think about the language. Until then, according to everything we know about human cognition, you are going to struggle – both in the language and in the content.'

Universities should put in place extra support to ensure students don't struggle with lessons delivered in English, the authors say. Co-author Dr Danielle Joulia said students would benefit from targeted language support that covers the vocabulary of the topic they are studying, ideally before each class. 'General academic English support is not enough,' she insisted.



HR Manager Appointment

American Academy is pleased to announce the appointment of our new Human Resources Manager, Mr. Abdul Alhaj Hussein. Abdul, an American-Saudi, joined AA in 2016 and has quickly proven his talent as a site project manager. His outstanding people skills make him the ideal person in the American Academy Family to manage the HR department.



AA Offers Female Teachers

American Academy is very pleased to announce that we now have female ESL teachers available to any client school or training center. This includes native English speakers from USA, Canada, UK, etc. as well as NNES Filipino and European teachers and Bilingual Arabic English speaking female ESL teachers.

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