

## The Influence of English Immersion Program on Academic Performance: Case Study at a Sino-US Cooperative University in China

**Authors :** Leah Li Echiverri, Haoyu Shang, Yue Li

**Abstract :** Wenzhou-Kean University (WKU) is a Sino-US Cooperative University in China. It practices the English Immersion Program (EIP), where all the courses are taught in English. Class discussions and presentations are pervasively interwoven in designing students' learning experiences. This WKU model has brought positive influences on students and is in some way ahead of traditional college English majors. However, literature to support the perceptions on the positive outcomes of this teaching and learning model remain scarce. The distinctive profile of Chinese-ESL students in an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) environment contributes further to the scarcity of literature compared to existing studies conducted among ESL learners in Western educational settings. Hence, the study investigated the students' perceptions towards the English Immersion Program and determine how it influences Chinese-ESL students' academic performance (AP). This research can provide empirical data that would be helpful to educators, teaching practitioners, university administrators, and other researchers in making informed decisions when developing curricular reforms, instructional and pedagogical methods, and university-wide support programs using this educational model. The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between the English Immersion Program and Academic Performance among Chinese-ESL students enrolled at WKU for the academic year 2020-2021. Course length, immersion location, course type, and instructional design were the constructs of the English immersion program. English language learning, learning efficiency, and class participation were used to measure academic performance. Descriptive-correlational design was used in this cross-sectional research project. A quantitative approach for data analysis was applied to determine the relationship between the English immersion program and Chinese-ESL students' academic performance. The research was conducted at WKU; a Chinese-American jointly established higher educational institution located in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. Convenience, random, and snowball sampling of 283 students, a response rate of 10.5%, were applied to represent the WKU student population. The questionnaire was posted through the survey website named Wenjuanxing and shared to QQ or WeChat. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the research instrument. Findings revealed that when professors integrate technology (PowerPoint, videos, and audios) in teaching, students pay more attention. This contributes to the acquisition of more professional knowledge in their major courses. As to course immersion, students perceive WKU as a good place to study, providing them a high degree of confidence to talk with their professors in English. This also contributes to their English fluency and better pronunciation in their communication. In the construct of designing instruction, the use of pictures, video clips, and professors' non-verbal communication, and demonstration of concern for students encouraged students to be more active in-class participation. Findings on course length and academic performance indicated that students' perception regarding taking courses during fall and spring terms can moderately contribute to their academic performance. In conclusion, the findings revealed a significantly strong positive relationship between course type, immersion location, instructional design, and academic performance.

**Keywords :** class participation, English immersion program, English language learning, learning efficiency

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