

EMI University Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Design and Management of Academic English Listening Classes

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Abstract

This paper explores the perceptions of their teachers' instructional strategies by students of an EMI university EAP course. It describes teacher-student interactions within language classrooms and investigates how their value is understood by students. Six participants were studied, using classroom observations employing the Foreign Language Interaction (FLINT) system, and semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of four students and two teachers, who were enrolled in the same university EAP course. The analysis revealed persistent difficulties in academic listening amongst English learners regardless of their proficiency level. The findings indicate that EAP instructors employ a coherent set of teaching activities with an implicit rationale to develop listening strategies, but that this rationale is not always understood or aligned with students' own learning strategies. The findings are limited, but, even so, suggest that instructors and students should discuss the rationale for their learning strategies more explicitly at the outset of a course.

Keywords: EAP, Academic listening, FLINT, Classroom management

Introduction

English medium instruction (EMI) has gained momentum in mainland China in line with a global endeavour to internationalise higher education (Zhou & Thompson, 2023). Its expansion is the result of an increase in the number of overseas exchange students and the rise in China of highly fluent English-speaking students. However, the pedagogical literature has until recently focused on addressing teachers' English proficiency and it has neglected to consider students' ability to learn through English (Jiang et al., 2019). In English for Academic Purposes (EAP) contexts, Chinese students face numerous linguistic challenges; a relatively neglected area is their need to acquire better listening skills to comprehend English fluently (Alonso, 2012; Zhou, 2023).

The present study draws upon interviews and classroom observations, to explore how instructors seek to enhance academic listening skills and how students perceive these efforts. The study offers insights into how listening skills and strategies are taught and perceived in class and presents some suggestions about how teachers can effectively address Chinese EAP students' English listening learning needs.

Literature Review

Four areas of research are relevant to the present study: general studies of listening fluency applied to academic contexts (Rost, 2018), academic listening *per se* (Rost & Wilson, 2013), active listening and classroom management. Each is considered in turn.

Listening Fluency in Academic Contexts

The term "fluency" is often associated with facility in speaking, reading, and writing, although it is less commonly connected with listening. Listening fluency is related to with the speakers' speed, smoothness, and cohesion, none of which is controlled by the actual listener (Rost, 2018). In the Asian EAP context, students face three major challenges: long stretches of spoken discourse, a wide range of speech situations, and the requirement to give clear responses to what is heard (Rost, 2018). Addressing these EAP listening challenges, Rozak et al. (2021) advocate using lectures covering relevant topics as listening materials, repeated listening in graded speech rate levels from slow to normal, and scaffolding linked-skills and activities, like background knowledge activation, and collaborative speaking and reading, to name but a few. These activities can help improve students' listening fluency.