Understanding Language Learning Motivation in Hong Kong

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Chair: Dr. Yuen Yi Lo

Abstract:
Recent decades have witnessed an increasing spread of content-based instruction educational models delivering content teaching through learners' second language. A principle of such models is that such instruction creates a naturalistic context that motivates language learners to use and learn target languages when learning subject content. However, the relationship between medium of instruction (MoI) and motivation specific to language learning is a relatively under-explored area. In the context of calls for theorizations of LLM to better respond to considerations of culture and context (e.g. Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005), this study seeks to contribute to the field through examining the interactions between LLM and micro (MoI classrooms) and macro (Hong Kong schools) contexts.

The present study adopted a mixed methods approach to investigate LLM among secondary school learners of English in Hong Kong, across Chinese, English and Mixed mode of instruction schooling. The focus here will be on quantitative data gathered through a motivation survey administered to students ($N = 3877$) aged 11-14. The survey examined a range of motivation constructs, including self-efficacy, academic motivation and eleven LLM-specific constructs.

Initial analysis suggests an effect of MoI on four of the eleven LLM constructs, in favour of EMI schooling. The study supports previous research showing that general academic motivation is higher among EMI learners, but the effect of MoI on this variable was negligible. Meanwhile, evidence from Hong Kong secondary school English learners seems to support Chen, Warden & Chang's (2005) proposal of a 'required orientation' as better accounting for LLM in East Asian contexts. Findings are discussed in the context of existing understandings of the relationship between MoI and learning motivation, as well as in terms of broader questions about the theorization of LLM.

About the speaker:
Mairin trained and worked as a Modern Languages' teacher, before undertaking her DPhil in Applied Linguistics at the University of Oxford. Having worked at the University of Oxford, the University of Newcastle and the University of Edinburgh, she is currently Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong. A key strand of Mairin's research focuses on language learning motivation in theory and practice. Mairin is co-Editor of the Edinburgh University Press Edinburgh Textbooks in Applied Linguistics and Associate Editor of the journal System.

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