

## English Medium Instruction in the Transition Year: Case from KSA

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### Abstract

Many countries in the world are beginning to use English as the medium of instruction, particularly in higher education, due to the economic and social demands for learning English. However, this presents a number of challenges particularly in EFL settings where the learners normally have low competence in the English language. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presents a case in point. This paper reports findings of a case study of the use of English as medium of instruction in the preparatory or transition year at a public sector university in Saudi Arabia. Findings reveal that both teachers and learners prefer English as medium of instruction due to instrumental needs. However, they face a number of challenges mainly due to learners' low proficiency in English. Consequently, they use some coping strategies to address these challenges. However, these have negative consequences for students' learning of academic content in science subjects. Similarly, some institutional support mechanisms, such as simplified curricular content, limit the amount of learning taking place in the transition year. A clearly articulated language policy regarding the use of English as the medium of instruction, and an accompanying research program are required to gain the alleged benefits from using English- medium instruction in higher education institutions in general, and the transition year, in particular.

**Keywords:** challenges in English-medium instruction, higher education, English as medium of instruction, Saudi Arabia, preparatory year

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