

# The implications of English-medium instruction on teaching practice and learning outcomes at The Hague University of Applied Sciences

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**study**<sup>1</sup> /'stʌdi/ *n* **1(a)** [U] the act of gaining knowledge, esp from books or spare time to *study* ○ a room set up for *study*. **(b) studies** [pl] such activities or particular person, eg at a college or university. *turn to one's studies after an illness*. *activity of gaining knowledge of a particular subject: Entomology is the study of insects*. **[pl]** (used in the titles of certain academic subjects) *business/media/American studies*. **3** *consideration of the content of a subject: make a study of the constitution*. **4** [C] a detailed examination of a subject: *make a study of Locke's philosophy*. *publish a study of...* **5** [C] a person, esp one who is engaged in *study*. **6** [C] a person, esp one who is engaged in *study*. **7** [C] a person, esp one who is engaged in *study*. **8** [C] a person, esp one who is engaged in *study*. **9** [C] a person, esp one who is engaged in *study*. **10** [C] a person, esp one who is engaged in *study*. **11** 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## Summary

In response to globalisation and internationalisation of both higher education and the job market, The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) has seen a considerable increase in English-medium courses, i.e. non-language subjects taught through English. Internationally, the rise of English-medium instruction (EMI) has led to research on, and discussion about the possible side-effects of a change in instructional language. More specifically, whether using a foreign language as the medium of instruction has a negative impact on teaching and learning. This paper reports the findings of a pilot research project into the implications of English-medium instruction (EMI) as perceived by students and teachers of the bachelor program Commercial Economics at the Faculty of Business, Finance and Administration at THUAS.

Research methods used to collect data include face-to-face interviews with both students and lecturers involved in EMI subject courses, a student questionnaire, and lesson observations. Despite regular exposure to English and an adequate self-perceived English proficiency, results show that a considerable number of students, as well as teaching staff are experiencing difficulties with English-medium instruction and that for many EMI is not as efficient in transferring academic content as instruction in the mother tongue.

## Acknowledgements

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 English as a language of instruction in higher education

In response to increasing globalisation and internationalisation of the job market, the past decade has seen an upsurge in English-medium instruction in tertiary education in non-native English-speaking countries. (cf. Coleman, 2006; Graddol, 2008; Hoare, 2010; Hu, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Saarinen & Nikula, 2013; Shamim, 2011; Wilkinson, 2013; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011)

Dearden (2015) defines English-medium instruction (EMI) as follows: “*The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English.*” (p. 2). EMI has become a valuable and widely adopted tool in the efforts of higher education to internationalise their curricula and prepare their students for the increasingly globalised world. As Doiz, Lagabaster, and Sierra (2011) explain, EMI not only brings in foreign exchange students, but also raises the (international) profile of the institution and prepares domestic students for the globalised labour market.

Dutch Higher Education has also seen a significant increase in the number of English-taught programmes. While a decade ago almost all programmes were taught in Dutch (Leest & Wierda-Boer, 2011), English is quickly becoming the dominant language of instruction at research universities in the Netherlands. Currently 60 per cent of Dutch Master’s programmes are taught in English (Association of Universities in The Netherlands, 2014), At universities of applied sciences, and in academic Bachelor programmes, the number of English-taught undergraduate programmes has also shown a considerable increase from 5 per cent in 2011 to 15 per cent (vocational Bachelors) and 24 per cent (academic Bachelors) in 2013. It is worth noting that these data only report on fully English-taught programmes of study, and do not include the much larger number of individual English-taught modules as part of a generally Dutch curriculum.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) too has seen a growth in the amount of English-medium instruction. Currently, ten Bachelor Degree Programmes are taught in English (Bachelor Degree Programmes, n.d.), but recently, Dutch-taught programmes have also started to implement English as a medium of instruction on a modular level, as can be seen from the internationalisation plans of various faculties.

In 2013/2014, the Research Group International Cooperation of THUAS researched which international competencies are required by alumni and employers. The results showed that more than half of the alumni needed English language skills in their professional practice, and that both English proficiency and intercultural competence have a positive influence on job prospects and career progression (Funk, Den Heijer, Schuurmans-Brouwer, & Walenkamp, 2014). The study concluded that the Dutch job market increasingly requires THUAS graduates to be proficient in English as well as interculturally competent. However, results also showed that study programmes do not always sufficiently develop the required competencies.

In their most recent institutional plan the Executive Board at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) express their plans to not only continue current internationalisation endeavours, but to also expand and enhance their internationalisation policy.

*“These past few years, we have made huge steps in internationalising our curriculum. Besides developing international programmes of study, the university has also chosen to make internationalisation a permanent and mandatory part of the curriculum. Our international Bachelor- and Master Programmes are performing well. The realisation of many of the objectives in the current internationalisation policy allows us to select new focal points, develop customised programmes for different programmes of study, and to deepen the quality of THUAS internationalisation policy.”*

(INSTELLINGSPLAN 2014-2020).

This illustrates that EMI is and will continue to be a key factor in THUAS internationalisation policy. Existing literature, however, has shown that changing the instructional language, from mother tongue to second language, can bring about implications for both lecturers and students, and could consequently affect the quality of education.

Previously documented effects of EMI include an increased workload for both students and teachers as well as reduced classroom interaction. For teaching staff in particular, EMI is said to require a change in didactic methods and consequently different teacher competencies.

### 1.2 Implications of English as a language of instruction

As Klaassen (2008) emphasises, it is important to understand the pedagogical implications of EMI in order to improve English-medium instruction. This may mean tackling issues in language proficiency, but may also mean improving specific didactic methods more suitable for instruction in a second language.

Over the past decade, various studies have been conducted to examine the effect of English-medium instruction in non-native English countries. Areas of research have included the impact on students and lecturers, both in relation to policy and in terms of classroom interaction, but also the didactic skills and competencies required to teach effectively in an EM context.

One of the first, and possibly the most extensive, studies at a *Dutch* university is that of Vinke (1995). Looking at EMI from a teacher perspective among Dutch lecturers, Vinke (1995) found, among other things, that EMI requires additional preparation time and that linguistic limitations impede lecturers' performance in explaining academic content. In a follow-up study, Vinke, Snippe, and Jochems (1998) concluded that lecturers had more difficulty expressing and explaining ideas adequately when teaching in English. English-medium instruction was also considered more strenuous. Similarly, Huibregtse (2001) found that both lecturer's grammatical accuracy and their spoken fluency often do not meet the level required for effective EMI. These and many other studies (Jochems, 1998; Klaassen & Snippe, 1999) have demonstrated the importance of not only improving lecturers' language proficiency, but that English-medium instruction also requires a different set of didactic skills and competencies. More recent studies have continued to support these findings. Mellion (2008), for instance, indicates that besides experiencing linguistic limitations, Dutch lecturers are not always fully equipped in terms of didactics to deal with foreign / non-native students.

In terms of transfer of academic content, Hincks (2010) registered a decrease of 23 per cent in speaking rate among B2/C1 level speakers of English in comparison to their native language (L1) speaking rate. In other words, communicating a message in a second language (L2) takes considerably longer than communicating that same message in the first language (L1), even for speakers who are proficient in the L2. In situations where the allocated time is fixed, such as lectures, this could mean that important information is omitted as a result of a slower speaking rate in L2. Students in EM (English-medium)

courses may therefore receive less information, or fewer examples and explanations which support learning, than students who receive instruction in their mother tongue.

Similar to the linguistic limitations of lecturers, the language proficiency of students in EM courses is also frequently a reason for concern. It is often assumed that EM students have the required level of proficiency to successfully complete their course. However, even students who are proficient in English may experience difficulties with EM lecture comprehension. Hellekjaer (2010), for instance, found that this was the case for more than 50 per cent of respondents. The main issues that affected comprehension were intelligibility of the lecturer and a lack of vocabulary. Students also experienced difficulties in taking notes in English and following the lecturer's line of thought, albeit to a lesser extent. Similar to the perceptions of lecturers, the majority of respondents in Hellekjaer (2010), between 62 and 72 percent, found EMI more laborious and seem to rely more on visual support. Another issue in English-medium instruction is that, due to linguistic limitations, EM students are often unable, or unwilling to ask and answer questions in class (Airey & Linder, 2006). As a result many students would adopt a number of compensation strategies, such as waiting until after the lesson to ask questions, or doing additional reading prior to or after a lesson.

Klaassen (2001) also observed a lack of concentration and a limited attention span among students receiving English-medium instruction.

All these effects could significantly impede the effectiveness of English-medium instruction and consequently affect student performance in EM courses. In fact, several studies have revealed that students score lower on the achievement of academic knowledge when taught and assessed in a new language (Levin & Shohamy, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002) and mother tongue education has been shown to be more effective education in a second language (Heugh, 2002; Rademeyer, 2005)

Despite the previously mentioned disadvantages of EMI, earlier studies have also emphasized numerous benefits in learning language and academic content simultaneously (Cenoz, 2009; Genesee, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 2005). Most recently, Dearden (2014) conducted a study, on behalf of the British Council, with participants from 55 different countries. The preliminary results of this study indicated that EMI is believed to not only develop language learning skills, but to also improve knowledge of a target culture, and to open up possibilities for students to work and study abroad. Teachers participating in this study believed EMI is "*a way to improve communication, to exchange ideas and create relations between countries, a way of facilitating world peace*" (p. 4). In other words, despite the more negative side-effects of EMI in terms of, for instance, classroom interaction and workload, EMI does appear to achieve the desired results in terms of internationalisation.

It is therefore worth exploring ways in which the negative implications of EMI can be minimized and the benefits of English-medium instruction can be maximized. This may mean adopting a different didactic approach when teaching in English, taking into account students' linguistic limitations and shortened attention span also in the development phase of curriculum design. As the Dearden (2014, p. 6) also indicates:

*"EMI (English-medium instruction) might well involve changing from a teacher-led style to a more interactive dynamic, and yet few teachers had considered the idea that EMI was not simply a matter of translating course material and slides from L1 to L2. At the very least, that teacher will surely need to be able to handle the English language, but they will also need to present concepts and ideas to students of various L1s, negotiate input and check comprehension while taking account of all the cultural differences in the room."*

In short, English-medium instruction requires more than just a translation of existing L1 material. Lecturers require different competencies and an alternative didactic approach as well as adequate command of the instructional languages. Additionally, they need to understand and be able to deal with the complexities and demands of teaching academic content through a second language (Marsh & Laitinen, 2005).

The present study aims to provide more insights into these issues.

### 1.3 Purpose and objectives of the present study

It is yet to be determined whether the effects and implications of EMI described in existing literature also apply to the teaching staff and student population at THUAS. At present THUAS does not have an EMI policy or a clear set of guidelines for the introduction, design, and instruction of EMI modules. English taught programmes appear to be implemented without consideration for the possible effects this may have on teaching practices and student learning, and the quality of education in general. However, previous studies, such as Grift, Meijer, and van der Salm (2012), have emphasized the importance of taking the opinions and experiences of these stakeholders into account when further developing internationalisation policy in terms of curriculum development, didactic approaches, testing, and staff support for English-medium instruction.

The present study is a pilot aimed at exploring the effects of a change in instructional language from native Dutch to non-native English on both teaching and learning. It sets out to investigate what the implications of EMI are for the teaching practices of lecturers and whether or not teaching EM courses requires a different set of competencies and didactic methods. From a student perspective, this pilot study aims to bring to light the advantages and disadvantages of EMI, and to explore whether EMI is equally efficient in transferring academic content as instruction in the mother tongue.

These data will then be used to offer suggestions for the design, planning, and instruction of individual EM modules and EM bachelor degree programmes so that these can be implemented as effectively as possible within THUAS curricula, while maintaining the desired quality of education.

The main question this pilot sets out to answer is:

► **What are the possible implications of English-medium instruction for the teaching practice of lecturers and the learning process and outcomes of students at THUAS?**

This central question is divided into six sub-questions:

1. What differences do Dutch lecturers experience between Dutch-medium and English-medium instruction?
2. What differences do Dutch students experience between Dutch-medium and English-medium instruction?
3. What are the perceived benefits of English-medium instruction at THUAS?
4. What are the perceived disadvantages of English-medium instruction at THUAS?
5. Is EMI as effective in transferring academic content knowledge as L1 instruction for native speakers of Dutch?
6. Which internal factors (related to students and teachers) and external factors (organisational) influence the perceived effectiveness of EMI?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the main question and subsequent sub-questions, the present research design adopted a mixed-method approach which was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

### 2.1 Qualitative data collection

#### 2.1.1 Semi-structured face-to-face interviews

In order to explore the views, experiences, and motivations of both the THUAS student population and teaching staff in relation to EMI, the qualitative data collection in this pilot started with semi-structured face-to-face interviews with THUAS lecturers teaching an English-taught subject course and THUAS students who followed this course.

Based on existing literature, the topics discussed in these interviews were: workload, interaction, quality, motivation, comprehension, and language proficiency.

#### Respondents

The student interviews were held with first-year students of the Bachelor Degree Programme Marketing (Commercial Economics, CE), of the faculty Business, Finance and Marketing at THUAS. CE is a Dutch-taught Bachelor programme, but students do receive English language instruction in the first three years of the programme. In addition to formal English language training, this year's first-year CE students were introduced to an English-taught subject course, Intercultural Competencies (IC). In this six-week English-taught programme, materials and instructions are in English, but students are allowed to communicate in Dutch.

The academic year at THUAS is divided into four terms. In their first year, at the end of the second term, CE students choose a stream: Marketing and Sales (MS) or Marketing, Media and Experience (MME). MME students follow the module IC in the third term (February to April). MS students are offered the course in the fourth term (April to June). The lecturers teaching the IC modules normally teach their subjects in Dutch, apart from one lecturer who is a native speaker of English.

Thirteen student interviews and five lecturer interviews took place in March and April of 2015. Student participants were invited to take part in an interview during one of their IC lectures. Some students were also personally invited to participate in order to achieve maximum variation sampling. In the end, the group of student interviewees was less varied than initially desired. Of the thirteen student respondents eight were male and five were female. Six respondents had had prior experience with English-medium instruction, either through experience abroad or previous English-taught programmes of study. Three of the interviewed students had parents with immigrant backgrounds.

Students' levels of proficiency in English were also taken into account. Secondary education is generally a good indicator of students' entry levels of English. According to the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), an international system used to describe foreign language proficiency, students who have obtained a Dutch HAVO secondary school diploma are expected to have a B1 level of English (B1+ for speaking and conversation skills). Students who have completed Dutch VWO level are expected to have a B2 level of proficiency in English and students of the Dutch MBO programme should have at least an A2 level (Eindtermen havo/vwo, 2015)

Initially, the present research design set out to interview sixteen students. However, saturation started to occur after approximately ten interviews and additional participants no longer provided additional

insights. For this reason, we stopped collecting data after thirteen interviews. This is fairly consistent with previous studies which have found that in homogeneous groups, saturation often occurs around twelve participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Latham, 2013).

Since the number of lecturers teaching IC were limited, all three lecturers involved were interviewed. Two additional lecturers involved in EMI at CE were also interviewed. These two lecturers provide English-taught modules in year 3 of the degree programme. As previously mentioned four out of five lecturers interviewed are native speakers of Dutch. One is native speaker of English. All lecturers have at least ten years' teaching experience, and have international work or teaching experience and/or a proficiency certificate at C1 level, or have undergone formal training in English-medium instruction.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. These data were then analysed and interpreted by means of inductive coding (Boeije, 2005).

### 2.1.2 Lesson observations

Following the semi-structured interviews, direct observation was used to establish whether the themes and information that arose from the interviews are also reflected in a classroom setting, an added value also noted by Dörnyei (2007). The observations were structured and nonparticipant in nature: the observer in no way participated in lesson activities, but did use a pre-established observation protocol (Dörnyei, 2007).

A total of five observations were held with the three different lecturers who taught the module IC in term 4; two native speakers of Dutch and one native speaker of English. Due to the limited number of observations and the lack of a suitable control group, the lesson observation data were only used for a more holistic and general comparison with the interview and survey findings.

As mentioned before, the observer made use of an observation protocol and monitored, among other things, how often attendees spoke Dutch or English, who gave which types of answers, and in which language. Other focus points included the general English proficiency of both students and teachers and didactic methods used by the lecturer, such as use of visual support, student encouragement, correction of language errors, methods of illustration, and repetition of answers.

### 2.2 Quantitative data collection

Finally, in order to examine the effects of EMI on student learning and their perceptions of the instruction offered, a questionnaire was administered to all first-year CE students at THUAS. MME students were administered the survey in the first lesson after finishing the EM module (week 1 of term 4). Because the term was coming to an end and there were no later opportunities to administer the survey in a classroom setting, MS students were asked to complete the questionnaire in the last two weeks of term 4. This means that the MS students had not yet finished their EM module. However, IC academic content is presented in the first four weeks of the module and the final two lessons are reserved for final presentations, so this adaptation in survey scheduling was not expected to affect the outcomes.

The questionnaire was made up of 34 multiple choice items and four-open ended items (see appendix 3), measuring lecture comprehension by means of self-assessment. A similar method was adopted in Hellekjaer (2010) who, supported by various earlier studies (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Oscarson, 1997; Marian, Blumenfeld, & Kaushanskaya, 2007; Ross, 1998) indicated "there is good reason to expect the scores from self-assessment items and indices to provide useful and valid comparison of student lecture comprehension difficulties in English and the L1" (p. 16).

The questionnaire was based on both existing studies in EMI (Hellekjaer, 2010) as well as the outcomes of the student interviews. The questionnaire was designed in Dutch so as to avoid any second language interference. Respondents were asked to assess their lecture comprehension through questions regarding their understanding of vocabulary, intelligibility of lectures and satisfaction about speaking rate. The questionnaire also included variables such as educational background, prior experience with EMI, and motivation for EM courses. Finally, a number of items were designed to elicit whether and how students compensate for the use of English, as reported by Airey and Linder (2006).

To ensure a high response rate, questionnaires were administered digitally in a normal classroom environment during one of their English Business Communication lessons (the module in which students receive formal English language training). Data collection was supervised by the students' Business English lecturers and a representative from the research group. In the end, 140 students completed the questionnaire, out of a total of 219 enrolled students. With a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5, the results obtained can be considered representative of the entire year 1 student population at CE. Further statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The group comprised 61 per cent male respondents and 39 per cent female respondents. This means that the female research population was slightly overrepresented in the present study, because out of all first-year CE students, 34 per cent is female and 66 per cent is male. The native language (L1) for the vast majority of respondents, 92.1 per cent, is Dutch. A considerable number of respondents (65 per cent) majored in Marketing, Media and Experience (MME), the remaining respondents (35 per cent) majored in Marketing and Sales. Since Marketing & Sales students account for 45 per cent of all first-year students, they are slightly underrepresented in this data set. However, statistical analysis showed no significant differences between MME and MS students, so the results can still be considered representative.

Of the eight classes surveyed, three received their EM instruction from a native speaker and five received instruction from lecturers who have Dutch as their native language. It is worth noting that the majority of the respondents (71.5 per cent) had had no prior experience with English-medium instruction. Some respondents (17.5 per cent) had previously received instruction in English on subject and/or modular level. The remaining respondents had either studied in an English-speaking country (2.2 per cent) or had followed a completely English-taught secondary school programme or degree programme, such as IBMS or the International Baccalaureate.

## 2.2 Methodological Challenges and Issues

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative design are appropriate for the exploratory nature of this pilot study. However, some methodological issues and challenges did arise in the course of this study, some of which deserve particular attention.

First of all, the data in this study mainly reflect respondents self-perceived differences between EMI and DMI and students' self-assessed linguistic competence. Certainly respondents were asked to answer the questions as honestly as possible, but there is no way of assuring these outcomes are fully representative of actual behaviour or performance. Respondents could have been influenced by other variables such as their general motivation for the English-taught subject, their general opinion of the lecturer or class, or other personal circumstances. A possible solution to this problem would be to measure respondents' actual behaviour, comprehension and performance by more extensive observations and by testing students' learning results and language proficiency.

Secondly, the present study lacks a suitable control group. This means that it is not possible to compare the actual behaviour and performance of both lecturers and students in a DMI setting to that in an EMI setting. Although the student survey was adapted accordingly and required respondents to compare their behaviour and performance in EMI to that of DMI, an experiment with both a control group and an experimental group would perhaps allow for firmer conclusions.

Thirdly, the nature of the English-taught IC module is something that should be taken into account. The module runs for a fairly short period of time, namely six weeks, and although instruction and course materials are in English, students are allowed to communicate in Dutch. A fully English-taught module may present students with different or additional challenges.

### 3. Results

In the following section, the results of the current research are presented in reference to the following sub-questions:

1. What differences do Dutch lecturers experience between Dutch-medium and English-medium instruction?
2. What differences do Dutch students experience between Dutch-medium and English-medium instruction?
3. What are the perceived benefits of English-medium instruction at THUAS?
4. What are the perceived disadvantages of English-medium instruction at THUAS?
5. Is EMI as effective in transferring academic content knowledge as L1 instruction for native speakers of Dutch?
6. Which internal factors (related to students and teachers) and external factors (organisational) influence the perceived effectiveness of EMI?

During the coding process, fragments were given an identification number, for instance 14.3. These numbers have also been added to citations in this article. The first number refers to the personal identification number of the interviewee. The number after the decimal point refers to the corresponding fragment. To illustrate, number 14.3 refers to interview 14, fragment 3. Due to the fact that interviews were held in Dutch, the used quotations were translated into English as literally as possible.

#### 3.1 Differences between EMI and DMI according to lecturers

The results in this section are primarily based on the outcomes of the five lecturer interviews held. Lecturers mainly noted differences in terms of preparation and instruction of EM modules. The differences in *preparation* can be summarized in three themes: exposure to English, course materials, lesson planning.

##### 3.1.1 Lesson planning

According to interviewed lecturers, the most prominent difference between English-medium instruction and Dutch-medium instruction is that EM lectures require additional planning time. Lecturers indicate they spend more time looking up relevant terms and concepts. Some lecturers also try to anticipate possible student questions and prepare suitable responses, more so than for Dutch-taught modules.

*“I try to make sure that everything I want to discuss is actually correct. I go over the terminology, vocabulary lists etc. Quite often the group consists of Dutch students, and then I contemplate what they might ask. That way I do some extra preparation.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.6

Moreover, lecturers also noted that it is often not possible, nor sufficient, to simply translate a Dutch module into English:

*“It’s not like you teach the exact same lesson. You’re using a different medium of instruction and so you need to adapt parts of your lesson accordingly.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.10

*“I wanted to give the course more of an international feel. We felt that the original PowerPoint slides were very much aimed at the Netherlands. I try to adopt a broader perspective than just the Netherlands, especially when talking about cultural differences.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 2.5

### 3.1.2 Exposure to English

Another recurring theme in the interviews was the so-called English mind-set. Particularly lecturers who are not regularly exposed to the English language intentionally increase their exposure prior an EM module, for instance by watching English news programmes and reading English books or articles:

*“I actually have far too little experience using English in a professional setting. So when I’m about to start teaching in English again, I try to get back into that mind-set: reading a lot of English books, going to the library, listening to and watching BBC. Just so I can expose myself to English.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.3

### 3.1.3 Course materials

Finding suitable materials does not appear to be an issue for the lecturers involved in teaching IC. In fact, according to most lecturers, it is actually easier to find relevant course materials in English than in Dutch. This is not surprising considering the international content of the module. The same is true for the Marketing lecturer interviewed. However, the fifth lecturer did raise an issue with finding suitable course materials:

*“I invested a lot of time in developing the syllabus. First finding suitable materials in books, and then writing numerous calculations. I do this in Dutch as well, but then you don’t really pay attention to the language. It just takes longer before you have calculations that are linguistically correct in English.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 4.7

Despite the fact that there may be plenty of English course books available, it may prove to be difficult at times to find materials that correlate with the Dutch term system. For some subjects, the books available are far too extensive and expensive to be used for a six-week teaching programme only. The aforementioned additional activities amount to a considerable additional workload for the lecturers involved in EMI: for some lecturers, teaching in English can mean 30 to 50 per cent more preparation time.

In terms of *instruction*, a distinction can be made between the differences lecturers notice among their students, and the differences they notice in their own teaching abilities.

### 3.1.4 Differences among students

All lecturers notice a difference in the level of interaction when teaching in English as opposed to Dutch. Generally, students are said to be less active, appear to ask fewer questions, and seem to be less responsive to questions:

*"I get the idea they are more reluctant to respond. There are a few people that are very proficient, who probably grew up speaking English, or who went to an international school. So they don't have any problems communicating in English. But the people who do find it difficult, or are scared to make mistakes, I feel those people are generally more reticent."*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.14

One lecturer actually decided move back to Dutch-medium instruction after noticing English-medium instruction that English-medium instruction was affecting student participation and their understanding of academic content:

*"I noticed it in this class who kept their mouths shut for four or five weeks, and when I changed to Dutch, it improved. This week, they had to work on a commercial, and I finally saw the motivation in those students. I thought: Wow!"*

QUOTE LECTURER 2.26

Resorting back to Dutch made students more active, motivated, and involved with course content. Another lecturer notes that their third-year students seem to be more focused when receiving English-medium instruction:

*"Yes, it might sound strange, but for some reason it seems as if they need to be more concentrated in order to follow what you're saying. This means they are distracted less easily. That they need make more of an effort. But this is really only an assumption."*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.13

However, this increase in concentration was not necessarily observed by the lecturers of the first-year students:

*"I think it's easier for students to tune out faster, because they really have to focus. If they're a bit tired or bored it might be easier for them to stop listening. So yeah, I think that will definitely affect how effective your message is getting across."*

QUOTE LECTURER 1.2

Whether manifested in an increased level of concentration or a reduced level of involvement or engagement with academic content, interviewed lecturers generally notice an increase in cognitive workload among their students,.

### 3.1.5 Teaching abilities

In terms of their teaching abilities, lecturers notice various differences between teaching in English and teaching in Dutch. Several lecturers indicated that they experienced difficulties in explaining content matter in different ways, and that this sometimes makes them more repetitive.

*"I have to say I feel somewhat limited. I try to explain academic content briefly and often need resort to repetitions. Also because at a certain point I'm drained and my vocabulary isn't extensive enough to explain things in 3 different ways."*

QUOTE LECTURER 4.11

Lecturers also find it more difficult to use humour in the classroom appropriately, and a non-IC lecturer also involved in supervising and assessing theses, experienced difficulties providing specific feedback on student work:

*“Yes, formulating feedback mostly. Reading is not an issue; you’re used to the language. But explaining what you think is difficult. Using rubrics makes this relatively easy, but not all programmes of studies use grading rubrics. And without a rubric it’s quite difficult to explain why something is a 6 and not a 7.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.23

This issue with English feedback on student work was only noted by one lecturer. Quite possibly because the three lecturers teaching IC mainly received student assignments in Dutch. The fourth lecturer teaches Financial Management and therefore only marked the outcomes of financial calculations.

These aforementioned differences between EM and DM teaching and preparation also affect lecturers’ performance in the classroom. One lecturer explains:

*“I don’t have a natural confidence (when teaching in English). Not that I’m shaking or anything, but I do, in a way, think ‘darn it! Part of the time you are thinking about language, which means there’s less time to think about content.’”*

QUOTE LECTURER 4.17

Another lecturer notes that teaching in English is more exhaustive than teaching in Dutch:

*“Yes, I do notice that when I’ve been teaching for 4 hours, in English, which I do on Tuesdays, that for some reason it drains my energy more than teaching in Dutch.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 2.15

## 3.2 Differences between EMI and DMI according to students.

### 3.2.1 English proficiency and importance of EMI

Before outlining the differences respondents experience between following DM courses and EM courses, the following section first summarises students’ self-perceived language proficiency and their overall opinion on the importance of EMI.



Figure 1: How often do you make use of English language skills?

As can be seen in figure 1, respondents most frequently make use of receptive skills (listening and reading). With a mean of 4.5 (1 representing ‘never’ and 5 representing ‘daily’), the average respondent listens to English multiple times a week. Reading skills are put into practice slightly less: the average respondent reads English texts almost on a weekly basis (3.88). Productive skills ‘speaking’ and ‘writing’ are used considerably less. With means of 2.98 for speaking skills, and 3.19 for writing skills, respondents appear to use their English productive skills only occasionally or on a monthly basis respectfully.

Despite the fact that respondents do not always seem to use their English productive skills, figure 2 illustrates - with means of 3.21 and higher – that the students still deem their general language proficiency sufficient.

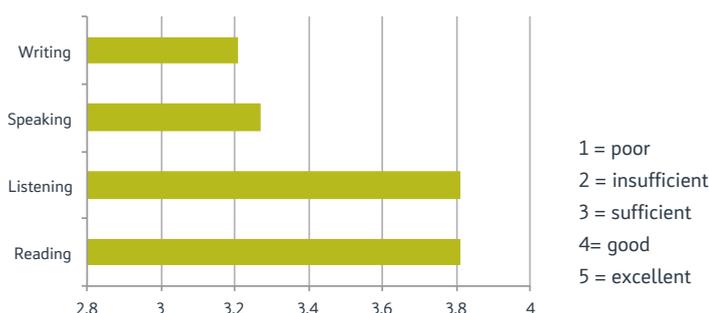


Figure 2: How would you rate your English language proficiency?

Figure 2 above also highlights a distinction between students’ self-perceived proficiency in writing and speaking on the one hand, and listening and reading on the other. Statistical analysis shows that this difference between receptive and productive skills is significant. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (63.5 per cent) believe their general language proficiency is sufficient to follow fully English-taught modules .

### 3.2.2 Differences between EMI and DMI according to students

In order to determine what differences students experience between Dutch-medium and English-medium instruction, respondents were asked to compare their performance, classroom behaviour, and didactic needs in EM courses with those in DM courses through a set of 15 statements. Students had to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale how EMI compared to DMI. One of the statements respondents were presented with is illustrated below:

*Doing assignments in English takes ..... time as / than doing assignments in Dutch*

- Much more
- More
- As much
- Less
- A lot less

These 15 statements generated a considerable amount of data. In order to see whether the 15 separate statements showed any underlying correlations, the data set was subjected to an exploratory factor analysis. The factor analysis identified three correlating dimensions, each comprising of multiple statements.

### Dimension 1: Workload

1. Comprehensive reading of English course materials takes .... time as/than reading Dutch course materials.
2. Doing assignments in English takes ..... time as / than doing assignments in Dutch.
3. I need ... examples and explanations in English-taught lectures as / than in Dutch-taught lectures.
4. I need ... visual support (for instance PowerPoint) at English-taught lectures as/than Dutch-taught lectures.
5. Following English-taught lectures requires .... concentration as/than following Dutch-taught lectures.

### Dimension 2: Comprehension

1. English-taught lectures are ..... intelligible as/than Dutch-taught lectures.
2. I understand .... of the content in English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.
3. I understand .... of the words and expressions English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.
4. We explore the academic content in .... detail in English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.

### Dimension 3: Participation

1. I am ... satisfied about the pace of speaking in English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.
2. I participate ..... actively at English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.
3. I ask ... questions DURING English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.
4. I feel ... confident to ask questions during English-taught lectures as/than in Dutch-taught lectures.

Each of the dimensions had a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value close to one (.847), which means the identified dimensions can be considered distinct and reliable. A highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) Bartlett's test result indicates that the analysis is also appropriate.

Figure 3 summarises the data in dimension 1: workload for English-taught modules in comparison to Dutch-taught modules.

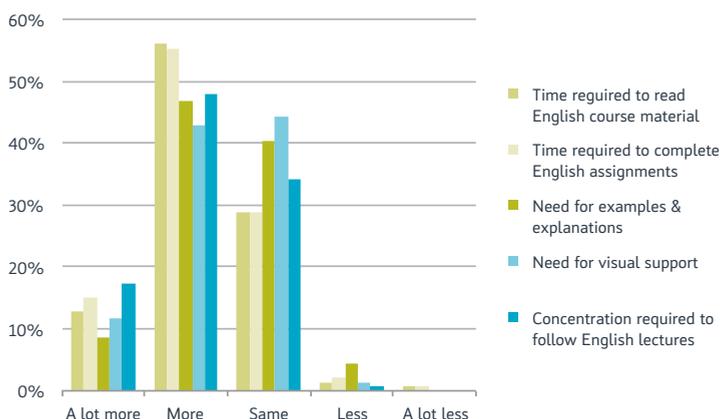


Figure 3: dimension 1 – workload EMI in comparison to DMI

As can be seen from the figure above, the majority of students experience a (much) higher workload in English-taught modules than in Dutch-taught modules: 68 per cent of respondents indicate

that reading English course materials takes (much) more time than reading Dutch materials, 70.3 per cent of respondents say completing English assignments takes (much) more time, and the majority of respondents also express an increased need for examples (55.4 per cent), visual support (54.4 per cent), and concentration (65.2 per cent)

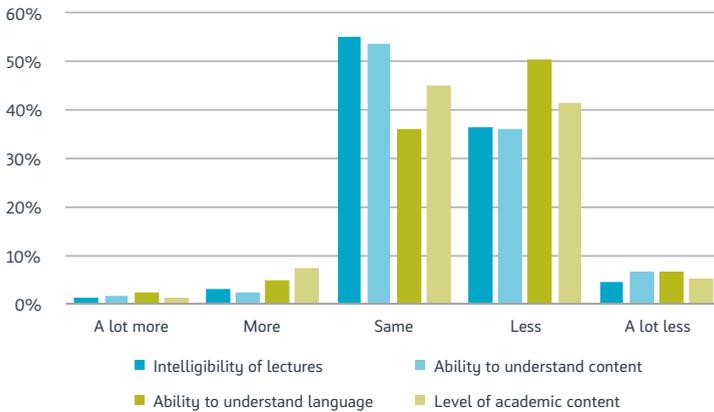


Figure 4: dimension 2 – comprehension EMI in comparison to DMI

The second dimension, *comprehension*, combines the intelligibility of the lecture, students' ability to understand academic content and language (terms and concepts), and the detail in which the subject matter is explored.

On average, just under half of the respondents experience comprehension differences between English-taught lectures and Dutch-taught lectures. English-taught lectures are considered (much) less intelligible by 40.5 per cent of the respondents. In terms of academic content, 42.6 per cent of the respondents believe they are able understand (a lot) less of the content presented and 46.4 per cent feel that in EM lectures subjects are explored in (a lot) less detail than in DM lectures. More than half of the respondents (56.9 per cent) experience problems in understanding terms and concepts used in EMI.

*Participation*, the third and last dimension, is represented in figure 6 below. The aforementioned issues in workload and comprehension do not seem to affect respondents' questioning behaviour or self-perceived level of participation greatly.

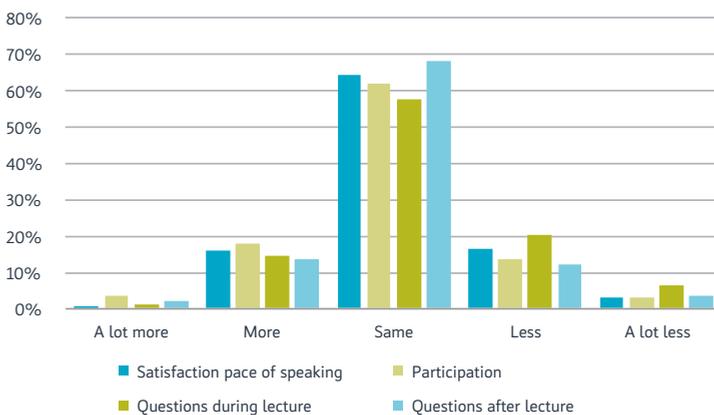


Figure 5: Student participation during EM lectures in comparison to DM lectures

### 3.3 What are the perceived benefits of English-medium instruction at THUAS?

English-medium instruction is unequivocally considered important by first year CE students at THUAS. Students taking part in the interview round, all listed several advantages of receiving English-medium instruction. Responses varied from 'beneficial to personal development' to 'improves chances of working internationally'. Figure 6 presents the advantages of EMI in the eyes of both student interviewees and survey respondents. The larger a topic is presented, the more frequently it was mentioned:



Figure 6: Advantages of EMI based on student interviews and open survey question

As can be seen in figure 6, students strongly believe that EMI improves their prospects for the future, especially their job perspectives, both at home and internationally. Student interviewees explained that CE graduates are likely to end up working for international organisations because their core subject, Marketing and Commerce, is generally a very international field of work. The following two quotes exemplify the extent to which interviewed students consider EMI important for their future prospects:

*“Preparation for what’s to come. You know that every company is bound to work internationally, so you’re definitely going to need it in the future.”*

QUOTE STUDENT 2.32

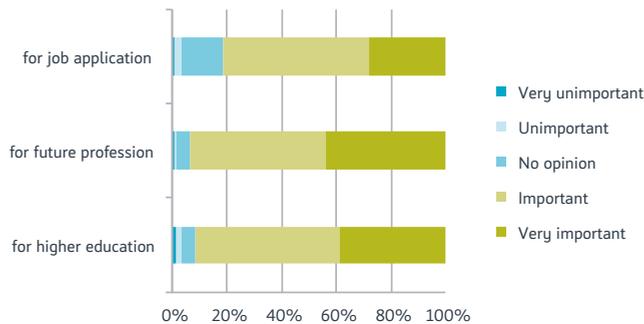
*“English is of course the number one world language, so if a person is proficient in writing, reading and understanding the language, I think it’s a ‘must’ for companies to hire that person.”*

QUOTE STUDENT 3.37

Respondents believe English language proficiency is crucial in finding a good job. They also indicate that EMI can serve as preparation for internships abroad or exchange programmes. By following English-taught modules, they get used to communicating in English.

Besides the advantages that EMI offers for the future, students also believe English-taught programmes are enriching. The module IC allows them to put into practice their English skills, helping them to improve their general English proficiency and expand their vocabulary. Additionally, EMI contributes to the development of their intercultural communication skills, which is useful for both communication abroad and today’s multicultural society.

Figure 7 below outlines, just how important survey respondents believe EMI is for three particular areas: higher education, future profession, and the job application process. The graph not only shows that respondents generally believe that English language proficiency an important part of higher education (91.5 per cent, (very) important), but that it is also relevant in their professional practice (93.4 per cent, (very) important), and that it is likely to increase their chances of finding employment (81.2 per cent, (very) important). However, only 28.8 per cent of the respondents would actually want to have a job in which English is the official language of communication.



**Figure 7: How important do you believe English language proficiency is for...**

Similar findings arose from the lecturer interviews. All interviewed lecturers emphasize the importance of immersion in the English language in relation to EMI, which allows students to improve and expand their English language skills. Being familiar with terms and concepts specific to students' field of work (Marketing) also proved to be a recurrent item. One lecturer explains:

*"I believe that the major advantage for students is that communicating in English becomes easier for them. Regular exposure to English whilst studying allows them to become more proficient in the language, and helps them get used to conversing in English. Our students often end up in an international setting, so this would definitely make a career at an international organization more accessible. This would be the major benefit."*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.26

### 3.4 What are the perceived disadvantages of English-medium instruction at THUAS?

Figure 8 shows an overview of the disadvantages related to EMI in the eyes of the respondents of the student survey.



**Figure 8: Perceived disadvantages of EMI according to students**

As can be seen from this word cloud, the main two disadvantages are 'workload' and 'loss of academic content'. Respondents feel that English-taught programmes require a larger time investment, are more difficult, demand more concentration and cost more energy. Students also feel that they are able to process and understand less of the academic content and fear that this might result in decreased academic performance. The findings of this open section in the student survey is fairly consistent with the student interviews. It is worth noting, however, that although the outcomes of the student survey are quite firm, the opinions in the student interviews are rather mixed: the number of students experiencing difficulties in EMI is equal to the number that is not experiencing difficulties. There is one problem, however, which both survey and interview respondents appear to agree on: understanding terms and concepts in English.

### 3.4.1 Loss of academic content

The underlying reasons for a perceived loss of academic content may lie in students' linguistic limitations, but also in the fact that for the majority of survey respondents (70 per cent), IC is their first English-taught module. Besides general language proficiency issues, students might still have to get accustomed to receiving instructions in English. This may also affect their general comprehension. Additionally, in the interviews students are quite critical when it comes to the language proficiency of their lecturers. Four of the five interviewed lecturers are non-natives of English. Student interviewees indicate this might affect the transfer of academic content:

*"Because of the accent it can sometimes be a bit difficult to understand. Then they (students) don't understand, and they are afraid to ask, so they don't get an explanation. I think this might reduce the quality of the lesson."*

QUOTE STUDENT 3.25

*"I think the lessons are slower. There's less content than in Dutch. In Dutch things are faster, and then you finish quicker as well. In English the content is often explained in multiple ways."*

QUOTE STUDENT 5.19

Some students express a certain frustration with the fact that an instructor is not a (near) native speaker of English.

*"Make sure EM modules are taught by experienced lecturers, and not by people who do not completely master the language."*

STUDENT RESPONSE OPEN QUESTION SURVEY

As a result, the student might start focusing more on the lecturer's pronunciation than on the academic content. Students that deem their lecturers' English proficiency insufficient often point towards a Dutch accent, or they believe there is too much word-searching. Grammatical errors are considered less important, but students do generally seem to set very high standards for lecturers' English language proficiency. However, there are also students who prefer being taught by a non-native speaker of English:

*"It was an advantage that the lecturer wasn't a native speaker; this meant that the speaking pace was somewhat slower and that the English wasn't perfect".*

QUOTE STUDENT 9.20

The student survey shows that students generally believe that the lecturers' English proficiency of their lecturer affects their personal performance in an EM module (51.4 per cent agrees and 24.3 per cent completely agrees).

### 3.4.2 Workload

Student interviewees indicate that, overall, the manner in which they prepare EM lectures is no different from their preparation for DM lectures. The only thing they do differently is look up unfamiliar words. Nevertheless, the majority of student interviewees indicate that EM modules do come with an increased workload, because course materials and lectures are all in English. Reading English course materials and assignment descriptions add to their workload, and students also find writing in English to be more strenuous and time-consuming. For this reason, only three interviewed students chose to complete their assignments in English. What students consider particularly difficult in writing in English is formulating grammatically correct sentences:

*"The first week I tried to do the assignments in English, but it just takes so long to make the sentences run properly. That really didn't work for me"*

QUOTE STUDENT 10.15

Similar to the findings in the lecturer interviews, students also indicated that English-medium instruction requires more focus and concentration:

*"In Dutch I can sometimes just doze off a bit, but in English I really need to be fully focused."*

QUOTE STUDENT 10.16

### 3.4.3. Interaction

The IC lectures are interactive in nature. Classes consist of 25 to 30 students, creating enough room for students to ask questions. A small majority of interviewees notice a reduction in the amount of interaction during EM lectures, despite the fact that students are also allowed to speak Dutch. Interviewees believe their fellow students might have difficulties speaking English because they are afraid to make mistakes, creating a barrier for classroom interaction.

*"I think there are people who are scared. Who think they can't speak English properly."*

QUOTE STUDENT 6.15

Despite the fact that students are not assessed on their language skills, and that lecturers do not correct mistakes, students seem to remain reticent to ask and answer questions. Interviewees indicate that students are not necessarily afraid of what their lecturer might think, but that they fear the opinions of their fellow students:

*"At the Business Game people made fun of me several times because my English is poor."*

QUOTE STUDENT 9.7

*"I think it's mostly a confidence issue. That they are scared, and that they think other students will make fun of them if they make a mistake."*

QUOTE STUDENT 6.43

One class even went back to Dutch, because students felt an English-taught module was too difficult and too strenuous. Students of that particular class requested the lecturer teach the module in Dutch. An interviewee indicates that after this change, they noticed an increased interaction.

*“When we switched to Dutch, you could see the class getting more involved. Everyone was able to contribute. I guess in Dutch there is less of a barrier.”*

QUOTE STUDENT 3.19

The disadvantages noted by student respondents are similar to the differences experienced by lecturers: EMI is considered more laborious and there is less interaction during lectures. However, where lecturers generally indicate they cover the same amount of subject matter, students do perceive a loss of academic content.

When asked which strategies they use to overcome difficulties in EMI lecture comprehension, survey respondents listed the following:

Strategy	Percentage
Looking up words in a(n) (online) dictionary	74.3 %
Asking a fellow student or friend	64.3 %
Asking questions during the lecture	59.3 %
Reading the English course materials multiple times	57.9 per cent

**Table 1: Strategies that the majority of respondents use to overcome issues in EM lecture comprehension**

Less frequently used strategies included consulting Dutch course materials (32.9 per cent) and ask questions after class (31.4 per cent).

### **3.5 Is EMI as effective in transferring academic content knowledge as L1 instruction for native speakers of Dutch?**

Previous studies report evidence of a loss of academic content in English-taught programmes for a variety of reasons, including a reduced speaking pace and lecture comprehension difficulties for students.

As previously mentioned, lecturers interviewed in the present study, generally indicate that they are able to cover the exact same amount of academic content in English-taught modules as in Dutch-taught modules.

*“I believe this is the fourth year that I’m teaching this module. The past here years, I taught it in Dutch, and now I teach it in English. The structure and the amount of academic content is exactly the same.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.9

There is only one lecturer who is unable to cover the same amount of academic content, because they spend a considerable amount of time introducing subject-related terminology (Financial Management) in class. One explanation could be that students are less familiar with the terminology of this particular subject. The other two subjects, Intercultural Competencies and Marketing, are more internationally oriented and many of the terms used in Dutch are similar or even identical to those in English.

Although lecturers believe the academic content delivered is the same regardless of instructional language, some student respondents do perceive a loss of academic content. One third (31.8 per cent) of survey respondents believe they learn less in an English-taught module than if the same module had been taught in Dutch (table 2).

Name	Percentage
Completely disagree	11,4%
Disagree	27,1%
Neither agree nor disagree	30,7%
Agree	27,9%
Completely agree	2,9%
N	140

**Table 2: I learn less in an English-taught module than if I had followed the same module in Dutch**

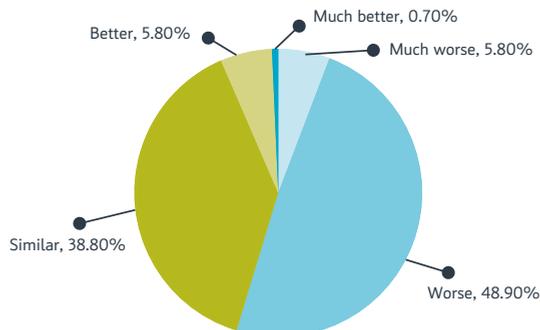
This perceived decrease in the amount of academic content transferred, might be a result of lecturers having to spend extra time making sure students understand the EM instructed matter, as the following quote illustrates:

*“I know I’m very aware of trying not to speak too quickly or explaining things quickly a second way. If I think it’s a difficult concept or a difficult word, I’ll explain it again right afterwards in a different way, using another word. And mainly pace, you know, just kind of looking around at their faces: “do they get it or do they look puzzled”*

QUOTE LECTURER 1.4

When asked how much of the EM lectures they were able to understand, interviewees mentioned percentages ranging from 70 to 100. One student indicated they understood less than 50 per cent of EM lectures. This shows that a substantial number of students experience loss of academic content in EM lectures.

In addition, the majority of student survey respondents also believe they are unable to deliver the same quality of work in English as they would in Dutch (see figure 9 below)



**Figure 9: Quality of English course work (exams, assignments etc.) in comparison to Dutch**

These comprehension difficulties, both in terms of language and subject matter, may be a result of students' English language proficiency. Most students enter their Bachelor programme with a B1 (intermediate) level of English, the end level for HAVO students in secondary education. However, the academic content used in the module is taken from sources aimed at native speakers of English. Data from both the student interviews and the open questions in the student survey show that students fear their results may suffer as a result of a change in instructional language:

*"In English I'm afraid I won't follow and understand much. I think this might negatively affect grades and study progress."*

7.23 PERSONAL INTERVIEW STUDENT, 31 MARCH 2015

### 3.6 Which internal factors (related to students and teachers) and external factors (organisation) influence the perceived effectiveness of EMI?

Lesson observations, student and lecturer interviews and a quantitative student survey has brought to light several issues in EM lecturing for both lecturers and students.

Student respondents were asked, both during the interviews and in the survey, which factors or adaptations would make EMI more effective. The most prominent point of improvement is related to improving language skills, both in terms of English language training as well as an increased focus on English language skills during EMI lectures.

Figure 10 below summarises the suggestions provided by students. The larger the circle, the more frequent answers within this category were listed. Each of the four categories will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



Figure 10: What suggestions do you have for English-medium instruction?

#### 3.6.1. Organisational level

On an external, organisational level, students indicate that some subjects are more suitable for EM instruction than other subjects. Financial and mathematical subjects are preferably taught in Dutch, because respondents already consider these subjects to be difficult, as illustrated by the following quote.

*“In my opinion, subjects like Marketing and such could be offered in. So could MME, and IC. But real subjects, like financial and mathematical subjects are difficult, so I would prefer to keep these in Dutch”*

QUOTE STUDENT 11.9

The results of the student survey sheds additional light onto this matter. Figure 11 shows which first-year CE modules could be taught in English, according to survey respondents. The majority of students believe that the module Intercultural Competencies is suitable for English-medium instruction. Not surprising considering the module is already taught in English. Remarkable, however, is the fact that 42 per cent of respondents believe Marketing could be taught in English as well, followed by Marketing & Sales (31.9 per cent), Consumer Behaviour (30.4 per cent) and Marketing, Media & Experience (29.7 per cent).

Name	
1	Marketing (MKT)
2	Financial Management (FM)
3	Consumer Behaviour (CG)
4	Qualitative Market Research (MMO)
5	Supermarket project (SUM)
6	Business Plan (OOP)
7	Intercultural Competencies (IC)
8	Marketing, Media and Experience (MME)
9	Marketing and Sales (MS)
10	Study and career counselling (SLB)
11	Quantitative Market Research (KMO)
12	None

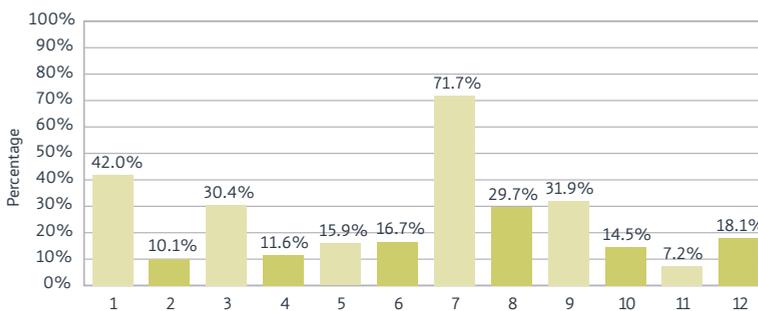


Figure 11: Which of the following modules are suitable for EMI?

Whether or not a subject is suitable for EMI depends on a variety of factors. According to the survey respondents, subjects that are internationally oriented (i.e. the corresponding terminology is predominantly English and academic content focuses on international trends and situations), are generally considered more suitable for EMI. In addition, the perceived academic level of a subject is also a con-

tributing factor. In general, the modules that score lowest in the graph above, are mostly modules that require students to do calculations and (statistical) analyses. Students indicate that these modules are already difficult in Dutch.

In terms of the place of EMI in the overall programme of study, the vast majority of respondents (76.6 per cent) believes that year 1 is the best time to start with EMI, followed by year 2 (18.1 per cent). Respondents go on to explain that it is best to start as soon as possible, so that students can get used to receiving instruction in a different language. However, they also indicate that EMI should slowly be introduced in the curriculum, with one step at a time, or that students should be allowed to choose whether they receive instruction in Dutch or in English.

In terms of internal factors (student and teacher-related), most suggestions are related to classroom interaction, followed by course materials provided, and reducing the barrier for students to communicate in English.

### 3.6.2 Classroom interaction

The most prominent suggestion in terms of classroom interaction, both in the student interviews and the student survey, is an increased focus on English language skills. One way to do this is by increasing the amount of English language instruction and by offering tutoring to students who are experiencing problems with the English language. An additional suggestion is to offer more opportunities to practice productive skills.

Lecturers also emphasise the importance of improving students' language proficiency. One lecturer comments:

*“Students’ English language proficiency really needs to be improved if we want them to follow IC in English. Or we should just consider keeping EM modules in year 3, as we are also doing now. Then students will have had more English language training. First-year students generally don’t have the skills to follow English-taught modules.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 2.30

According to student respondents, there should also be more focus on English language skills during EM lectures. At present, students generally do not receive support or feedback on their English. During the five lesson observations, a total of three corrections were made on student output in English, once on pronunciation and twice on grammar. The grammatical corrections are illustrated below:

<b>Student:</b>	I didn't written down.
<b>Docent 1:</b>	You didn't write down
<b>Student:</b>	I spend always money
<b>Docent 1:</b>	You always spend money.

Although students receive limited feedback on grammatical and pronunciation, lecturers did often repeat student answers. That way, words that may have been mispronounced by students were corrected indirectly by the lecturer.

This strategy of error correction, however, does not seem to be recognized by students and students clearly stress the relevance of language feedback in EM modules:

*“English language mistakes aren’t corrected. If that’s the case, then why not just design a solid Dutch programme.”*

QUOTE STUDENT 5.43

Lecturer’s language skills also seem to be a success factor in EMI: 75.7 per cent of respondents believe their performance in EMI is affected by the English language proficiency of their lecturer. Moreover, students appear to have high expectations when it comes to their lecturers’ English language proficiency:

*“For me personally, the lecturer’s language proficiency plays a huge part.”*

QUOTE STUDENT 1.21

Lecturers themselves also indicate that it is important for lecturers to be proficient in English, but they also unanimously agree that management should not pressure lecturers into teaching in English if they don’t want to:

*“You need to have a very solid basis in terms of English language proficiency. Motivation is also very important. Forcing lecturers to teach in English is not the way.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 3.16

Lecturers also indicate that the limited number of English-taught modules makes it more difficult for them to get into the habit of teaching in English:

*“I know teach an EM module 2 hours a week, for a period of six weeks. This fragmentation doesn’t really work. It’s very difficult to get into the flow.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 4.26

Lecturers who feel the need to improve their language skills indicate that immersion, for instance by taking a course in an English speaking country, is most effective:

*“The average courses here at THUAS, no matter how good they are, don’t give me the confidence I need to teach in English. I really need to be immersed in the language for certain time.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 4.5

### 3.6.3 Lower barrier

Finally, student respondents indicate that lecturers should look into ways to lower the threshold for students to communicate in English. Students are now often held back to speak English in a fear of making mistakes. Interviewed lecturers indicate that this is certainly an area of concern. A point that was raised multiple times, and which would stimulate student to communicate in English, is to try and increase the amount of foreign exchange students in the classroom:

*“We should move to a more internationalized classroom, with more students from partner universities abroad.”*

QUOTE LECTURER 5.20

Student respondents suggest rewarding those students who do their assignments in English. Since it increases the workload and is considered more difficult than doing assignments in Dutch, students feel they should be compensated for completing work in English where other students may take an easier route and do their work in Dutch.

### 3.6.4 Course materials

In terms of course materials offered, table 3 indicates which supplementary materials or other supportive tools survey respondents consider most helpful when receiving English-medium instruction.

Supplementary materials	Percentage
Vocabulary lists EN/DU – DU/EN for common terminology and expressions	54.7%
Feedback English language on assignments and speaking activities	64.7%
Content tutoring in English	18.7%
Content tutoring in Dutch	23.7%
Support in practicing English speaking skills	42.4%
(Supplementary) course materials in Dutch	36.0%
(Supplementary) course materials in English	44.6%
Making PowerPoint slides available beforehand	53.2%
Additional preparation time	27.3%
Other:	0.7%
N	139

**Table 3: Which of the following would help you overcome issues in EM lecture comprehension**

As can be seen from this table, content tutoring, either in Dutch or English, and additional preparation time are considered least helpful. However, providing feedback on the English language, offering a list with common terms and concepts, and providing PowerPoint slides prior to the lecture would help the majority of respondents.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The present study observed several implications of EMI for both teaching staff and students. The exploratory lecturer interviews yielded EMI-related disadvantages similar to those recorded in earlier studies (Vinke, 1995; Vinke, Snippe, Jochems, 1998), including linguistic limitations and added workload.

For students, the main issue appears to be ‘unfamiliar vocabulary’. Despite their self-acclaimed adequate levels of English proficiency, students tend to experience several areas of difficulty in EM lecture comprehension. These findings are consistent with the Norwegian students in Hellekjaar (2010). As Airey and Linder (2006) suggest, allowing more time for clarification of questions, either between lecturer and students, or on a peer to peer level, may help overcome these difficulties. Based on the student survey, asking questions to a lecturer and peer-to-peer questioning are in the top 3 of preferred strategies to overcome comprehension issues, so this suggestion is certainly worth considering. Additionally, student respondents in the present study indicate that getting more used to terms and concepts related to the subject, for instance by offering vocabulary lists, would also be helpful. These findings are similar to those in Hellekjaar (2010) who suggested lecturers allocate time to discuss relevant vocabulary prior to, during or after the lecture in order to increase lecture comprehension.

Students in the present study also indicated that the level of proficiency of their lecturers directly influences their academic performance, and over 40 per cent of respondents found EM lectures less intelligible than DM lectures. Similar effects have been registered in earlier studies. Hellekjaer (2010) for example also noted issues in lecture comprehension, which were mainly due to unclear pronunciation, stress and word segmentation by the lecturer.

The fact that all THUAS instructors need to have at least a C1 level of English in order to teach EMI classes, would imply that their English proficiency is more than sufficient to use in a classroom setting. Therefore, one might consider that Dutch students are overly critical about the English language proficiency of their lecturer. Earlier findings indeed show that home students tend to judge their lecturers' English language proficiency more harshly (Grift, Meijer, & van der Salm, 2012). The same researchers explain that pronunciation is a key factor in people's assessment of language proficiency. Dutch students will most likely assess the English language skills of a lecturer with a Dutch accent more harshly than an EM lecturer with a different foreign accent, because "judgements of language proficiency tend to be almost exclusively based on subjective impressions of pronunciation". However, "a perceived 'foreign accent' is often considered charming, as long as its intelligible" (p. 12). (Grift, Meijer, & van der Salm, 2012).

Data from the present study suggests that it is not so much insufficient language skills (in the eyes of the students) that impede their understanding of academic content, but that students find accent and word-searching distracting and that it causes them to focus more on the language skills of the instructor than on academic content, which is congruent with the findings of Grift, Meijer, and van der Salm (2012). It must be noted that the present study did not measure lecturers' actual proficiency levels, nor did it research the specificities of students' perception of lecturers' English. Nevertheless, lecturer interviews did find some evidence of non-native lecturers feeling less able to speak spontaneously and to explain content in various ways, results that are similar to those of Wilkinson (2005).

Despite the various difficulties that students experience in lecture comprehension, survey students themselves believe this does not affect their questioning and answering behaviour. This is contrastive to both earlier studies as well as data collected from student and lecturer interviews and in lesson observations. These all pointed towards a decrease in the number of questions asked and answered during EM lectures. Data suggest that students are afraid to make language mistakes, especially in front of their peers. Together with a critical view of lecturer proficiency, the underlying issue here might be that students set their English language standards too high and that they feel language mistakes are not acceptable.

In short, knowledge of vocabulary, lecturer fluency and pronunciation, and peer-to-peer relations appear to be important factors in EMI. Additionally, the data suggest that students have an increased dependence on visual aids and additional examples and illustrations. As Klaassen (2001) emphasises, these elements all point out the need to use effective lecturing behaviour and to pay serious attention to lecture quality.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both CE students and their lecturers emphasize the need for graduates to be proficient in English and they see English-medium instruction as a tool to help them achieve the desired level of proficiency and even improve their prospects for the future. These perceptions are supported by the British Council and the Academic Association Cooperation.

However, the negative experiences of students and lecturers should also be taken into consideration. Difficulties with lecture comprehension, understanding terms and concepts, reduced interaction, and an increased workload are some of the issues that the respondents of the present study have encountered as a result of a shift in instructional language. This study set out to find ways to overcome these issues and maximize the potential of English-medium instruction. The experiences of both students and teachers provide valuable insights and together with several lesson observations, they lead to the following recommendations:

### 5.1 Support in improving English language proficiency

In the module IC, the emphasis lies heavily on academic content. English is the selected language of instruction, but students receive little to no feedback in terms of language or structured support in dealing with EM course materials and content. Although students experience comprehension difficulties and clearly expect and desire corrective language feedback, Dutch lecturers generally feel they lack the English skills to offer this support.

It is therefore suggested that lecturers involved in EMI work together with English language trainers more closely. One option would be for the English department to design a parallel English programme related to the content of the module in question and to introduce interdisciplinary assessment: in one combined assignment students could then be assessed by both the core subject lecturer and a lecturer of English.

Another option is to take a more CLIL-based (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach. That is to say: teach both the subject and the language in one module. This would probably mean a reduction in the amount of academic content to make room for language instruction, but it would improve students' comprehension of English-taught lectures. Additionally, CLIL is also a valuable tool in curriculum internationalisation. As the British Council also indicates: "CLIL encourages the use of curricula which promote the right interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity and communication and language abilities which are in demand by today's employers" (Content and Language Integrated Learning, n.d.).

A shift from EMI to CLIL would mean that EM lecturers need additional training in not only designing CLIL curricula, but also in providing language instruction, or that English language trainers get retrained to also teach the subject matter of a CLIL course.

Whichever strategy is used to provide additional language learning support, data in the present study suggests that creating more awareness regarding second language learning would also benefit EM modules. Students appear to judge the language proficiency of their lecturers quite harshly. This may also make them more reticent to peer-to-peer communication in English. Educating students about various levels of English proficiency and what constitutes an acceptable level of English help to make expectations more realistic and take away some of their fears and hesitations.

### 5.2 Preparing lecturers for English-medium instruction

The difficulties in EM lecture comprehension as experienced by CE students, may also be due to the fact that lecturers are less expressive and can provide fewer clear examples in English. One way to overcome this issue is to improve the general language skills of lecturers. Particular focus points, based on the findings in this study, are pronunciation and fluency. For modules that include more extensive written assessment, lecturers should also be offered training and support in formulating targeted written feedback.

However, lecturers may also want to focus on what constitutes effective EM lecturing behaviour. As Klaassen (2008) explains: "awareness and understanding of the complexity of the pedagogical situation is essential for improving English-medium instruction" (p. 40).

The negative effects of English-medium instruction in terms of reduced interaction, increased dependency on both visual support and exemplifications, together with a perceived barrier for students to communicate in English call for training in effective EM lecturing behaviour. Based on the outcomes of the present study, focus points could be effective questioning, checking understanding, as well as activation strategies so to engage students more with EM lecture content.

Additionally, the majority of students experience a higher workload in English-taught modules: reading course materials and completing English assignments both require more time. It is therefore important for curriculum designers to take this into consideration when designing EM modules, for instance by adapting course materials (both in terms of content and amount) to an EM setting, instead of copying an existing Dutch module.

### 5.3 Additional research

As previously mentioned, the present pilot study provided valuable insights which lead to several recommendations for the implementation and design of EM modules. However, the study was an exploratory pilot study and in order to come to firmer conclusions, additional research is recommended.

Firstly, the present study included a limited number of lesson observations of a module in which students received instruction in English, but were allowed to communicate in Dutch. This has shed light on student perceptions towards EMI and several underlying issues, but provides only limited information on, for instance, students' language deficiencies. Observing Dutch-taught modules and observing the same students in modules that are fully English-taught for a longer period of time, would allow for a broader comparison of student and lecturer behaviour in an experimental setting. Furthermore, as Mellion (2008) found that EM lecturers teaching international classrooms experienced additional problems, comparing EMI in a predominantly Dutch group of students to EMI in an international classroom would provide a valuable addition to the existing data set.

Secondly, focus groups comprised of students, lecturers and administrators would allow for a reflection on the current results and help determine the desired course of action whilst taking into consideration the various stakeholders involved.

Due to the underrepresentation of lecturer experiences and beliefs in the present research design, it is also recommended to extend the number of lecturer interviews. Furthermore, including a lecturer survey would help quantify the generated outcomes.

As was mentioned before, the present study does not measure actual performance and behaviour. It can therefore only report effects of English-medium instruction as observed by respondents themselves. Even though self-assessment has shown to be a good indicator of comprehension difficulties, the data collected in the present study is more holistic in nature. Therefore, it is worth measuring the effects of English-medium instruction in an experimental setting so as to come to more specific and quantifiable data. Possible areas of research include: formally testing students' knowledge of a subject after DM and EM instruction, assessing both lecturers' English language proficiency and teaching behaviour in an EM setting, and studying which didactic methods are most successful in English-taught modules. Since Klaassen (2001) found that any negative effects on student learning disappear the longer students receive English-medium instruction, it is also recommended to monitor respondents for a longer period of time.

Finally, data collection could be extended to include other programmes of study, but also to an international classroom setting to see whether the implications of English-medium instruction differ between disciplines

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## APPENDICES

The appendices belonging to this article can be found on:

<http://www.dehaagsehogeschool.nl/lectoraten-en-onderzoek/overzicht-lectoraten/internationale-samenwerking-lectoraat/publicaties>

## REFLECTION

Joyce den Heijer's research report on The implications of English-medium instruction on teaching practice and learning outcomes at The Hague University of Applied Sciences is an enlightening read to say the least. From the perspective of a lecturer who has taught in English both in a Dutch program (SBRM) as well as an international program (IBMS), this report offers many takeaways for lecturers instructing in English both within and outside the THUAS campus.

The implications of EMI on teachers and the effect it has on the learning process for students is a current and extremely relevant topic as it should have substantial influence on the policies adapted by universities using EMI and the assistance and structured training that lecturers instructing in English within THUAS should be receiving to better prepare and deliver lessons.

The qualitative research method used for data collection means that there is better insight into how other lecturers in similar situations are faring and what challenges they are facing. It is encouraging to read that the outcomes of the survey show that many of us, who instruct in English face the same challenges. The report also provides compelling evidence proving that EMI means that both non-native lecturers as well as students need to invest extra in the exercise in terms of time, effort, course material and more compared to colleagues instructing in Dutch.

The report also juxtaposes what the lecturers and students each consider to be the differences between English medium instruction and Dutch medium instruction. This is extremely imperative to better understand the motives and methods employed in EMI and facilitate updates and allow for targeted teacher training.

Last but not least it is encouraging to note that the perceived disadvantages of EMI at THUAS are few and can easily be overcome.

Overall it is a relevant and beneficial piece of work that systematically and rather thoroughly – given its scope, addresses the issues, challenges and benefits of English medium instruction at THUAS and should therefore be considered essential reading and data to support any policy level changes and developments that address further internationalisation efforts by the university.

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