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Language attitudes and language proficiency of undergraduate students in English-medium instruction

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Englischsprachiger Fachunterricht (English-Medium Instruction oder EMI) wird auf Masterstufe schon seit Jahren praktiziert und hat sich als fester Bestandteil der Hochschullehre etabliert. Die Hochschullehre in einer Fremdsprache auf Bachelorstufe hingegen ist weitaus weniger verbreitet und wird gegenwärtig kontrovers diskutiert. Ein zentrales Problem in dieser Diskussion ist die Frage nach der Sprachkompetenz der beteiligten Akteure. Im vorliegenden Artikel wird der Zusammenhang zwischen Einstellungen zur englischen Sprache bzw. zu EMI und der auf Kannbeschreibungen basierenden Einschätzung der eigenen Sprachkompetenz untersucht. Dafür wurde in einem ersten Schritt eine standardisierte Online-Umfrage mit 129 Bachelor-Studierenden an einer der grössten Fachhochschulen der Schweiz durchgeführt. In einem zweiten Schritt wurden die Ergebnisse der Umfrage in Fokusgruppendifkussionen vertieft. Die Ergebnisse der Online-Umfrage zeigen, dass die Einstellungen der Studierenden gegenüber EMI tendenziell negativ ausgeprägt sind und mit tiefen Einschätzungen der eigenen Sprachkompetenz korrelieren. Dies steht im Gegensatz zu den Äusserungen der Studierenden in den Fokusgruppendifkussionen sowie in den offenen Kommentarteilen der Umfrage. Die Auswertung der qualitativen Daten deutet darauf hin, dass Studierende ihre vorwiegend negativen Einstellungen gegenüber Englisch und EMI eher mit einer mangelhaften Sprachkompetenz der Dozierenden als mit eigenen sprachlichen Schwierigkeiten verbinden.

Stichwörter:

englischsprachiger Fachunterricht, Sprachnormen, Sprachkompetenz, Spracheinstellungen, Bachelorstudierende.

1. Introduction

Whenever a community of practice undergoes a change, its underlying norms need to be renegotiated by the members of the community. Their perceptions of one another's language proficiency constitute one factor in this process. This paper looks in greater detail at social actors' perceptions of language proficiency in the context of the introduction of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in third-level education. The introduction of English as the language of teaching and learning, particularly at bachelor's level, is generally perceived as problematic by institutes of higher education (Studer 2013).

Recent research has focused on the changes to a community of practice a language switch may provoke and on the subsequent new practices that develop from these changes (e.g. Smit 2010; Doiz et al. 2013). Other studies have predominantly looked at the phenomenon from the perspective of the institution or stakeholder, i.e. language policy-maker, study course

coordinator, module coordinator, and, to some extent, module lecturer (Studer 2013; Kelly & Studer 2010). While there is an abundance of literature on language attitude in L2 learning environments, comparatively little has been said to date about the normative perceptions of students involved in English-medium instruction.

The present paper highlights the importance of students' perceptions of their own and the lecturers' general language proficiency in EMI contexts. Based on questionnaire data and the analysis of focus group discussions with bachelor students of Natural Sciences at a major university of applied sciences in Switzerland, the current paper investigates the interplay between the students' self-evaluated English language proficiency and their attitudes towards the introduction of EMI. The authors of this study seek answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a correlation between students' linguistic self-confidence and their attitudes towards EMI?
2. Do linguistic self-confidence and attitudinal behaviour of the students reflect their attributive reactions when they evaluate the EMI programme?

To answer these questions, the authors of this study conducted a survey with 129 bachelor's students in their second year of study during the academic year 2012/2013. The students who participated in an English-medium programme had registered for one or several of nine modules in their fourth semester which were taught through English for the first time. The EMI programme, which involved more than 20 members of staff, was coordinated by the local degree programme coordinator. Linguists were called to monitor the introduction of English and to collect a series of data, including observations, focus group discussions and questionnaires. The phase in the programme reported on here forms part of an ongoing project which started with a small pilot phase in the academic year 2011/2012.

The introduction of EMI in this particular institution was preceded by a longer planning phase which consisted in establishing the willingness of the staff and stakeholders, organising finances and recruiting the monitoring body that would evaluate the programme. The fourth semester of the degree programme was chosen so as to attract foreign Erasmus students who would spend part of their second year in Switzerland. The second year was also deemed most suited to the task since students had passed the first-year assessment phase but were not yet specialising for their bachelor's degree.

The introduction of English at undergraduate level was considered controversial, which could be partly explained through the particular university's history and culture (regional orientation). A cautious and gradual approach to the change had been chosen so as to minimise potential complaints on the students' and lecturers' sides. The project manager was

determined throughout the first two years of the project to reduce the conflict potential by constantly inviting all social actors to express their wishes and concerns, therefore creating an atmosphere of openness and exchange. Through this approach, the students had informal as well as formal opportunities to be included in the evaluation of the project; the lecturers, likewise, were invited to share their thoughts with management on various occasions.

Despite the open climate, students initially seemed critical of the usefulness of the programme and expressed their disapproval towards the study coordinator. Not least for this reason, it was decided to look into the possible causes of this critical response. Two approaches were chosen for this purpose. Firstly, research was aimed at revealing interpretative repertoires of students, i.e. the communicative 'resources' and the discursive backdrop with which students form their opinions (Studer 2014). In this study, it was found that students especially expressed criticism of the language proficiency of their lecturers when, in fact, they strongly disagreed with their teaching style. Especially teacher-centred lecturing was perceived negatively. In the present study, the authors extended their focus so as to look at attitudinal patterns and linguistic self-confidence of students that might indicate why certain students may be more critical of the EMI programme than others.

2. Conceptual framework

The particular evaluation method focused on in this paper, an electronically delivered questionnaire to students, was to fulfil various purposes in the project: Firstly, it should serve as a first indicator of concerns the students may have towards the introduction of English in their degree programme; secondly, it was to shed light on the students' beliefs concerning their own and their lecturers' language proficiency. Thirdly, the questionnaire was to reveal the students' attitudes towards English and English-medium instruction. The questionnaire further collected socio-demographic information concerning language background and multilingual practices so as to enable the authors to put the questionnaire results into a broader perspective. Of particular interest to the authors were possible interconnections between attitudes towards EMI and perceptions of language proficiency. It was assumed that perceptions of high language proficiency correlated with positive attitudes both towards English-medium instruction and the language itself, while low language proficiency would lead to greater anxiety and disapproval and, therefore, to more critical attitudes. Negative attitudes towards the programme, it was feared, might lead to a drop in student motivation.

The assumption that perceptions of proficiency, language attitude and motivation are interconnected is by no means new or unique to this study but has been stated in previous contexts, especially in L2 learning research

focusing on L2 attitude and motivation. We recall in particular Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) model of L2 motivation; a sequential model by which achievement is a direct product of language attitudes and subsequent motivational behaviour.

The sequential model of Gardner seems compatible with Dörnyei's model of foreign language learning motivation (1994: 280; 1998: 125; also Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011), in which he distinguishes three motivational levels, i.e. the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level (Clément et al. 1994). Of these three levels, the language and learner levels are of particular interest to this study. The language level comprises language attitudes; the learner level emphasises linguistic self-confidence, which includes perceptions of language proficiency of L2 learners.

Tremblay & Gardner (1995) combined in their model mainstream components of language attitudes and motivational behaviour that have been widely researched and empirically grounded. Language attitudes are thereby conceptualised as minimally consisting of an integrative and an instrumental orientation. The integrative orientation has been used to refer to a psychological and emotional identification with the L2 and/or L2 community, reflecting a desire to identify with a particular language and culture (Gardner 2001; Dörnyei 2003: p. 5).

Lasagabaster (2002) analysed integrative vs. instrumental attitudes in a multilingual context in higher education using questionnaires. Going back to Gardner and Lambert (1972), Lasagabaster (2002: 1694) set out to empirically verify the widespread assumption that integrative attitudes towards L2 community were fundamental to student L2 achievement. While the integrative orientation is undoubtedly important in the study of language attitudes, however, Lasagabaster (2002), in line with newer approaches (cf. Dörnyei 2010), supports the assumption that L2 achievement can only be explained when looking at the interplay between integrative and instrumental attitudes. Questionnaire items aimed at revealing language attitudes, therefore, need to take the two dimensions into account.

The second important dimension in the present study is the umbrella concept of self-confidence, which was originally defined as "self-perceptions of communicative competence and concomitant low levels of anxiety in using the second language" (Noels et al. 1996: 248). In line with attitude structure, Clément and Kruidenier (1985) identified anxiety as the affective component and self-perceptions of communicative competence as the cognitive dimension of self-confidence. Self-confidence, as described in this definition, encompasses the cognitive concept of self-efficacy (Bandura 1997), which more specifically involves people's judgments of their abilities to carry out language- and communication-related tasks. Although self-confidence seems to become a particularly salient "determinant of attitude" in situations of

contact between L2 learner and the L2 community, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels (1994: 423) argued that "anxiety and, by extension, self-confidence in the L2 classroom are intimately linked to classroom processes."

Newer approaches to self-confidence theory have focused more strongly on the situatedness of L2 motivation. For the purpose of the present study, WTC – willingness to communicate – seems of particular interest in the EMI context as it means a person's "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a particular person or persons, using a L2" (MacIntyre et al. 1998: 547).

3. The questionnaire

The above brief considerations form the conceptual backdrop to the student questionnaire used for the purpose of the present study. The questionnaire consisted of 40 items and six thematic sections outlined below. Where evaluations were elicited in the questionnaire, the response categories followed the four-level Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire survey was conducted three weeks into the spring semester 2012/2013, after the students had had first introductory sessions with their English-medium lecturers.

Personal language background: In the first section, items were aimed at revealing the students' multilingual / bilingual background and upbringing (e.g. I grew up with the following languages; I consider myself a bilingual person) as well as their multilingual practices at home and at work, language education and experience (e.g. I have been registered in an institute of higher education where English is the main language; I have the following language certificates in English).

Attitude towards English as a lingua franca and English in higher education and science: This section consisted of six items that foregrounded possible attitudes towards English as a lingua franca and, in particular, English in higher education and science. The items were compiled following the tripartite distinction of attitudes into cognitive, affective and behavioural components (originally Rosenberg & Hovland 1960). The items were inspired by, yet adapted from, previous questionnaire studies (Lasagabaster 2002; Baker 1992). Two items each were put together referring to the same attitude component. The items were assumed to reveal integrative and instrumental orientations. The following items were used:

<i>I actively offer to use English if my counterparts do not speak my native language</i>	conative component / willingness to communicate
<i>I am always ready to use English even if my counterparts try to communicate with me in my native language(s)</i>	

<i>I consider English in higher education to be no more than a communication tool</i> <i>English should become the only language used in higher education</i>	cognitive component
<i>The cultural side of English is unimportant in the international scientific community</i> <i>I like it that English is the most widely used language in the scientific community</i>	affective component

1. *Level of English proficiency*: This section of twelve items consisted of three items each in the language competence areas of speaking, listening, and writing for the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) levels B1 to C2. B1 was considered the undergraduate threshold level, which was required to follow lectures through English ; C2, the highest level, referred to professional qualifications at post-graduate level. The items used in the questionnaire were, except for minor adaptations for the local audience, consistent in wording with the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) "Can Do" scales of 2002/2007. They contained questions concerning the students' abilities in lectures, talks, textbooks, articles, essays, seminars, tutorials and measured language skills in an academic context. All items were formulated as *can-do* statements, which recalled the students' specific judgments of their ability to carry out certain tasks (e.g. *I can understand instructions and assignments given by a teacher for a lecturer; I can give a clear presentation on a familiar topic, and answer predictable or factual questions*).
2. *English class anxiety*: This section comprised three items referring to problem-solving strategies when encountering difficulties in comprehending, reading or writing in English (e.g. *If I encountered comprehension difficulties during a lecture, I would take the following actions*).
3. *Desired English proficiency*: The students were given the opportunity to select areas which they would like to improve or practise, based on the following items : *I would like to improve my knowledge in the following domains; I would like to practise the following English language skills*.
4. *Attitude to English-medium instruction*: The final section consisted of four items (again following the distinction cognitive-affective components of attitude) that tapped the students' overall response to English-

medium instruction and their programme. The following items were used:

<i>I think it is a good idea for Swiss colleges to offer courses through English.</i>	cognitive component
<i>I think I would learn more if this subject were taught in German (reversed).</i>	
<i>I am looking forward to studying this subject through English.</i>	affective component
<i>If I had the choice, I would follow this subject through German (reversed).</i>	

There was a fifth filter item which asked students to indicate whether they were worried about studying within the EMI programme (*I am worried about studying my subjects through English*). While the above four attitude items could be rated along a four-level Likert-scale, this fifth item was a yes-no question leading the students to an open comment section. The results of the open comment section are presented in 4.1.1.

In addition to the questionnaire, classroom observations took place during the semester in order to analyse the performance of the lecturers. The observations concerned especially the lecturers' competence in teaching in English and focused on aspects like style, language competence, discourse competence and quality of teaching artefacts (e.g. slides, script, etc.). The results of the observations, including selected results from the online student survey and an overall comment about suitability of the lecturers or need of further support, were summarized in reports and discussed with the lecturers in individual meetings.

Using focus group discussions, the researchers tried to collect "thicker" data about the success of the EMI-programme and to better understand the negative attitudes of the students toward EMI that resulted from the pilot phase of the EMI programme (Studer 2011, 2013) and later from the students' questionnaire (see below). The two discussions with 10 participants each took place at the end of the spring semester 2013. Based on filmed scenes of EMI lectures, the discussions included questions about students' general perceptions of English in the classroom and about possibilities to raise the acceptance of the programme in the student community.

The above-described methods for data collection, also called method triangulation, were used to gather data that the researchers could not gain using a single method (Flick 2008: 12) and facilitated validity through cross verification from more than one source on the other (Denzin 1970: 300). For the purpose of the present study the authors will focus on the perceptions and

perspectives of the students only, i. e. the questionnaire and focus group discussion data. The actual performance of the lecturers is not considered in this article (see, however, Studer 2015).

4. Results

For the investigation of the interplay between students' language proficiency and their attitudes toward EMI, quantitative data from the online questionnaire were used. The results of the questionnaire survey are presented in 4.1. The qualitative data from the focus group discussions are introduced in 4.2.

4.1 Questionnaire results

The questionnaire was sent to all 129 students who participated in the EMI study programme studying at the institute concerned. The response rate was more than 50% (68 students). In thematic section 1 (personal language background), the questionnaire collected language background information in order to complete information about English language use at home, at the university and in everyday-life. The results from thematic section 1 show that the vast majority of students (91%) grew up with Swiss German only and mainly use this language for communication purposes with fellow students at university. Only five participants named English as their mother tongue and 17% considered themselves bilingual. In their everyday-life, most students (68%) said they would use English occasionally in e-mails or face-to-face conversations.

Regarding students' attitudes towards English as a lingua franca and, in particular, English in higher education and science (thematic section 2), the results show a willingness and readiness to communicate in English but a rejection of the idea of English as the only language in higher education. 91% of the students, for example, report that they actively offer to use English if their counterparts do not speak their native language. 51% are always ready to use English even if their counterparts try to communicate with them in their native language. In contrast, less than half of the students (42%) consider English in higher education to be more than a communication tool and only 6% think that English should be the only language used in higher education. The cultural side of English also appears to be unimportant for over half of the students surveyed (51%) when using English in a scientific community. This does not mean that students do not appreciate the English language, since the vast majority (74%) declare that they like the fact that English is the most widely-used language within the international scientific community.

In thematic section 3 (level of English proficiency), the results show participants to be self-confident English language users. The three items at B1-level were excluded from the scale because of insufficient results from the reliability analysis. Furthermore, two of these three items related to reference

skills or skills in management of study rather than actual language ability (ALTE, 2007: 95). The following figure shows the normal distribution of the English language proficiency scale (Cronbachs Alpha: .93). A slightly negative skewness (-.07) and kurtosis (-.16) indicate only a minimal deviation from the normal distribution (Bühner 2006: 88 – for definitions of skewness and kurtosis see also Aron et al. 2006: 21-23). Students who participated in the EMI programme evaluate their English language competence within the B2-C2 range (mean: 2.7, SD: .66). However, single item responses indicate variation in the self-evaluation of students' language skills and competence areas. While, for example, 78% of the students estimate that they can scan texts for relevant information and grasp the main point, only 45% report that they can write a text that shows the ability to communicate without causing difficulty for the reader. This can be explained through the difference in the CEFR-levels B2 vs. C1 or through different language skills in reading and writing (reception vs. production).

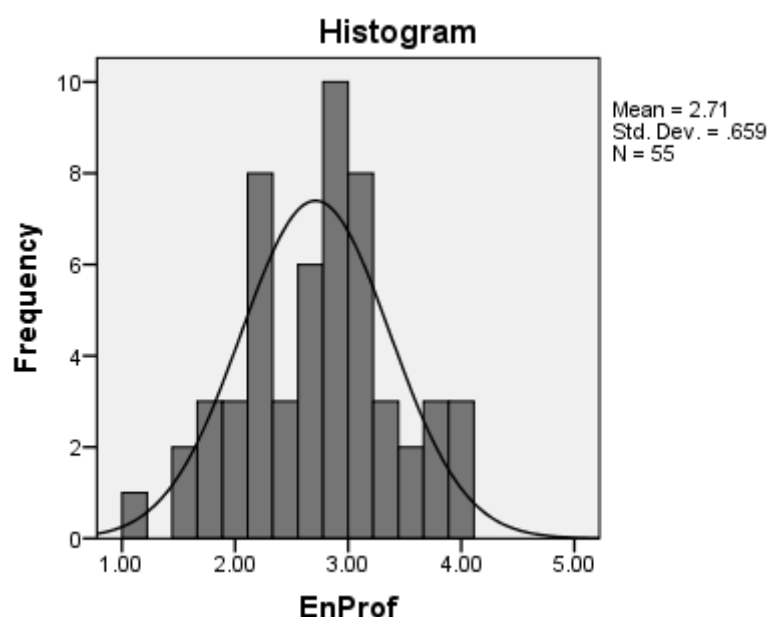


Figure 1. English language proficiency scale (self-assessment)

In order to complete information about students' language proficiency and problem-solving strategies (thematic sections 4 and 5), students were asked about the areas they would like to improve or practice more in English as well as about their actions when encountering difficulties because of the language during the classes. Most of the students expressed the desire to improve their lexical knowledge through word lists or word formation exercises. They also indicated that they would like to practice their productive skills (speaking and writing). When facing comprehension problems during classes, most students

indicated that they would ask other students sitting next to them or fellow students in general for help.

Thematic section 6 comprised 5 items eliciting the students' language attitudes based on the distinction of attitudes into cognitive, affective and behavioural components. The items refer to general assumptions about courses in English in Swiss universities as well as to students' expectations regarding their own participation in the concrete EMI programme. A four-level-Likert-scale of agreement was used again (strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree). Regarding the single item results, 69% of the students thought that it was a good idea for Swiss colleges to offer courses through English. 49% were looking forward to studying their subject through English. However, a large majority of students (86%) thought they would learn more if the subject was taught in German and if they had the choice, they would follow this subject through German (75%). 42%, finally, indicated that they were worried about studying these courses through English. These results indicate a contrast between items at the component level (cognitive and affective).

In order to identify interrelationships among the single items and group them as a construct (scale attitudes toward EMI), an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the first four items. The suitability of the data for this analysis was confirmed by the results of the KMO (.835) and Barlett-Test (.000). Before the analysis, the polarity of the negatively formulated items was reversed. Using the principal component method the authors aimed at extracting the maximum possible variance (Bühner, 2006, p. 196). According to this method the model should be rotated. Therefore the orthogonal varimax rotation, which maximises the variance of the square loadings of the factor, was chosen (ib., p. 204). As expected, and according to Kaisers' rule, which drops all factors with values γ under 1.0 (ib., p. 200), one solid factor capable of explaining 63% of total variance was extracted. Table 2 shows the main results of the factor analysis after the exclusion of the item regarding students' worries about EMI (item 5). This item concerned the affective component of students' self-perception and was removed because of poor factor loading (.37) and a low corrected item-total correlation (.46) (Bortz & Döring 2006: 145, 219). In other words, it appears that the item about students' worries does not measure the same construct measured by the other items in the scale. The four remaining items have very good psychometric properties. The consistency of the constructed scale was confirmed by a reliability analysis. The result (Cronbach's Alpha .86) indicates a highly reliable scale.

	Exploratory Factor Analysis		
Question:	Factor loadings (Varimax)	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
How much do you agree with the following statements?			
Response Categories:			
<i>Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree</i>			
I think it is a good idea for Swiss colleges to offer courses through English.	.81	.70	.84
I am looking forward to studying this subject through English.	.84	.72	.83
I think I would learn more if this subject were taught in German (reversed).	.80	.67	.85
If I had the choice, I would follow this subject through German (reversed).	.89	.80	.79
Explained Variance	63%		
Cronbach's Alpha	.86		

Table 1. Attitudes toward EMI scale: Factor and reliability analysis

Figure 2 shows the rather negative attitudes of the students towards EMI in general and, in particular, towards the EMI programme (mean: 2.1, SD: .7). The mass of the distribution is concentrated more on the left of the figure and has a slight negative skew (-.043), while the negative kurtosis value (-1.193) indicates a non-normal distribution.

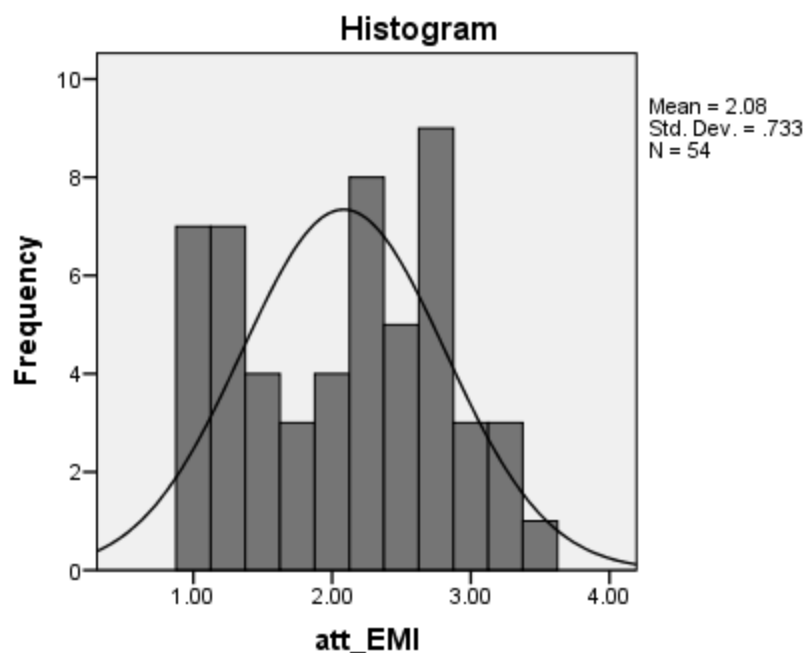


Figure 2. Attitudes toward EMI scale

Following the validation of the measuring instruments, the researchers examined the relationship between the two scales in order to answer the first research question about interconnection between perceptions of language proficiency and attitudes towards EMI. As assumed, a high positive correlation (.57) can be identified between English language proficiency and attitudes towards EMI; the correlation is highly significant at the .01-level and confirms the interplay between learners' linguistic self-confidence, which includes perceptions of language proficiency, and language attitudes. Thus, the more self-confident students are in their English language proficiency, the more positive their attitudes towards EMI.

4.1.1 Open comments section

At the end of the questionnaire, students were given the opportunity to write down open comments on their experience with the EMI programme. More than half of the sample (35 students) felt the need to use this optional comment field, even after quite a long survey. It appears that it was important for the students to express their opinion about issues that were not included in the questionnaire or to identify reasons for their opposition to the programme.

In this sense, students' most frequent comments concerned the lecturers' level of English language proficiency, a topic that was not part of the questionnaire. Some of the students believed that they "suffered" because of the lecturers' lack of English language competence, as shown in the following typical comment:

- (1) "...It cannot be that teachers – who are actually well-qualified with a lack of English skills – have to hold their course in English. And we as students suffer..."

Others felt that the quality of teaching had dropped because of lecturers' insufficient English language skills. It would seem that the students making these comments knew intuitively that something was missing in the lectures. An inability to identify precisely what was lacking is indicated in the following comment:

- (2) "I think because of the different levels of the teachers some information is lost."

4.2 Focus group discussions results

In order to find out more about students' criticisms of the lecturers' language proficiency, two consolidating focus group discussions with selected students were conducted. The focus group discussions confirmed the students' negative attitudes towards EMI seen in the online questionnaire. With regard to the organisation of the EMI programme, students criticised the fact that they had no choice but to follow the course in English. They also stressed that they felt they had not been properly informed about the motivations to include or exclude certain modules and lecturers in the programme. For the students, the reasons and motivations for the introduction of the programme, but also important organisational information (e.g. language of examination), were therefore unclear. Statements (3) and (4) serve to illustrate the students' dissatisfaction with the way the project management had been handling the introduction of EMI:

- (3) "I had the impression we were the «guinea pigs». They decided it (the introduction of EMI) for some reasons..."
- (4) "...it was said the examination will be in German or English, if you are not very confident and then suddenly it is only in English, this was not the deal."

Regarding the quality of the programme, students were - like in the questionnaire - very critical of the lecturers' assumed lack of language competence and poor ability to adapt to the EMI situation, as can be seen in statement (5) below:

- (5) "It's not nice at all if you are in the course and you notice that lecturers have more difficulties with the English language than yourself."

As concerns the coverage of content in the lectures held in English, students believed that they advanced less quickly than students in the German speaking modules, again because of their lecturers' lack of proficiency in English. According to the students, the lecturers teaching in German were didactically more efficient and came across as more authentic.

- (6) "The lecturers that they are not confident, they just read out the slides or the script [...] Before, in German, they had a look on the slides and they gave a lecture..."

All in all, students found the EMI programme very demanding for both lecturers and students. At the same time, they did not see any concrete benefit for them from the programme. In particular, they highlighted the lack of

support from the institution and felt better choices could have been made regarding the selection of lecturers and modules. They felt that better and clearer communication about these decisions should have been established between them and project management. In addition, they felt they should have been rewarded for their effort with an official recognition (in their diploma) of their successful participation in the programme. Finally, they believed that English-medium instruction only made sense if international students actually participated in the programme as well.

Regarding quality improvement, students mentioned that they would appreciate language support (e.g. writing seminars, vocabulary lists) and regular checks of the lecturers' motivation, language proficiency and teaching in English competence. They finally suggested that code switching (German / English) should be permitted in the classroom.

5. Conclusion

The present study focused on the analysis of an extensive questionnaire survey conducted with 68 undergraduate students in higher education in a major university of applied sciences in Switzerland. The questionnaire data were complemented with qualitative data obtained through an open comment section in the questionnaire and two additional focus group discussions. The study sought to find answers to two interrelated questions: Firstly, the authors analysed possible correlations between language attitudes with students' linguistic self-confidence, assuming that negative attitudes would correlate with little self-confidence. Secondly, qualitative data were gathered to examine attributive reactions of students when they set out to explain their positive or negative response to the programme, assuming that these reactions would corroborate further the results obtained through questionnaire analysis.

The questionnaire, which was used to analyse the first research question, contained two separate attitude sections (global attitudes to ELF and attitudes towards EMI). While more detailed factor and reliability analysis did not provide reliable results for the survey of global attitudes to ELF (which is why it was only reported on single items in this paper), the authors were able to develop a highly reliable scale for the measurement of students' attitudes towards EMI that can be used in further research (Cronbach's alpha: .86). However, the small sample and contrasts between single items results at the component level (cognitive and affective) indicate that further confirmation of the psychometric properties of the scale will be necessary.

The results obtained from the examination of the relationship between English language proficiency and student attitudes confirmed the initial hypothesis of the authors, showing that attitudes towards EMI highly correlate with the linguistic self-confidence of students. Therefore, the authors conclude that the improvement of students' linguistic self-confidence could have a positive

impact on attitudes towards EMI. Looking at the students' self-assessed linguistic confidence from the perspective of the language areas students mostly wish to develop, the authors noticed a possible gap between receptive and productive language abilities. While students felt confident in the receptive areas (listening, reading), they felt they could particularly benefit from support in academic writing. The results of the present study suggest that one fruitful avenue to strengthen students' self-confidence might be courses in academic writing (and, to a lesser extent, speaking).

The correlation between self-confidence and attitude might further suggest the opposite direction of influence. The results indicate that developing a positive attitude towards EMI might also raise students' self-confidence. The importance of strengthening students' positive attitudes towards EMI can be seen in the fact that students showed a noticeable negative bias towards English-medium instruction and the EMI programme as a whole. This negative tendency, however, is not reflected to the same degree in the students' beliefs about their own language abilities. All students participating in the study rated themselves in the appropriate CEFR brackets (B2-C2) commonly assumed to be needed for following undergraduate courses in English. This finding would suggest that students tend to draw a more favourable picture of their (receptive) language abilities than of the EMI programme they participate in.

The analysis of the open comment section of the questionnaire (4.1.1) and the focus group discussions provided further evidence of a positive self-picture of students against rather negative attitudes towards EMI. Although there is a clear correlation between attitude and self-confidence, as seen in the quantitative data, the qualitative data suggest that students do not identify their own lack of language abilities as a possible source of their negative response to the programme. When analysing the comments made by students, one can see that the sources of the students' dissatisfaction are mainly, if not exclusively, sought with the EMI programme and the stakeholders involved. In other words, the study reveals that students do not tend to reflect critically on their own language abilities when participating in EMI but, instead, direct their criticism to the EMI programme they participate in. This finding supports an earlier study conducted in the framework of this EMI programme (Studer 2014), which revealed a strong tendency in students to attribute causes of negative feelings to circumstances that lie outside their accountability.

The findings of this study may be practically relevant in two ways: Firstly, students may benefit from linguistic self-confidence training that focuses on productive language abilities; secondly, students may benefit from awareness-raising input that is aimed at drawing students' attention to constructive and critical reflection about their own and others' language abilities. If the results of this analysis persist in further study, it will constitute a valuable addition to

current insight into the complex workings of EMI. It is potentially relevant to EMI practitioners, stakeholders and researchers as it might suggest a shift in research and programme attention away from lecturers to the students' language ability and awareness.

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