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"Perceptions of EMI: the students' view of a Master's degree programme"

(Article begins on next page)

Caroline Clark

Perceptions of EMI: the students' view of a Master's degree programme

1. Introduction

The surge towards internationalisation in Higher Education institutions (HEIs), has led to a rapid increase in English-medium instruction (EMI), and English-taught programmes (ETPs) as has been outlined throughout this book (see Dalziel, this volume; Guarda and Helm, this volume) and in the literature generally (see Wilkinson 2013; Costa/Coleman 2013; Coleman 2006, among others). Given the speed with which the internationalisation of HEIs has taken place, there are various issues still to be addressed in depth - such as language policy, EMI teaching methodology, assessment in EMI and also the role of the student participant.

Students and their lecturers are both involved in the same process, communicating through the EMI interface which has various effects upon the symmetry and balance of the classroom. The key to effective EMI lies in an adequate and appropriate preparation of students and lecturers, and the current research focusses on whether they hold the same concerns about each other's language competence, and if they share the same awareness and perception of the EMI classroom and teaching methodologies.

It is only in the last decades that universities have actively sought out enrolment from international students instead of being content with national and local students (Doiz/Lasagabaster/Sierra 2011). Thus the trend towards internationalisation has led HEIs to become more globalised institutions offering student and staff mobility, international research projects and a collaborative approach

to curricula (Dafouz/Smit 2014:1), and inevitably English has become the language of education (Jenkins 2014). Yet, as Van der Walt (2013:13) points out, issues of language have not been actively approached and tend to become an issue only when problems arise.

This study concerns a two-year postgraduate degree course at the Department of Political and Juridical Sciences and International Relations of the University of Padova which is taught entirely in English. The ETP offers subjects ranging from economics, to political science and international law. At the time of writing the course had been running for two years and is the only course being offered entirely in English by the Department. A very similar course had been offered in Italian until the 2013/14 academic year.

1.1   EMI and the student

The capacity to attract international students has been considered a measure of the success of internationalisation, yet there are many facets of this measure still to be explored in depth, as there are myths to be explained (Grin 2010; Clark forthcoming). Generally, ETPs are considered to offer greater opportunities to Italian students than the traditional Italian courses, such as participation in international exchange programmes (Wilkinson 2013) and better career opportunities (Al-Bakri 2013), while improving English language competence at the same time. Nevertheless, some generalisations surround the attraction of international students - in some way they are viewed as being more desirable than domestic students and able to contribute more to the academic environment; it is also often presumed that their language competence is superior (Grin 2010).

International and domestic students will have different motivations for undertaking such a course. They bring different linguistic and cultural experiences to their studies, and it follows that their achievements, difficulties and satisfactions may also be different. The current study regards students' experiences of the EMI classroom

as a learning environment and is less concerned with language proficiency as an outcome of EMI.

It is evident that language - including perceptions of language, varieties, prestige, skills, levels - must be investigated in order to maximise EMI. First, doubts have been expressed about whether both students and lecturers have sufficient language to cope with teaching and learning in EMI, as a study of language competence in Vietnam (Manh 2012) has revealed. Rogier (2012) suggests that students and lecturers have different perceptions of language competence, and also of the problems which might arise regarding language in EMI. Other studies have found that students hold generally negative views about their lecturers' English (Suviniitty 2012) and participants in the current study have also shared this view, often seeing language deficit as a catch-all cause for discontent with EMI courses.

The students' perceptions of EMI have not been investigated in great depth and much of the literature regards Asian and Middle Eastern contexts (Kym/Kym 2014; Al-Bakri 2013; Kirkgoz 2014; Manh 2012).

2. Study of students' perceptions of an ETP

The present study involves the students of one postgraduate degree course taught entirely in English. It aims to contribute to understanding the students' role in EMI and is centred on how students perceive their own level, and their lecturers' levels of English, and the degree to which they perceive language skills as having an essential role in the quality of a course.

Although no specific level of English is required on enrolment in the course, students must declare that their level is at least B1 - the level normally tested in undergraduate courses. Further, Italian Ministry of Education indications regarding the content of degree courses do not permit English language to be taught as a credit-bearing subject in ETPs since it is presumed that students should

already have a high level of English. Similar reasoning applies to Italian language courses which also cannot be attributed credits. Most international students wish to attain credits for participation in these courses that they follow to maximise their experience in Italy – as expressed by one student: "[…] being a foreign student my native tongue is not accepted and neither is the italian one, so […] we have to learn two languages in extremely limited amount of time" IN1-02.[1] In this respect, there appears to be a blurring of the definition of an 'international student'.

2.1 Research questions

The specific aim of this study was to investigate students' opinions of their EMI courses within a single two-year postgraduate ETP, and how they see their role in the EMI classroom. Some comparisons are made with lecturers' views, and also more student-centred issues are investigated, such as students' preparation for EMI, the difficulties they face in their EMI courses, and their perceptions of EMI. The research questions, therefore, were centred on how students perceive their own level, and their lecturers' levels of English, and the degree to which they perceive language skills as having an essential role in the quality of a course. Other questions included the use of Italian in the classroom. It must be underlined that the questionnaire was not to be considered as an evaluation of single teachers by their students, and this was made clear to respondents.

It was hypothesised that students would see language as an important factor in EMI, and would rate lecturers as less competent than themselves in English. It was also expected that any criticism of shortcomings in the course would be based on language deficit. Further, it was hypothesised that students would prefer to do exams in their first language, as has been proposed in the literature (see Sert 2008) and that second-year students would perceive themselves as more competent in English having already benefited from over a year of EMI.

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[1]   No corrections have been made to the students' comments.

2.2 Methodology

A mixed methodology approach was adopted, involving an online survey with open and closed questions, as well as semi-structured interviews. The survey was constructed in Google Forms, which was chosen for ease of administration, while data analysis was performed using Excel statistics.

The survey comprised 33 separate items (some of which were not relevant to this study). Six questions offered a checklist, 26 elicited responses on a 5-point Likert scale and one question was open. The scale was almost always offered in the same direction, with positive descriptors given first, which may lead to a tendency towards more positive responses. On the other hand, reversing the order, with the resulting confusion would have led to similarly skewed responses.

The link to the anonymous survey was sent to students by the course secretary in May 2015 with an invitation to reply, and a reminder mail - with a link to the survey - was sent two weeks later. This period was therefore towards the end of the academic year, which meant that for first-year students there was ample opportunity to reflect on the year's study, while second-year students could reflect on the entire course.

2.2.1 Participants

The students involved in the study are required to have a minimum of B1 level and by the end of the two-year course to either hold an internationally-recognised certificate at B2 level according to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe 2001) or to pass a rigorous B2 test in all four skills (reading, listening, writing and oral) offered by the university language centre.

The survey was made available to all 93 students enrolled in the first and second years of the course. Of these, 45 students were in the second year (those enrolled in the academic year 2013/14), five of whom were international students (henceforth IN2). The first year group comprised 48 students (enrolled in the 2014/15 academic year), nine of whom were international (henceforth IN1). The proportion of

international students is not high, but for a new course this is to be expected and the percentage of international students has doubled over the two years that the course has been running. For the year 2016-2017 the proportion of international enrolments in the course is expected to increase to over 50%.

The response rate (see table 1) was almost 50% (46 students) comprising 20 first-year students (41.7%) and 26 second-year students (57.7%).[2] The participation of international students included four of the nine IN1 students and all five IN2. One respondent was a native-speaker (NS) of English. Other first languages included Russian, Romanian, Spanish, Portuguese and Vietnamese. A total of 37 students with Italian as their first language completed the questionnaire, 16 of whom were in their first year (henceforth IT1) and the remaining 21 were in their second year (henceforth IT2).

	Domestic students	International students	Total
1st year	16	4	20
2nd year	21	5	26
Total	37	9	**46**

Table 1. Numbers of domestic and international students responding to the questionnaire

Students were asked to indicate the principal reason (one choice only) why they had chosen to study this course delivered in English. An interest in the subject of the degree course was expressed by 47% of students, and therefore suggests that they would have chosen to enrol in this course in any case, irrespective of the language of

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[2]   Most of the second-year students had just attended a course held by the author, which may account for the high response rate. Nonetheless, the questionnaire was made available only after completion of the course and exam, thus student behaviour should not have been affected.

delivery. This includes nearly all the IN1 and IN2 students, yet it is unlikely that they would have followed the course had it been in Italian. On the other hand, 26% of respondents explicitly stated that they had chosen the course because it was delivered in English. This contrasts with the findings of Kym and Kym (2014: 54) with Korean students, where over 50% selected the course because it was taught in English. A small number of students (17%) indicated the international opportunities offered by the course. This choice could be seen as a convergence of both the subject and the language of delivery. Other studies (for example, Tazl 2011; Al-Bakri 2013; Troudi/Jendli, 2011) have found that many students choose to follow an ETP to prepare for a competitive international job market.

2.3 Questionnaire responses

2.3.1 Participants' self-evaluation of language level

Since a sufficiently high language competence is essential to successful EMI, students were asked to report their own levels of English that were then used as a variable, and also established a baseline for further questions. It was presumed that the respondents would have at least a B1 level of English, and be working towards a B2 level (in the case of first-year and some second-year students), or already have a B2 level (in the case of certificate holders, and the better second-year students). As expected, students reported a high level of English generally, although the measure is very loose since no definition was provided of the four levels offered: *low*, *medium*, *high*, and *very high*. As reported by LeBlanc and Painchaud (1985: 673) there is some "skepticism about students' capacity to provide meaningful information about their ability to use the language".

The first batch of questions asked students to evaluate their level for each of the four skills. As expected, they perceived the receptive skills (reading and listening) to be easier, and there is a predictable concentration of self-evaluations in the medium-high range. It is interesting to note, however, that similar percentages of

students rated both listening (receptive skill) and writing (productive skill) as *high* or *very high* as can be seen in Figure 1. This is unexpected as writing is generally considered the most difficult of the skills, which is also supported by the results of B2 tests that the same students had great difficulty passing.

The IN1 and IN2 students were quite harsh in their self-evaluation; the only two ratings of *low* for speaking were given by international students (NS Spanish and Portuguese). On the other hand, Italian students self-evaluated themselves higher than their international counterparts. It was interesting to note that IT1 students rated themselves higher in all skills than IT2 students. This evaluation does not correspond to reality as the results of B2 level language tests undertaken show that IT2 students had less difficulty passing the tests.

Only two students rated themselves as *very high* in all four skills: an IT1 student and the (only) NS English student. Those who rated one of their productive skills (either writing or speaking) as *very high* and the other as *high* included an NS Spanish IN2 and two IT2 students.
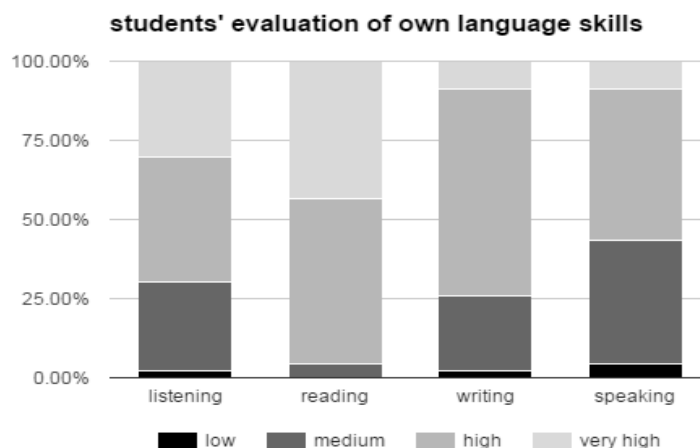

Figure 1. Students' evaluation of their own language skills, rated as *low*, *medium*, *high* or *very high*

A correlation is expected between students' perceptions of their level of preparation and the language difficulties they may face in following a course held in English.

Just over half the respondents (52%) declared that they had met absolutely no language difficulties in the course so far. On the other hand, four students (8%) said that they found themselves in difficulty with the language *very often*. Interestingly, these students did not self-evaluate their own skills as particularly low, which implies that they did not see the difficulties as deriving from their own incompetence. Two of these students were IN1 (Spanish), two were IT2, and all rated their own skills as predominantly *high,* with the IT2 students rating themselves as *very high* in writing ability.

The responses, on the other hand, could imply that the cause of the difficulties met *very often* lies in the ability to understand or follow lectures either because of the materials used, or because of the lecturers' use of English.

2.3.2 The importance of language skills

Another batch of questions asked students which skills they thought were most important to be able to participate successfully in an academic course taught in English, and to indicate them on a 5-point Likert scale (see Figure 2).

As expected, no language skill was considered *not important* while reading ability was considered the least important of the skills for successful participation in an ETP. This suggests that either reading posed no difficulty, which is supported by the findings reported in Table 1, or, surprisingly, that students do not consider reading to be an important competence in EMI. Alternatively they could have interpreted the question as suggesting that reading skill does not concern the actual language of delivery in that it is a passive skill. This finding contrasts with that of Kym and Kym (2014) who found that writing was considered the least important and listening as the most important skill for successful EMI.

Speaking was considered by respondents to be the most important with writing placed slightly less. All skills were rated equally as *very important* by 19 students (41%) who did not attempt to

discriminate between them. Most of these were second-year students, suggesting that they may have recognized the importance of all skills working together by the time they had reached the end of their two-year course.
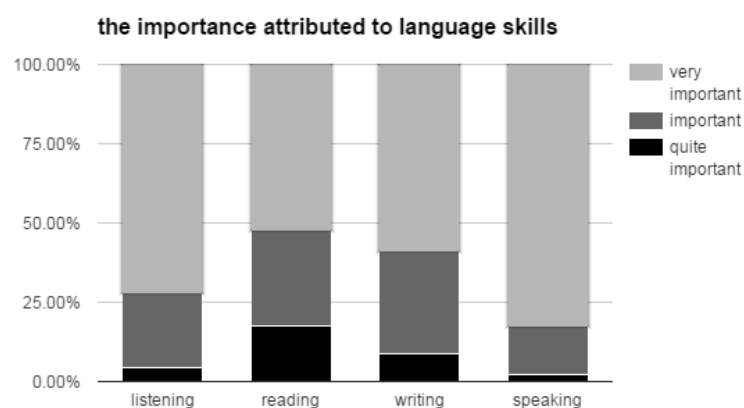

Figure 2. The importance that students attribute to the four language skills.

2.3.3 Difficulties in the classroom

Research has indicated various potential problems in the EMI classroom. For example, students' uncertainty about their ability to grasp the academic content clearly which may prevent them from developing critical thinking skills (Sert 2012). Gundermann (2014) also discusses the situation common to EMI contexts where the different levels of students' English may compromise learning.

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of their course on a 5-point Likert scale to investigate how they feel as EMI students. Most students, in particular the IT2 students, reported encountering no difficulties with the assigned reading materials (all in English). The students who admitted having difficulties were an IN1 and one IT2, both of whom are students who expressed little difficulty overall.

These students rated their own reading ability as *high*, and the importance of reading as much lower than all the other skills.

The aim of the questions asked was to establish whether students thought they shared the same level of language, and whether they found that a wide variation might have affected the success of lectures. All students declared that there were *great* differences in levels of English across the class, but, at the same time, they declared that this discrepancy in level did not affect the success of lectures. That is, respondents did not consider non-homogeneous levels of language among students as interfering with the quality of lectures.

A small proportion of students (11%) declared that the difference in levels was *vast*. Interestingly, all these students evaluated their own level as *not high*. These same students were divided as to whether this discrepancy in level affected the class overall with half saying *yes, definitely* and the other half *no, not at all*. IT2 students were more aware of the difference in level, and perceived a negative effect on the class while IN1, IN2 and IT1 students indicated that the difference in level had little effect on the class as a whole, implying that it may be a personal problem of the student.

The questionnaire did not ask what students thought about minimum language requirements but many made spontaneous comments in the open section. These comments indicate that they are in favour of stricter requirements: "I think students should be requested to pass an english test before they enroll to this MA course" (IT2-06), "B2 English level should be considered as a prerequisite" (IT1-05). Both these students rated themselves as *high* in all skills.

Regarding language assessment, many students pointed out that lecturers too should be required to have some form of certification: "I do think that a high English proficiency certificate should be asked to all, not just students but teachers too" (IN1-03) and "Professors who do not speak english natively should be required to take a language test every few years (just like the students)" (IN2-03).

A further question which has been discussed in the literature (Troudi/Jendli 2011; Al-Bakri 2013; Tazl 2011) is whether EMI reduces the quality of learning or amount of content that can be taught. The aim was to discover whether students feel as though they would learn more, and faster, if the course were held in their own first

language. It was found that only 13% of students (all of whom were IT1) definitely agreed that their learning was probably slower. On the other hand, 32.4% (all IT2) disagreed totally. These same students all gave higher and more homogeneous ratings of their own skills overall.

This finding could be interpreted as a type of language cognizance, or linguistic maturity, whereby over the time of study students become more confident in their learning abilities and at the same time more aware that language competence possibly plays a lesser role in their learning compared with their first-year counterparts. Clearly, without objective measures of how quickly, and how much, students learn, these findings reflect only the student's perception of their learning.

2.3.4 Students' perceptions of lecturers

The issue of lecturers' English skills was investigated by asking students for their views to see where their impressions coincide with those of lecturers in general. This method is not without pitfalls as Jensen et al (2013) point out. They have found that students' attitudes towards lecturers' lecturing competence is affected by their perception of the lecturers' competence in English (Jensen et al. 2013: 103).

Students were generally satisfied that lecturers were able to present course content clearly and logically, with 5 students (11%) agreeing *definitely* that the presentation of courses was very good.

One of the concerns expressed by EMI lecturers in general, and which has been discussed in depth elsewhere in this book (see Guarda/Helm this volume), is their language skills, and whether they are adequate to teach in English. Students were invited to evaluate their teachers' language skills in terms of their communicative ability. The question was not intended to investigate single lecturers' capacity or skills, but rather to lead students to reflect on language and the role it plays in learning. In fact, interviews with some of the same respondents indicated that they had a mature and constructive collaborative attitude towards the question of EMI, and the difficulties that might be faced by lecturers as well as students.

The students were asked to rate three aspects of lecturers' language: 1) grammar and vocabulary, 2) pronunciation, and 3)

fluency and clarity on a 5-point scale ranging from *excellent* to *not good at all*. The results are reported in Figure 3.
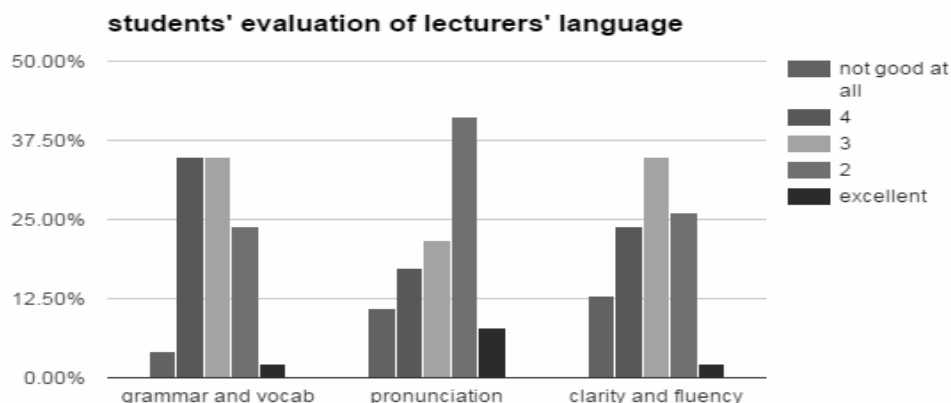

Figure 3. Students' evaluation of their lecturers' language competence.

Overall, responses show that students are reasonably satisfied with the level of their lecturers' English, which does not always coincide with how lecturers perceive their own language (see Guarda/Helm this volume).

Gundermann (2014: 124) suggests that pronunciation and accent are key to comprehension in the EMI classroom. Many of the EMI lecturers involved in the LEAP project were very aware of this, and expressed doubts about their pronunciation and fluency (see Guarda/Helm this volume; Ackerley this volume). Also Costa (this volume) points to pronunciation as "one of the most neglected areas [...] and on which students are more judgemental". Therefore, it was expected that students might be critical of their lecturers' pronunciation and would point to pronunciation as being difficult to understand. This did not turn out to be the case as half the respondents said that they had no difficulty at all understanding lecturers' pronunciation. International students were most critical of lecturer pronunciation, but they were also very critical of their own. This is in

line with findings by Fraser (2006) which show that students and lecturers who share the same NNS English regional variety, also share an ease of comprehension.

Regarding grammar and vocabulary (grouped together), it was expected that students would be more critical of their lecturers, since this aspect had come up in informal discussion. Students' evaluations did tend towards the lower end of the scale, but it is interesting to note that the respondents who rated lecturers' level of grammar and vocabulary as *not good at all* were all in their first year, and also rated themselves as *low* for the same aspects. This finding may suggest that these students are critical of non-native speaker (NNS) errors and set high expectations in language learning. It is also possible that they may not have benefited from the 'linguistic maturity' hypothesised above.

The third aspect concerned the clarity and fluency of the lecturers' delivery in English, and whether they spoke smoothly without stops and starts, and were able to finish their utterances thus completing information units. Respondents seemed to have some difficulty with this question with 35% of responses being neither *good* nor *bad*. About 28% said that lecturers were *clear* or *very clear*, while 13% indicated that lecturers' clarity and fluency was *not good at all.* These students were all in their second year, and all had rated their own oral skills as 3 on a 5-point scale. That is, they appeared to be critical of their own oral skills, not just those of the lecturers.

The same question of clarity and fluency was proposed indirectly in a different form and students were asked what ability they appreciated most in a 'good' lecture (only one answer permitted). *Fluency* was rated as the key to delivering a 'good' lecture by 70.1% of students while *grammar* was considered the most valuable skill by only 6.5% of students as can be seen in Figure 4.

When this question was turned around and students were asked which weakness they found most 'irritating' in a lecture, possibly leading to difficulties in understanding, *fluency* was again confirmed with 61.3% of students indicating bad fluency as the most 'irritating' – see Table 3. Despite lecturers' worries, *pronunciation* is considered as the key to a good lecture by 12% of students and bad pronunciation is considered 'irritating' by only 9% of respondents.
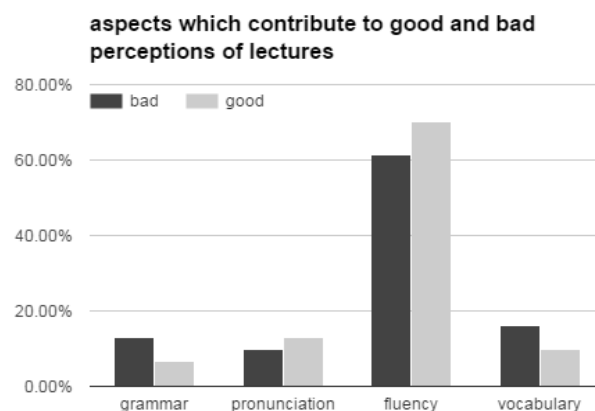
Figure 4. Aspects of language which students consider as contributing to good and bad lectures.

A further question which had arisen in informal discussion was whether lecturers should be NS English, although it is clearly not feasible in the Italian university context. Fraser (2006), referring to a Japanese context, notes that students find NNS English as spoken by lecturers who share the same L1 easier to understand, but at the same time this NNS English pronunciation is not valued as a variety. It is NS English which is sought, valued and desired in EMI (Fraser 2006: 86). Also in this present study, most students indicated that they would prefer to learn from a NS lecturer but, surprisingly, 26% were totally against NS lecturers.

Students were also asked whether they thought their lecturers generally had a better level of English than their own. Those who indicated that lecturers had *much better* English (8.68%) were all Italian students, while those who indicated *much worse* (also 8.68%) were all International students. Over half the respondents considered their own level of English to be better than their lecturers'.

2.3.5 Teaching methodology

In the research carried out with EMI teachers (Guarda/Helm 2015), it was found that they were not always aware of the importance of teaching methodology, nor had they entertained ideas of changing their teaching style before they started engaging in EMI or participated in professional development courses. As expected, students were generally not knowledgeable about teaching methodologies. However, they were very aware of classroom atmosphere and the teachers who were, and those who were not, able to adapt to an EMI classroom and deliver effective lessons. In the interviews, many had difficulty expressing this awareness, and *methodology* was not a term that interviewees used, but they pointed out the positive aspects of particular teaching practices such as presentations, seminars and discussion. For example: "I think that courses where the students are pushed to be more participative are very good for the improvement of their skills. I am talking about making presentations or presenting assessment etc." (IT1-04).

When asked about lecturers' ability to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere, students were appreciative. Those who rated lecturer speaking skills as *low*, were among the 19.6% who said that lecturers were *always* able to manage the classroom in such a way as to stimulate participation, discussion and an exchange of ideas. This finding indicates an awareness that language skills and teaching methodology are quite separate – that is, poor language skills do not necessarily mean poor teaching skills. Those who were most disappointed by the class atmosphere, and judged it as negative and not conducive to informal debate (21.7%) were all IT2 and IN2 students, with a *high* self-evaluation. One of these students commented: "Professors should be encouraging discussion more. This could be done in the form of seminars. […] It's ridiculous that we are not being encourage to interact with the material" (IN2-16).

Further, students were asked whether lecturers share language problems with the class, and seek collaboration from students in resolving them. Students generally agreed that they did, but those (6.5%) who indicated that lecturers *always* solicit collaboration from the class also rated lecturers' speaking skills as *low* suggesting that

they may view this as a negative strategy which might be adopted to compensate for their shortcomings. The 19.6% who said that lecturers *never* involve the class with questions of language were almost all first year students with a medium to low self-evaluation.

Costa (this volume) notes the issue of the role of language in assessment. Linked to this is the discussion of whether students should be allowed a choice of language for exams, which has also been discussed in the literature. Sert (2012), for example, found that lecturers were aware of student difficulties in transferring their ideas into English for an exam, and expressed the need for the classroom language - English - to be used in the exams rather than offering a choice of language or the students' L1, Turkish (Sert 2012: 166). Clearly, this possibility favours NS Italian students since all the lecturers in the degree course (except two) were NS Italian. Participants in the LEAP project have discussed various solutions to the question of the language to be used in exams - including allowing students to start in English and then revert to Italian in oral exams – both of which disadvantage the IN students (Guarda/Helm, this volume). However, it is interesting to note that 73.9% of respondents were adamant that no choice should be offered and were totally satisfied with exams being in held in English only. Only one student (IN2) who is NS Spanish expressed the opinion that students should be able to choose the language of exams.

Almost all students reported understanding *all* the ideas presented in lectures, and the accompanying materials, while slightly fewer were satisfied with their ability to learn all the necessary terminology and vocabulary for the course. In general, no particular problems were reported regarding understanding the course work. Linked to this aspect is the final thesis which must be presented and defended in English. More than half the respondents felt they were *ready* to write a thesis in English, and nobody reported being *definitely not ready*. The group (10.9%) who felt they were *definitely ready* were all IN students. In fact, the first cohort were preparing their theses at the time of writing, and given the difficulties many have met with writing at a B2 level, their work will provide interesting material for further study.

As expected, and in keeping with other research (e.g. Chang 2010; Rogier 2012), most students reported that their level of English had *definitely* improved during the course. However, 22.2% of respondents did not share this view. They were mainly IT2 and IN2, and the same students rated their own levels as *high,* and were critical of the language skills of their lecturers. This finding implies that they may have been unable to gain any further language benefits from lectures, classmates or course materials. Generally, though, students were satisfied with the language aspects of the course and almost all agreed that their own level of English allowed them to profit from, and not just follow, the course. Most students (64%) rarely, or never, left a lecture feeling that they had not understood very much because of language problems, either their own or those of the lecturer. However, 15% felt that they often left class without understanding much because of language difficulties. These same students tended to evaluate their own levels of language competence much higher than their lecturers in general suggesting that they hold the lecturers' limited language competence to blame.

3. Discussion

While the questionnaire as an instrument was flawed, it did lead to some interesting findings. The shortcomings include the small number of participants involved and the necessary grouping together of all lecturers, making a sensitive analysis impossible. Similarly, any discussion of teaching methodology must remain on a generic level, limited by students' perceptions rather than their knowledge of methodologies.

Given these constraints, it is still possible to draw some conclusions, not all of which were predictable. For example, it was surprising to discover the apparent difference between first and second year students and between International and Italian students.

International students made up only 15.2% of the sample, and their responses follow a different pattern from their Italian counterparts. These students tended to be harsher in their self-evaluation, and less critical of their lecturers' language, except for pronunciation where they were more critical of both themselves and their lecturers than the Italian students. Subsequent interviews with most of these students showed that their language competence, and in particular their levels of spoken language, were generally higher than they had declared. On the other hand, Italian students, IT1 in particular, tended to have a lower level of language competence than they had declared.

First-year students, new to EMI, were more satisfied with their own language abilities, and at the same time were more critical of their lecturers. On the other hand, second-year students tended to be more critical of their own abilities and more satisfied with their lecturers. This finding seems to point to a type of 'language cognizance' whereby over the two years of EMI they were able to reflect on the idea that language use is not just a question of the linguistic capacity of one or both parties involved, but an interaction between parties. They were less likely to consider 'good' or 'bad' English as determining the outcome of lessons, or as a factor in their own knowledge acquisition.

From the interviews, and discussion of methodology, it was confirmed that students, in particular those in their second year, were less likely to use language as a measure of quality, but instead referred to teaching methodology and the lecturers' ability to stimulate class discussion.

It has become evident, not only from this study, but also from the contributions of Schubert, Vanni and Xu (in this volume) that students of EMI cannot be considered as homogeneous and differences have emerged between domestic and international students. These differences may derive from the knowledge and preparation – social, cultural and academic – with which they are equipped before starting an EMI course. It is necessary for further research to investigate the role and needs of the different student typologies in the EMI classroom, and any differences between newly

enrolled and graduating students. Further research should also study larger groups of students

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Appendix

Of the original 33 questions, those which are not relevant to this research have been eliminated from the following list.

What is your first language? English / Italian / Other (indicate which).

Which year are you enrolled in? first year / second year

Do you attend lessons? I cannot attend / I am not able to attend all lessons, but I attend about half / I attend most lessons

How do you perceive your abilities in academic English? Refer to your ability to follow and participate in a University course given in English. (The skills: *listening*, *reading*, *writing* and *speaking* to be rated on a 4-point Likert scale: *low* to *very high*)

Do you have any difficulties with the English used in the HRG courses? (5-point Likert scale: *no, none at all* to *yes, often*).

Which skills do you think are most important to participate in an academic course taught in English? (The skills: *listening*, *reading*, *writing* and *speaking* to be rated on a 4-point Likert scale: *not important* to *very important*).

The MAIN reason I chose to study this course was because: choose ONE answer only: I am interested in human rights (the language is irrelevant) / I want to improve my English / the course is taught in English / it gives international opportunities / I have friends who do the course / Other (give details).

Courses

This section asks about the courses. Answer the questions by indicating how much you agree or disagree.

Do you have difficulty with the reading materials in English? (a 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Are the contents of courses presented (in English) clearly and logically? (a 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Do the students in your course all have the same level of English? (a 5-point Likert scale: *no, the levels vary greatly* to *yes, everyone has the same level*).

If students have very different levels of English, do you find this affects the success of lectures? (a 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Do you think you would learn more if the course was held in your own language?(that is, do you find you learn less, or more slowly, when learning in English?) (a 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Lectures and lecturers

These questions regard the HRG course and the lecturers in general, and do not refer to specific subjects or teachers. I am interested in your overall feelings.

In this section, please indicate your level of agreement with the statements.

Do you find that lecturers generally have good grammar and vocabulary skills? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, excellent* to *no, not good*).

Do you find that the pronunciation of lecturers (in general) is difficult to understand? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, very difficult* to *no, not at all difficult*).

Do your lecturers speak very clearly and fluently? That is, smoothly, without stops and starts. (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, very* to *no, not at all*).

Which of these abilities do you appreciate most in a good lecture? Indicate one only: good grammar (verbs, prepositions, etc) / good pronunciation / good fluency (speaking clearly, without stops and starts) / good vocabulary

Which of the following 'irritate' you most in a lecture?indicate one only: grammar mistakes (verbs, prepositions, etc) / bad pronunciation / fluency problems (lots of stops and starts, unfinished sentences, etc) /   limited vocabulary

Does the atmosphere in most lessons encourage participation, discussion and an exchange of ideas? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, always* to *no, never*).

Generally, do the lecturers have better English than you? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, much better* to *no, much worse*).

Do lecturers ask the class to help when there are language problems? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, always* to *no, never*).

Do you think the style of lecturing in English, and classroom atmosphere, is different from lectures in your own language? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, they are very different* to *no, they are the same*).

Do you think students should be able to choose which language to do exams in? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

About you as an EMI student

These questions regard your experience as a student and what you may have gained from this course in English.

Do you understand most of the ideas that are presented in the lectures? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes* to *no*).

Do you think all lecturers should be native speakers of English? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Do you feel that you are learning all the necessary terminology of the courses? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Do you feel ready to write your thesis in English? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Has your level English allowed you to profit from this course? (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Do you ever leave a lecture without understanding very much? (because of language problems). (A 5-point Likert scale: *yes, very often* to *no, never*).

Has your English improved while doing the HRG course? (a 5-point Likert scale: *yes, definitely* to *no, not at all*).

Is there anything that you would like to add about the course, in particular your thoughts on following a course in English, the difficulties and frustrations you may have found. You can answer in Italian if you prefer!