EMI through the eyes of university lecturers. A Hungarian perspective

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to introduce the results of a questionnaire survey carried out among university lecturers teaching at different faculties of the University of Szeged, Hungary. Questions focused on the differences between teaching through Hungarian (their mother tongue) as opposed to through English, and on the problems lecturers have faced and the solutions they have to these problems in an EMI context.

The results of the questionnaire survey presented in this paper show that there are considerable differences between English-medium and Hungarian-medium classes in terms of methodology, communication with students, lesson planning and testing. Problems identified by lecturers include problems related to language competence and cultural differences. These results highlight the need for cooperation in internationalization efforts between EMI and CLIL experts and university lecturers teaching their courses through English.

Keywords

CLIL in Higher Education, EMI, Internationalization of Higher Education, University Lecturers’ Views on EMI

1. Introduction

This section provides an overview of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), CLIL methodology, and CLIL in higher education.
1.1. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English-medium Instruction (EMI)

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach, integrating the teaching and learning of content and language. It is an umbrella term that covers a diversity of school practices, the many faces of CLIL\(^1\) include language showers, CLIL camps, local or international projects, one or more subjects taught through an L2, or total immersion schools.\(^2\) CLIL in higher education (HE) contexts is usually referred to as English-medium instruction (EMI).\(^3\)

1.2. CLIL methodology

For the successful implementation of CLIL, sound methodological foundations are needed. Coyle identifies the 4 Cs of CLIL methodology as content, cognition, communication and culture.\(^4\) She summarizes the 4 Cs as “meaning making involves knowing (content) and thinking (cognition) articulated (communication) in ways which demonstrate intercultural awareness and subject appropriate discourse (culture). These processes are all about developing subject literacies”\(^5\).

When planning a CLIL lesson, content is considered as a starting point.\(^6\) Content refers to the material to be taught, including identifying the teaching objectives and the learning outcomes.\(^7\) Next, content should be linked with communication, through identifying the language elements students will need to work with the content, including key words, phrases, grammar, and the linguistic requirements of tasks and classroom activities. In the next stage of the planning process, all of the above should be complemented with the planning for the development of thinking skills the teaching of content and language requires.\(^8\) This determines what questions the teacher ask and which tasks will encourage higher order thinking skills (HOTs). The fourth C,

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culture, includes referring to the cultural implications of the topic and considering how culture connects with the other three Cs.\(^9\)

Mehisto and his colleagues\(^{10}\) identify six groups of altogether 30 core features of CLIL methodology. The six groups are the following: multiple focus, safe and enriching learning environment, authenticity, active learning, scaffolding, and co-operation. Co-operation, in their view, involves planning in co-operation with CLIL and non-CLIL teachers, involving parents and the local community, authorities and employers. In a university context, this could be extended to the involvement of faculty decision makers and CLIL experts.

Based on the 30 core features, Mehisto and his colleagues also identify four principles of CLIL: cognition, community, content and communication. This model, in some respects, is similar to that of Coyle, however, the only difference being that culture is replaced with community. Mehisto and his colleagues opine that these principles might serve as reference points in lesson planning. The community principle states, among others, that students feel part of an enriching learning community, and teachers and students are partners in education.

As concerns the criteria for success in CLIL, Ball and his colleagues\(^{11}\) have identified eleven potential determining factors. Four of these refer to learners, including learner L2 ability, exposure to L2, literacy and cognitive skills, and socio-economic status. Two refer to teachers: teacher L2 ability and teacher pedagogical skill. Program-related factors include resourcing, self-selecting or system-wide programs, time allocation, the language syllabus, and planning.

Teacher ability in the L2 is seen as crucial by Ball et al.\(^{12}\) On the one hand, teachers have to be able to have a good command of the language of the subject, and, on the other, they have to be able to express pedagogical strategies for successful teaching through the L2. Teacher pedagogical skill is as important as teacher language skill according to Ball et al.\(^{13}\) They state that CLIL teachers need to be trained to use CLIL methodology.

\(^{9}\) Ibidem.
\(^{10}\) P. Mehistro, D. Marsh, M. Frigols, *Uncovering CLIL...,* op. cit.
\(^{12}\) Ibidem.
\(^{13}\) Ibidem.
1.3. CLIL in higher education

CLIL in higher education (HE) contexts is usually referred to as English-medium instruction (EMI). Macaro and his colleagues, in their systematic review of EMI in higher education, find that the growth of EMI in HE is clearly observable in all geographical areas of the world, and that most of this growth is top-down policy driven. A great variety of topics have been researched empirically in the field, for example on teacher and student beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. Macaro and his colleagues also claim that the concept of proficiency to teach through English is underspecified both in empirical research and by institutional requirements. The review also highlights that there is a lack of preparation to teach through English and a lack of professional development opportunities. In addition, it has to be noted that there are varying models of EMI in higher education, even within one HE institution. Sometimes the same institution offers complete study programmes through English, ESP courses, together with elective courses that are taught through English.

This great variety and diversity of EMI is reflected in the ROAD-MAPPING model of English-medium education in multilingual university settings (EMEMUS) of Dafouz and Smit. They have identified six dimensions of EMI, namely Roles of English in relation to other languages, Academic Disciplines, that is the different teaching and learning practices, curricular designs and assessment methods in different disciplines. Language Management denotes language policy statements and declarations, while Agents refers to the social players involved in EMEMUS. Practices and Processes include the way agents think about and do teaching in higher education, while the Internationalization and Glocalization dimension looks at the local and global forces shaping higher education in the 21st century.

EMI can also be investigated in relation to geography and location. A north-south divide has been identified in EMI in European higher education. This means that Nordic and Baltic states have a higher pro-

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15 Ibidem.
16 Ibidem.
18 Ibidem.
portion of English-medium master’s programmes per 100,000 inhabitants than southern Europe. The authors also note that the numbers hide considerable differences between institutions and disciplines; EMI is most frequent in business and engineering, followed by social and natural sciences. In addition, EMI is found to be more frequent in master’s programs than at undergraduate level.\footnote{Ibidem.}


Doiz and her colleagues report on university lecturers’ beliefs and practices in EMI in Spain.\footnote{A. Doiz, D. Lasagabaster, V. Pavón, \textit{The integration of language and content in English-medium instruction courses: Lecturers’ beliefs and practices}, “Ibérica” 2019, no. 38, pp. 151–176.} They identified three problem areas in EMI in HE, based on feedback from lecturers: (1) teaching through a foreign language, (2) the impact of English on the development of the classes, and (3) students’ language skills. Lecturers find it difficult to deal with language problems in class, and planning and teaching through English is seen as time-consuming and stressful, thus decreasing lecturers’ self-confidence. As a consequence, Doiz et al. highlight the need for training lecturers in the most relevant EMI skills.\footnote{Ibidem.} The second problem the team identified was the impact of English on the development of classes:\footnote{Ibidem, p. 169.} the students’ command of English determines the quality and quantity of the material that can be taught in a course, which leads to the third problem, that of the students’ language skills. Students’ low language skills can slow down the pace of the classes and might require frequent stops to rephrase or check understanding.

Another study from Spain focuses on how lecturers in the field of engineering in English-medium programs at a Spanish university see
their work in the context of CLIL and EMI;\textsuperscript{25} with results stating that engineering lecturers seem to follow the modality of EMI rather than CLIL, which includes a dual focus on content and language and thus on language development. The surveyed lecturers refuse to teach language. Aguilar’s results also state that lecturers attach no importance to language integration, and find English language proficiency of all stakeholders as the most important ingredient of success in EMI.

Teaching through the medium of English is made even more challenging for disciplinary teachers as university lecturers have had no degree in content teaching methodology, let alone any background in CLIL methodology, in contrast to language teachers, who get some training in integrating content and language teaching.\textsuperscript{26} In spite of this, a study carried out in Austria found that EMI teachers scored better on a test of teachers’ well-being than secondary CLIL teachers.\textsuperscript{27}

This study, which was carried out among university lecturers teaching lectures and seminars through English at the University of Szeged, Hungary, aims to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways are the English-medium classes different from Hungarian-medium ones?
2. What problems have university lecturers at four faculties of the University of Szeged faced while implementing EMI?
3. What solutions have they found to these problems and what advice they would give to their colleagues?

2. EMI at the University of Szeged

The University of Szeged, which is located in Szeged, southern Hungary, is one of the biggest universities in Hungary with about 22,000 students attending one of its 12 Faculties. Each of these Faculties has a different degree of internationalization. Some faculties have a long history of EMI, for example the Faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry, while others are quite new to internationalization.

For the purposes of this study, four faculties of the university were selected that have launched English-medium study programs after 2010; the Faculty of Agriculture, the Faculty of Economics and Business

Administration, the Faculty of Health Sciences and Social Studies and the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences.

The Faculty of Agriculture started the English language BSc Agricultural Engineer in 2015. Mostly international students attend the study program. The lecturers involved haven’t received any language or methodological preparation before the launch of the BSc. The Faculty helps and motivates trainers through project-related study material development.

The Faculty of Economics and Business Administration started planning for an English-medium study program after the 2012 government decision, according to which all business training programs had become fee-paying. Internationalization was seen as a way forward. They launched the Business Administration and Management BSc programme through English in September 2013, first only for international students, but since 2020 the programme is open for Hungarian students as well. In 2014, the Faculty launched its International Economy and Business MSc through English, both Hungarian and international students attend this program. In 2015, the Faculty launched an English-medium doctoral program, which is for international students only. In 2020, the Faculty launched its English-medium Tourism and catering BSc, both Hungarian and international students attend this study program. As concerns preparation for the launch of English-medium instruction, the Faculty organized English lessons for all the higher education teachers (HETs) who wished to be involved in English medium instruction. The instruction was funded by the Faculty, and took place in the form of one-to-one tutoring. Participants were required to pass a C1-level English language exam within two years. New colleagues who have joined the Faculty since 2012 have the same offer of free language tutoring and the same requirement of passing a C1 language exam. The administrative staff attended a group English language course. As the English-medium instruction started at the Faculty, the need for intercultural awareness-raining arose. There were meetings for teaching staff once a semester in order to be able to deal with problems arising in multicultural classrooms. Also, some methodological assistance was also given to trainers, as most of the HETs at the Faculty are not trained teachers, but have a business degree.

The Faculty of Health Sciences and Social Studies has two English-medium BScs: Physiotherapist and Nurse (Nursing and Patient care BSc, specializations: physiotherapist and nurse). The English language study programs started in September 2018 and are attended by international students only. In preparation to the launch of English-medium programs, language courses were organized for faculty
teachers, which run for several semesters. Teaching and administrative staff at the faculty have the possibility to attend free language courses.

The Faculty of Law and Political Sciences offers four English-medium study programs. The Master in International Relations was launched in 2014, and is attended by both Hungarian and international students. The Master of Laws [LL.M.] in International and European Trade and Investment Law was launched in 2015, and is attended mostly by international students, with one or two Hungarian students per year. The Master of Laws [LL.M.] in Comparative Copyright Law was launched in 2020, and is attended by international students. There was no specific preparation for teachers, and the motivation for teachers is that, in their teaching performance evaluation, courses taught through English are calculated with a higher multiplier.

In summary, it can be stated that the four faculties have chosen different paths in preparation to the launch of EMI in their respective faculties, with two faculties providing preliminary linguistic preparation for the lecturers. Table 1 provides a summary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty of</th>
<th>Study program + year of launch</th>
<th>Language preparation</th>
<th>Teaching methodology preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Agricultural Engineer, 2015</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics and Business Administra-&lt;br&gt;tion</td>
<td>Business Administration and Management BSc, 2013 International Economy and Business MSc, 2014 Doctoral Program, 2015 Tourism and Catering BSc, 2020</td>
<td>yes, one to one English tutoring, requirement: C1 English exam</td>
<td>after the start of the programs: mini methodology courses intercultural awareness raising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences and Social Studies</td>
<td>Nursing and Patient Care BSc, Specializations: Physiotherapy, Nursing, 2018</td>
<td>yes, for several semesters</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Political Sciences</td>
<td>Master’s in International Relations, 2014 Master of Laws in International and European Trade and Investment Law, 2015 Master of Laws in International Copyright Law, 2020</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Preparation of lecturers for EMI at the different faculties of the University of Szeged
3. Methodology

In this investigation, two methods were used. First, in order to gather some background information, the Faculties’ vice deans for internationalization were approached via email or telephone, the questions they were asked are listed in Appendix 1. Then, an online questionnaire (google form) was prepared for university lecturers teaching a course or courses through English (Appendix 2). There were 38 respondents from the faculties concerned, 31.6% respondents from the Faculty of Agriculture, 26.3% from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, 23.7% from the Faculty of Health Sciences and Social Studies, and 18.4% from the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences. The answers to the lecturers’ survey were analysed using keyword analysis.

The respondents have a diverse experience in teaching through English, ranging in time from six months to 25 years. About half of the lecturers have been teaching through English for 1 to 5 years, and 34.2% have been for between 6 to 10 years. See Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Participants’ experience (in years) in teaching through English](image)

36.8% of the respondents teach lectures through English, 26.4% teach seminars through English and 36.8% of the respondents teach both lectures and seminars through English.
The language level of the respondents ranges between B1 and C2. 5.3% of the respondents are at B1 level, 28.9% at B2 level, 39.5% are at C1 level, and 26.3% are at C2 level. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Language level of the respondents

4. Results

In this section, answers to questions 4 through 11 of the google form questionnaire are presented. Question number 4 asked about any positive experiences the lecturers have experienced in connection with their classes taught through English. Questions 5, 6, 7, and 8 focused on the differences between classes taught through Hungarian and English, in terms of methodology (question 5), communication with students (question 6), preparation for the class (question 7), and testing (question 8). Questions 9, 10 and 11 asked about problems, solutions and advice related to EMI.

4.1. Positive experiences (question 4)

Question number 4 asked about any positive experiences lecturers have experienced in connection with their classes taught through English. There were altogether 54 answers that fell into 8 categories.
Table 2. Respondents’ answers to question 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Percent of answers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivated students</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback from students</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good exam results</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct, friendly relationship with students</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New teaching challenge</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful students</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills development</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural aspects</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the responses were related to the success of students. Motivated students ranked first, followed by positive feedback from students and good exam results. Successful students were also mentioned, including thesis topics selected from the topics covered in the course, students participating in international competitions, or students publishing English language publications from the topics of the course. As concerns success or benefits for teachers, teaching through English is seen as a new teaching challenge, which means being up to date in English professional literature, terminology, and adapting a different style of teaching, with new, alternative viewpoints.

4.2. Methodology (question 5)

Question number five asked about the differences in teaching methodology between the English- and Hungarian-medium classes of the lecturers. 30% of the responses stated that there was no difference in methodology or no difference in methodology if the language skills of the students were good. 48% of the respondents answered with statements beginning with “more”. 12% stated that in English-medium classes more explanations were needed, and 8% stated that these classes were more interactive. Answers also included more visuals, more detailed slides, and more pair work for students in contrast to Hungarian-medium classes.

The remaining answers concerned what was less or fewer in an English-medium class than in a Hungarian one. EMI classes are perceived as slower, and some lecturers use simplified texts. Some respondents even mention that lecturers should never take for granted what the students know, as they come from diverse backgrounds. Less material can be taught in an English-medium class, which is sometimes also seen by the teachers as an ESP-class.
4.3. Communication with students (question 6)

Question 6 focused on differences between Hungarian- and English-medium classes with respect to communication with students. There were 42 answers to this open-ended question, which fell into five categories. 23.8% of the answers stated that there was no difference in communication with the students between Hungarian and English-medium classes. 23.8% of the answers stated that there was a more relaxed atmosphere in English-medium classes.

In comparison to Hungarian-medium classes, 19.1% of the responses stated that there was a need for more repetitions and explanations, and more questions are needed to check understanding. 19.1% of the responses mentioned that these classes were slower, there was time for fewer examples, and there was a need for simplification, in other words, lecturers use a simplified vocabulary and simplified texts. 14.2% of the answers referred to language problems, including understanding students, involving students, and receiving less feedback from students.

4.4. Lesson planning and preparation (question 7)

Question 7 focused on preparation and lesson planning. The most frequent reply (37.5%) stated that lecturers prepare more for English medium classes. 27.5% of the respondents stated that there was no difference in their preparation. Specific fields were also mentioned in the answers to question 7. These included linguistic preparation, mentioned by 15% of the respondents. This includes looking for synonyms, simplifying texts, checking pronunciation, or looking up technical terms. 12.5% of the responses concerned English-language materials, that is looking for English-language materials or international examples. Responses also mentioned the use of online materials (5%), and preparing written study materials for the class (2.5%).

4.5. Testing (question 8)

Question 8 asked about differences (if any) in testing students in the English-medium classes. 46.5% of the responses stated that there were no differences in testing. 53.5% of the answers referred to some kind of difference, most of them considering the language level of students attending English-medium classes. These included providing more time to complete a test, and a shift from written exams to oral exams, presentations, individual tasks, and more or regular tests during the semester.
4.6. Problems (question 9)

Question 9 concerned the problems lecturers have encountered during English-medium classes. There were in total 47 answers to question 9. 44.7% of the answers mentioned language problems either in general, or referring to the students’ language level, or the teacher’s language level. 31.9% of the responses mentioned cultural differences, such as a different attitude to time, discipline problems, and a different attitude to writing assignments and group work. 6.4% of the responses mentioned that they had faced no problems, and another 6.4% mentioned the differences in the background knowledge of students. 10.6% of the answers fell into the category “other”, including statements such as humour cannot be used the same way as in Hungarian-medium classes, and that EMI was more tiring for the lecturer.

4.7. Possible solutions (question 10)

Question 10 asked for possible solutions to these problems. There were 57 answers given. 36.9% of the solutions relate to lesson planning, such as asking for feedback or motivating exercises. Answers related to attitude and language ranked second, accounting for 22.8% of the answers each. 17.5% of the answers related to course organisation.

Solutions related to lesson planning include using visuals, asking for feedback more frequently, and repeating information many times or more slowly. Solutions related to attitude are for example being more open, paying individual attention to students, or looking continuously for new methods and tools. As concerns language, solutions included preparing glossaries, and asking students to repeat what they have just said. Solutions related to course organisation include setting detailed course requirements in writing, or compulsory tutoring before tests or giving out written study materials.

4.8. Advice (question 11)

Question 11 asked lecturers to give advice to colleagues who would start teaching through English for the first time. There is a considerable overlap with the answers to Question 10. Altogether there were 62 pieces of advice, falling into the four broad categories of lesson planning, attitude, language and course organisation. Advice related to lesson planning (38.7%) includes starting with a small class, allowing time for presentations, always recapping information, planning less material for a class, always checking understanding, using visuals and including international examples or case studies.
Advice related to attitude (30.6%) includes the need for openness, patience and intercultural awareness, being fair, consistent, flexible and creative. Advice related to language (19.4%) includes speaking slowly and clearly, preparing with synonyms, and to develop language skills. Another important point is to encourage colleagues to speak freely instead of reading out the material. Advice related to course organisation (11.3%) includes observing some experienced colleague’s EMI class, handing out written study materials, and having clear criteria students need to fulfil for passing the class.

5. Summary

This paper presented the results of a questionnaire survey about Hungarian university lecturers’ experiences related to teaching lectures and seminars through English. The questions focused on differences between teaching through English and Hungarian, and English-medium instruction-related problems, solutions, and advice.

In comparison to Hungarian-medium classes, lecturers see English-medium classes as ones requiring more explanation and more repetitions, and thus being a bit slower-paced. However, English-medium classes are also seen as more interactive and more relaxed. In order to contribute to the better understanding of the material, lecturers ask for feedback more frequently in English-medium classes than in Hungarian-medium classes. In addition, HETs prepare more for English-medium classes, which includes preparing simplified texts, glossaries, or more detailed slides. In testing, they give oral exams more frequently, in contrast to the written exams that are common in Hungarian-medium instruction.

These characteristics are rooted in the problems identified by the lecturers, namely language problems and cultural differences. These results are in line with the findings of Doiz and her colleagues,28 namely that the language proficiency of the students determines the quality and quantity of the material that can be covered in a class.

The solutions and advice given by the lecturers include a focus on language planning and trying a more open attitude. The suggestions and solutions related to planning signal a move toward focusing on repacking information in user-friendly ways (the use of visuals, more frequent feedback), which is a fundamental idea in CLIL lesson planning, together with language planning, such as preparing glossaries. These results signal a consciousness of integrating content and

language in the lectures and seminars taught through English, which is in contrast with the findings of Aguilar.29

The limitations of this research should also be noted, namely the small sample size and the use of descriptive statistics only. However, these findings might contribute to a better understanding of how English-medium courses are taught in higher education and might provide the basis for professional development courses in English-medium instruction.

References


Appendix 1

Questions to Vice Deans for Internationalization on training programs through English

1. What English-medium study programs does your Faculty have?
2. Since when do you offer English-medium study programs?
3. What is the composition / proportion of students in English-medium study programs? (mostly Hungarian students / mostly international students / equal proportion of Hungarian and international students)
4. Have you organised any training or preparation for your lecturers to teach through English? If yes, what kind of preparation it was?
5. How does your Faculty help / motivate lecturers teaching through English?

Appendix 2

Questions to lecturers teaching subjects through English

1. Which Faculty of the University of Szeged do you teach at?
2. Since when do you teach through English?
3. What kind of course do you teach through English?
   • lecture
   • seminar
   • practice
4. What do you consider as your biggest success in relation to your courses taught through English?
5. What are the differences, if any, between your classes taught through English and Hungarian concerning methodology?

6. What are the differences, if any, between your classes taught through English and Hungarian concerning communication with your students?

7. What are the differences, if any, between your classes taught through English and Hungarian concerning preparation for the classes?

8. What are the differences, if any, between your classes taught through English and Hungarian concerning testing?

9. What problems have you faced in classes taught through English?

10. How have you solved / addressed these problems?

11. What is your advice to colleagues who start teaching through English?

12. What is your English level?
   - A2
   - B1
   - B2
   - C1
   - C2