

# ATTITUDES OF CROATIAN NATIVE SPEAKERS TOWARDS THE IDEA OF INTRODUCING ENGLISH-MEDIUM HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr Branka Drljača Margić & Tea Žeželić

Department of English

University of Rijeka, Croatia

# Outline



- Introduction
  
- The study
  - Participants
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  - The analysis of results and discussion
  
- Conclusion

# Introduction – EMI in Europe



- higher education – increasingly internationalised
- a growing need for student and teacher mobility
- EMI
  
- domain loss
- a step towards diglossia
- cultural imperialism

# EMI in Croatia



- higher education in Croatia – almost exclusively Croatian-medium (among a small number of countries with no complete programmes in English, Ammon & McConnell 2002)
- Croatia – approaching accession to the EU → more opportunities for student mobility – implies reciprocity
- A university cannot be expected to participate in international student exchange programs if it does not offer at least some courses in a language that exchange students are expected to understand (Preisler 2005: 242).



# The present study - Methodology

# Participants



- 177 graduate students of the University of Rijeka, Croatia (Faculty of Maritime Studies, Faculty of Engineering, School of Medicine, Faculty of Law, Academy of Applied Arts, Faculty of Economics, and Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management)
- 96% between 22 and 26 years old
- 56% female and 44% male
- 94% learned English (8 years on average)
- very exposed to English; input greater than output

# Research method



- data collected by means of a questionnaire (originally written in Croatian)
- pilot study
- three parts
  - personal data and self-perceived competence
  - previous experience with EMI
  - attitudes towards EMI
- descriptive statistics → frequency rates

# Research questions (1 / 2)



- Do the respondents feel that they are competent enough to attend courses and take exams in English?
- (Why) would the respondents like courses they attend and exams they take to be in English?
- Do the respondents think that courses they attend and exams they take should be in English?



# Research questions (2/2)

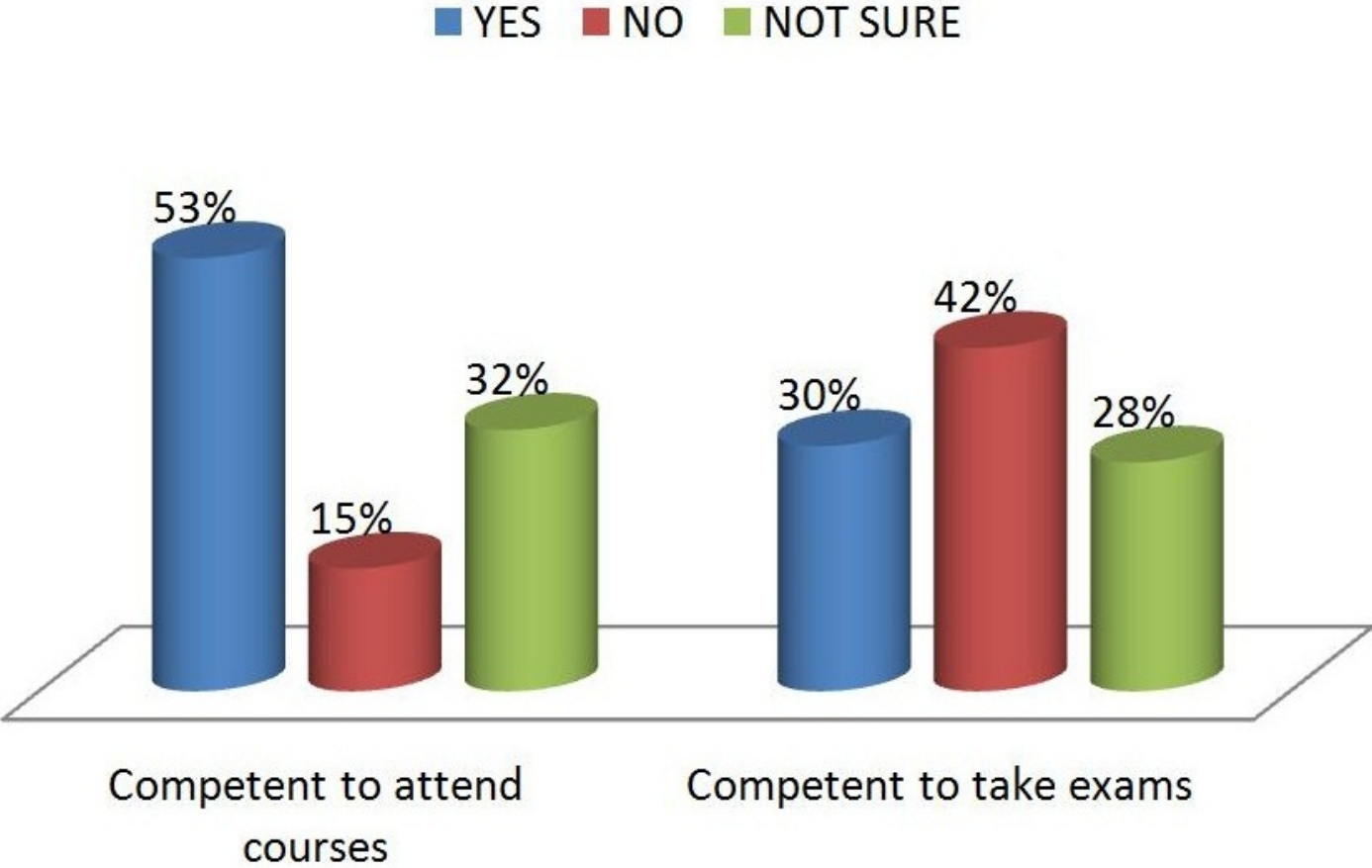


- Do the respondents perceive the implementation of English-medium higher education in Croatia to be possible?
- What do the respondents believe to be main advantages of and barriers to introducing English as a medium of instruction in Croatian higher education?
- Do the respondents believe that the introduction of English as a medium of instruction in Croatian higher education would make universities/faculties more competitive?



# The results

# The respondents' self-perceived competence

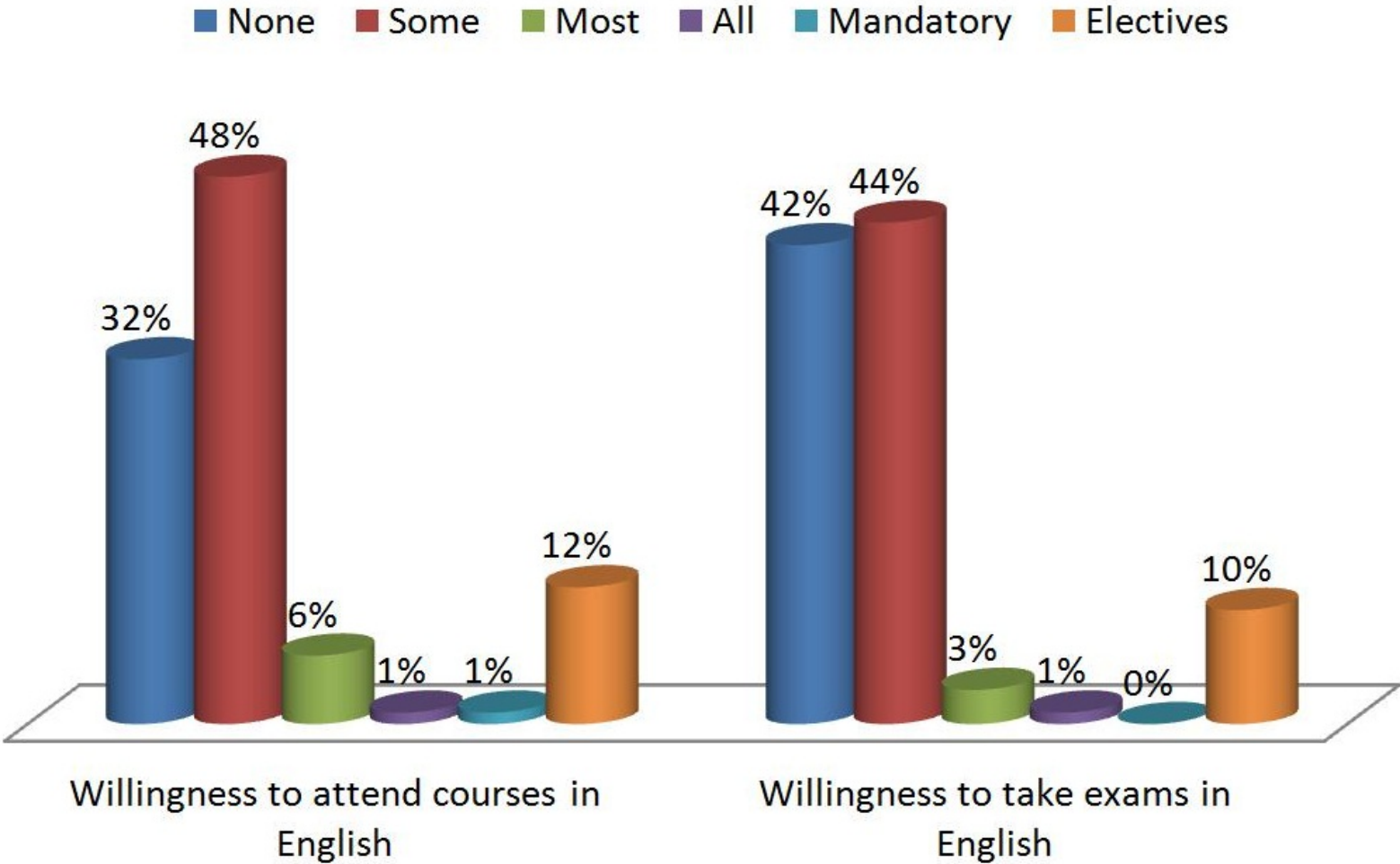


## The respondents' previous experience with EMI



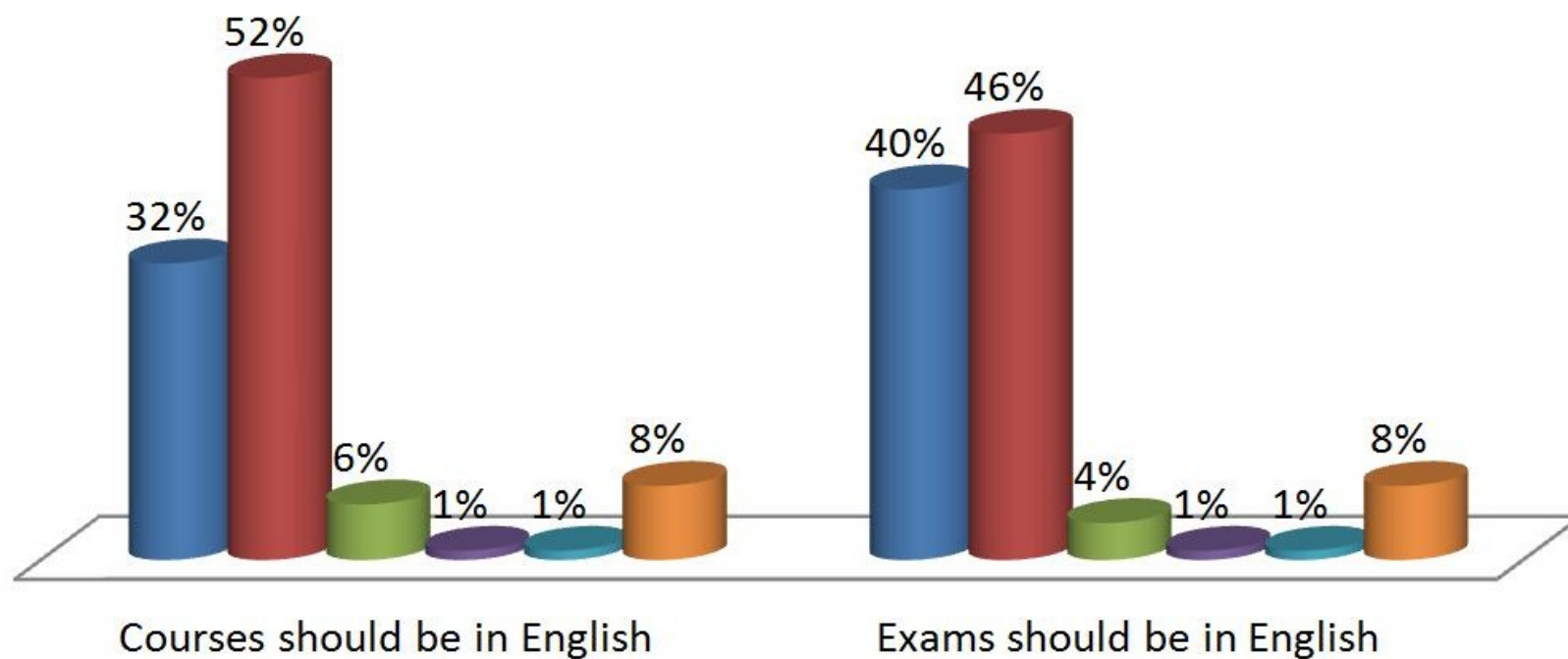
- 3%
- 6 students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management – 4 electives (foreigners and Croatian natives)

# The respondents' willingness to attend courses and take exams in English



# Perceived utility of courses and exams in English

■ None ■ Some ■ Most ■ All ■ Compulsory ■ Electives



## Why Croatian students do not want to attend courses in English


a lack of practice

self-perceived incompetence

a lack of lecturers proficient in English

loyalty to Croatian


Croatian in jeopardy



*“Because I think we have insufficient knowledge for that to be possible, we all believe we know English, but actually we don’t when it comes to taking exams – that would be too difficult.” (30)*

*“The reason why I wouldn’t want to take all courses in English, but only some, is that I haven’t gained sufficient knowledge of English in the course of my formal education; hence it would be good to start with only a few courses in English.” (47)*





*“Because not all teachers are English proficient, and most are not trained to teach in English.” (49)*

*“Because I live in Croatia and love my language.” (113)*

*“Because the tradition of the Croatian language and everything related to it, grammar, orthography, would be jeopardised. We must be literate primarily in our own language.” (166)*

*“I believe I live in Croatia.” (82)*

*“Because I am lazy.” (91)*




## Why Croatian students want to attend courses in English

gaining a higher level of competence in English

becoming more competitive on the labour market

interesting/challenging

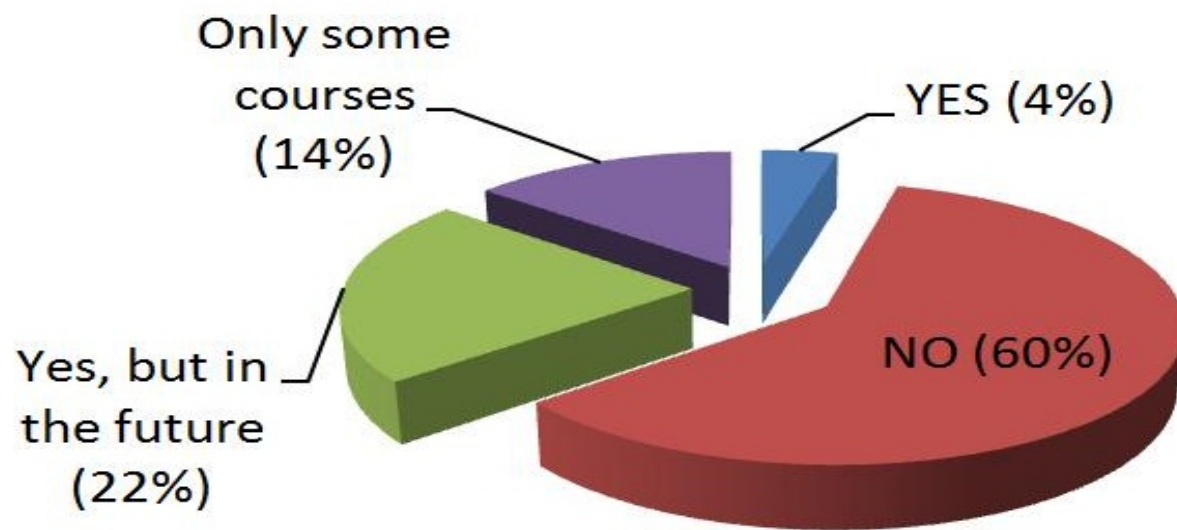


*“I believe that would make me more competitive on the labour market and make it easier for me to live and work abroad.” (2)*

*“The English language is the most widespread language in the world. Taking courses and exams in English would enable me to fluently communicate with foreign colleagues.” (125)*

*“It would be interesting, challenging and would give me the opportunity to perfect my knowledge of English.” (15)*

# The possibility of having courses in English



# EMI: the barriers



- a lack of ability and motivation to use English as a medium of education
- fears for the Croatian language and its development
- financial and organisational issues involved
- Croatian mentality, nationalism, unreceptiveness to new ideas

# EMI: the advantages



- improving English
- full participation in international communication
- better preparation for the competitive labour market
- achieving professional goals in Croatia and abroad
  
- enabling foreign students to enrol
- helping university get better rating

# Conclusion



- in spite of the approaching accession of Croatia to the EU and the increasing internationalisation of higher education Europe-wide, the idea of introducing English-medium higher education in Croatia is largely facing scepticism and concerns
- the respondents are highly sceptical about the ability and motivation of teachers and students to transfer and acquire knowledge in English
- furthermore, they are concerned that Croatian would consequently become inadequate as a medium for transmitting new scholarly knowledge and inappropriate for use in higher education

# Suggestions for further research



- a larger sample
- students at pre-university level
- conduct a similar study in a few years and compare results
  
- carry out a study among those with some EMI experience





Thank you for your attention!

[bdrljaca@ffri.hr](mailto:bdrljaca@ffri.hr)