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*Branka Drljača Margić*

## BALANCING ENGLISH AND CROATIAN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EMI STUDENTS' VIEWS\*

*dr. sc. Branka Drljača Margić, Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet*  
*brljaca@ffri.uniri.hr*  [orcid.org/0000-0002-7617-6606](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7617-6606)

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*The rapid expansion of English-medium instruction (EMI) raises important questions about its implications for national languages. However, the perspectives of EMI students and teachers on these issues remain largely unexplored. Drawing on questionnaire data from 71 and focus-group data from 14 second- and third-year undergraduates at a Croatian higher education institution, the present study addresses this gap by examining EMI students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the use, knowledge and status of Croatian in higher education and in their future profession. The findings indicate that most students do not perceive their choice to study in English as threatening the development or use of Croatian, while around a third report negative effects on their proficiency in the language. The vast majority support the parallel provision of study programmes in Croatian, while opinions diverge on the introduction of Croatian for Specific Purposes courses and the occasional use of Croatian in EMI classrooms. The paper highlights the need to safeguard the role of Croatian in (English-medium) higher education and provides important insights for EMI teachers, students and policymakers.*

**Keywords:** *Croatian; English; higher education; English-medium instruction; students; language policy*

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## 1. Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education today is closely linked with the use of English as a medium of instruction. This connection stems from the role of English as the dominant academic lingua franca, which both enables and advances the internationalisation process. In turn, the internationalisation of higher education contributes to the spread of English in academic settings and reinforces its global standing. English-medium instruction (EMI) is thus often seen as a hallmark of internationalisation in higher education (Wilkinson 2013).

Macaro et al. (2018: 37) define EMI as the use of English “to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English”. EMI has become a key strategic priority for higher education institutions, as it enhances their international visibility, boosts competitiveness, advances global rankings and promotes the mobility of faculty and students (Lasagabaster 2022). As a result, the past two decades have seen a sharp rise in the number of English-taught programmes worldwide, with 40,786 programmes now offered outside the Big Four anglophone study destinations—the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada and Australia. In fact, every fifth non-philological degree programme in English is currently delivered in non-English-speaking countries (British Council 2024). This trend has led to a steady increase in academic interest and research within the field.

Since EMI primarily involves a change in the language of instruction, it is not surprising that most of the questions posed and concerns expressed relate to its linguistic aspects. More specifically, researchers investigating EMI voice concerns regarding teachers' and students' competence to teach and study in English (Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović 2017; Liao et al. 2025), as insufficient language proficiency negatively impacts the transfer and acquisition of content, classroom interaction, the quality of education, students' motivation and teachers' self-esteem. Questions have also been raised about language-related outcomes (Pecorari 2020), language requirements for teaching and learning (Wang, Yuan and De Costa 2025) and language support for teachers and students in EMI (Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović 2018).

Although the above-mentioned language-specific questions and concerns primarily focus on English, attention has also been paid to the role,

status and use of national languages in non-English-speaking countries where EMI has been implemented. However, such discussions are far less common and primarily reflect scholarly perspectives and considerations. More specifically, EMI is perceived to potentially have an adverse impact on the status of and attitudes towards the national language in higher education—a high-status domain where education in English may be viewed as more appealing, beneficial and appropriate (Sah 2024; Tamtam et al. 2012). Consequently, in prestigious domains such as academia and higher education, other languages are increasingly losing ground to English, potentially resulting in a diglossic relationship between English and national languages (Coleman 2006; Drljača Margić 2021). Students enrolled in English-taught programmes develop academic communication skills and disciplinary literacy in English, but often lack equivalent competences in their mother tongue (Santulli 2015; Wilkinson and Gabriëls 2021). This may lead to their reluctance and inability to communicate effectively within their field of expertise using the national language. Finally, the increase in English-taught programmes at the expense of those in the national language may infringe upon students' right to receive education in their national language (Ou, Hult and Gu 2022).

While researchers examining EMI have critically considered its implications for national languages, the insights and perspectives of key stakeholders, namely teachers and students, have been largely overlooked. The present study thus aims to address this research gap by exploring EMI students' perspectives and perceptions regarding the use, knowledge and status of the Croatian language in EMI and higher education in general, as well as in their future professional context.

## **2. Supporting national language use and proficiency in higher education**

As Cots, Lasagabaster and Mancho-Barés (2013) observe, universities rarely develop an explicit language policy that addresses key issues related to language use and multilingualism in education. When implemented, such a policy focuses mainly on English proficiency requirements and support mechanisms to ensure the development of quality English-taught study programmes. Another area that this language policy should address is the integration of the national language into EMI and the promotion of students' national language competences alongside English. More specifi-

cally, language policy in (English-medium) higher education should also consider the role and use of local languages, the balance between English and other languages, and the enhancement of national language proficiency through appropriate training (cf. Hult 2005; Sah 2024).

Regarding the latter, Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović (2017) gave an overview of some actual or envisioned strategies from various European contexts aimed at supporting plurilingualism and the use of the national language as a medium of instruction in (English-medium) higher education, as well as at promoting the advancement of students' national language competences. These strategies include using both English and the national language to deliver key components of English-taught degree programmes, ensuring that undergraduate education is conducted in the national language, providing training in the national language, allowing translanguaging in EMI classes and awarding extra credit for academic work completed in the national language. An illustrative example is the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use at the University of Copenhagen. In accordance with its policy of parallel language use, in the Centre, the parallel use of English and Danish in EMI classrooms is not only permitted but actively encouraged. As Dimova, Hultgren and Kling (2021) argue, the parallel use of English and Danish serves two purposes: to respond to the Englishisation of universities and to facilitate content comprehension among students. Another example is the Politecnico di Milano, where the university management's attempt to implement an English-only policy in its master's programmes was contested by a large number of teachers and researchers (Santulli 2015). Conversely, the case of the School of Business and Economics at Maastricht University, as reported by Wilkinson (2013), illustrates that bilingual education in Dutch and English was discontinued due to its high costs, leading the institution to retain only English-taught study programmes. What is significant, however, is that precisely the Netherlands, where "for years, politicians, education institutions, and businesses have actively recruited students from other countries to further expand the Netherlands' leading position as a knowledge and innovation country" (NL#Times 2024b), has recently begun to more strictly control the influx of international students, resulting in a decline in their numbers (Schiltmans 2023). In the same vein, the number of English-taught programmes has been reduced, and the introduction of new ones has markedly slowed (British Council 2024). Furthermore, care has been taken to ensure that major bachelor's degrees, such as economics and

psychology, are also offered in Dutch, if not exclusively. It has been urged that knowledge of the Dutch language and culture should be enhanced (NL#Times 2024a). Also, at the Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka, international students are required to take Croatian language courses. These consist of five courses offered during the first five terms of study, each comprising two 90-minute sessions per week, for a total of 60 classes per course. The courses are taught by a Croatian lector from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka. Upon completion of all five courses, students are expected to reach the B1 level of proficiency. The courses primarily focus on general Croatian, but also include specialised medical terminology (as explained by Tanja Diklić, course instructor, personal communication, 28 July 2025).

### 3. Methodology

The first part of the following section presents the aims and research questions. Subsection 3.2. provides a brief description of the participants and the context in which the study was conducted. The final part outlines the research methods and the approach used for data analysis.

#### 3.1. Aims and research questions

The aim of this study was to investigate EMI students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the use and status of the Croatian language in (English-medium) higher education and in their future profession. The study also sought to encourage students to reflect on their proficiency in the national language.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. Do students believe that their decision not to study in Croatian will have negative implications for the Croatian language and their proficiency in it?
2. How do students perceive the implementation of EMI in relation to the Croatian language and Croatian-taught study programmes?
3. What are students' views on the use and teaching of Croatian within EMI programmes?
4. What do students regard as possible ways to safeguard and maintain the Croatian language?

### 3.2. Participants and the context

The sample comprised 71 students—38 second-year and 33 third-year students—enrolled in a three-year English-medium undergraduate study programme. These two cohorts of students were selected on the grounds that they had been immersed in EMI long enough to develop perspectives on the influence of English-medium education on their Croatian proficiency, as well as on the use and status of the Croatian language. Simultaneously, their relatively recent transition to EMI allowed them to retain a degree of immediacy and critical awareness regarding the shift in the language of instruction. All participants were native speakers of Croatian. Prior to their university studies, they received their education in Croatian.

The study was conducted at a Croatian public higher education institution that has offered an English-taught study programme for over a decade. This programme has a Croatian-taught counterpart, which was established earlier. The English-taught programme maintains a stable enrolment rate, with the majority of students being domestic.

### 3.3. Research method and approach to data analysis

The primary data collection method was a questionnaire. It was distributed to students in class and took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The questionnaire was anonymous, written in Croatian and comprised 12 questions.

Five questions were open-ended, while each of the remaining seven consisted of a closed-ended *yes/no* or *yes/no/not sure* question followed by an open-ended prompt asking students to explain their affirmative, negative or uncertain response. Finally, the students were invited to provide any additional comments. The content of the questions is presented in the following section.

Following the analysis of the questionnaire data, two 45-minute focus groups were held to assist in interpreting the findings by clarifying potential ambiguities, validating initial interpretations and eliciting more nuanced perspectives. The focus groups consisted of 14 students (eight second-year and six third-year students) taken from the original sample of 71 students and were conducted at the higher education institution under study.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were statistically analysed using Microsoft Office Excel. The frequencies and percentages of participants' affirmative, negative or uncertain responses were calculated.

As for the qualitative data, all responses to the open-ended questions and sub-questions in the questionnaire were compiled in a separate document, and the focus-group discussions were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The data were analysed using thematic analysis (cf. Braun and Clarke 2021). Participants' responses were read several times, and the data were manually coded by the author to identify emerging themes. Themes were generated through manual coding to maintain close engagement with the data and preserve interpretive depth (Saldaña 2021). Given the manageable size of the dataset and the exploratory nature of the study, coding by hand enabled an inductive, context-sensitive approach, capturing nuanced meanings and patterns, and supporting reflexivity throughout the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2021). Relevant excerpts from students' responses were selected, translated verbatim into English and incorporated into the presentation of results to illustrate the identified themes in line with the study's aims and research questions.

#### 4. Results

Students decided to study in English: a) because it offers greater employment opportunities, primarily abroad, b) to further improve their language proficiency, c) to continue their education abroad, d) to participate in the Erasmus programme, e) to enhance international collaboration, f) because it is more interesting, and g) out of curiosity. The first reason was cited by almost all participants. The second two reasons were frequently mentioned, whereas the others appeared sporadically, typically alongside the first three.

I believe that an English-taught study programme and an English diploma open more doors to jobs abroad, which are better paid and offer more opportunities for professional advancement.

Even if I stay in Croatia, knowledge of English as a world language is essential for communicating with foreign partners and foreign workers in the country.

To improve my English language skills, and I want to pursue a master's degree abroad, so it is important to get used to the language.

[...] Besides, it is convenient if a student decides to go on Erasmus.

[...] and I was motivated by the curiosity about what it would be like to study in English.

[...] Good English proficiency promotes international collaboration and getting new acquaintances.

Regarding the negative implications of their decision to study in English for the status, development and use of the Croatian language in higher education and beyond, 89.5% of the respondents foresee no such impact. They explain that they use Croatian outside the university and that the overwhelming majority of degree programmes are still offered in Croatian. The remainder of the respondents believe that the growing preference for studying in English will weaken individuals' L1 skills.

As for the negative implications of studying in English for their knowledge and use of Croatian in their future profession and beyond, 63.16% of the respondents do not anticipate any, as Croatian is their native language and they use it on a daily basis. However, 36.84% already report negative effects, such as limited familiarity with relevant terminology in Croatian, forgetting certain expressions, deteriorating writing skills, grammatical inaccuracies, awkward or unnatural phrasing and greater spontaneity in English than in Croatian.

I don't think it has negative implications because although I study in English, I live in Croatia and speak Croatian every day.

Some expressions will later need to be learned in Croatian, but I believe this will not be a problem.

I believe it will not have negative implications for my general knowledge of Croatian, except in relation to my future profession if I stay in Croatia.

Studying in English will only compound the fact that I am already unable to express myself in grammatically correct Croatian.

Sometimes I can't recall a particular word in Croatian. They come to me more spontaneously in English.

My writing skills in Croatian have declined.

The vast majority of the respondents (88.24%) hold that both current and future study programmes in English should have Croatian equivalents to give students a choice. Only 8.82% disagree, arguing that this would diminish the value of EMI and that some programmes do not need to be offered in Croatian, while 2.94% are unsure.

Students should have the choice to study in their first language.

Not everyone has the means to study in English. They may lack the financial resources or sufficient proficiency in English.

I agree that programmes in English should have equivalents in Croatian, but I also believe that more programmes conducted in Croatian should also be offered in English.

It is important for Croatia to offer programmes in Croatian in order to retain people in the country.

There are plenty of study programmes taught in Croatian. Offering every single English-taught programme also in Croatian reduces their value.

I think that some study programmes do not need to be taught in Croatian.

Most students (61.76%) oppose the occasional use of Croatian in EMI, arguing that English should be the sole language of instruction and noting that international students do not understand Croatian. Around a fifth of the participants (23.53%), however, consider occasional code-switching to Croatian beneficial for learning Croatian terminology and for improving content comprehension. Those who are unsure (14.71%) view translanguaging as potentially helpful for better and easier understanding of content, but only when international students are not present.

If someone decides to study in English, then all aspects of the programme should be exclusively in English.

Switching to Croatian prevents foreign students from understanding the content.

If there are no international students, the teacher can switch to Croatian to explain things more easily and help students understand the material.

Although we study in English, it would be beneficial to become familiar with Croatian terminology should we choose to work in Croatia.

Based on others' experiences, the slightly declining interest in English-taught study programmes stems from a lack of understanding, which could be alleviated through the occasional use of Croatian.

Almost half of the respondents (45.45%) support introducing a Croatian for Specific Purposes course, comparable to the English for Specific Purposes course available to students who study in Croatian. In their opinion, such a course would provide students with a platform for learning Croatian terminology and disciplinary discourse, thereby preparing them for jobs in Croatia. Many of these respondents, however, point out that the course should be elective or compulsory only for domestic students. Another half of the participants (48.48%) do not deem it necessary, as they are primarily preparing for employment abroad. Those who are uncertain (6.06%) suggest that the course should be elective or offered only to international students.

No need for such a course. If I had wanted to become familiar with Croatian disciplinary discourse, I would have enrolled in a study programme in Croatian.

I plan to work abroad, so I'd end up forgetting everything from that course.

Such a course would help us learn Croatian terminology so that we can manage better in the workplace in Croatia.

Yes, because I find it important to be prepared for job opportunities in Croatia.

Definitively, because I've met so many professionals who couldn't express themselves properly or were illiterate.

This course should be elective, otherwise foreign students would be lost.

When asked how to protect the Croatian language and ensure its further development and use in higher education, as well as in students' field of study, the students suggested the following measures: a) higher salaries, better quality of life and greater respect for people in Croatia, b) maintenance of Croatian-taught study programmes, c) implementation of Croatian-medium equivalents for English-taught study programmes, d) improved knowledge of standard Croatian and updated Croatian classes in schools, e) everyday use of Croatian and reading in it, f) making knowledge of Croatian mandatory and providing relevant training, g) offering Croatian for Specific Purposes courses, h) raising awareness of the importance of language maintenance and development, and i) establishing relevant bodies and associations. A minority of the students (34.36%) did not consider any particular actions necessary

or were unsure how to protect the language. Two respondents noted that care for Croatian should not be imposed or enforced.

Keep people in the country by appreciating and fairly compensating them. Give them reasons to study in Croatian.

Language will continue to develop by itself, yet students should read more in Croatian to expand their vocabulary.

Use Croatian as much as possible.

An institution should be established to oversee the protection, compulsory learning and promotion of Croatian.

Make sure people have a good command of standard Croatian.

Modernise Croatian language classes in schools, ensure the recruitment of competent teachers and raise students' awareness of the importance of high literacy in their native language.

Care should be taken that foreign workers in Croatia are provided with language training free of charge.

Incorporate Croatian for specific purposes courses into EMI curricula.

Maintain study programmes in Croatian, regardless of English alternatives.

## 5. Discussion

The findings indicate that the students chose to pursue their studies in English primarily because they perceive a degree from an English-taught programme as a pathway to enhanced employment opportunities abroad. Enrolment in such programmes is also regarded as a means of improving their English language proficiency and becoming accustomed to studying in English, which is considered particularly valuable by those intending to pursue master's or doctoral studies within EMI contexts at foreign universities. Proficiency in English is thus viewed as an important factor in supporting both educational advancement and professional development abroad (cf. Sah 2024). In contrast to the findings of Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović (2017), which show that all EMI students in their study planned to work outside Croatia, the present results reveal that some students remain open to job opportunities in Croatia. For these students, English is likewise considered essential, as it facilitates international communication and interaction with foreign staff in the country.

The large majority of students do not perceive their decision to study in English as posing a threat to the status, development and use of the Croatian language in higher education and beyond. This perspective is primarily explained by the fact that they use Croatian on a daily basis outside the university context and that study programmes in Croatia are still predominantly offered in Croatian, suggesting that students who pursue their studies in Croatian preserve the national language. The latter resonates with the findings of Ljosland (2007), who argues that students' personal ambitions tend to outweigh concerns regarding the status of the national language—a tendency that may constrain its development and contribute to domain loss. According to de Swaan (2000), the responsibility for protecting and further developing the national language in high-status domains, such as higher education, is thereby implicitly shifted onto others. It should, however, be noted that the majority of respondents base their views on the current situation, in which study programmes are predominantly offered in Croatian. The 10.5% of respondents who perceive a threat in the form of deteriorated L1 skills take into account a potential future increase in the number of EMI programmes and in students' preference for them. It may be concluded, as corroborated by the focus-group findings, that this proportion would have been higher if respondents had adopted a more future-oriented perspective.

Furthermore, although only 10.5% of respondents perceive negative implications of EMI for the status, development and use of Croatian—focusing mainly on the potential erosion of their L1 skills—this percentage rises to 36.84% when they are explicitly asked whether studying in English negatively affects or will affect their knowledge and use of Croatian in their future profession and beyond. In particular, they highlight their limited familiarity with disciplinary terminology in Croatian, which may negatively affect their professional performance if they pursue careers in Croatia. Students also report that enrolment in EMI negatively affects their grammatical and orthographic accuracy, lexical range, idiomatic expression and writing skills in Croatian. The latter, however, as highlighted in the focus groups, cannot be attributed solely to EMI, given the pervasive exposure of young people to English through social media, reading books in English, watching films and series in English and using English in everyday communication. What can, however, be attributed almost exclusively to their engagement in EMI is that they not only become acquainted with their specialised register primarily in English but also develop their *cognitive*

*academic language proficiency* (Cummins 1979) in English. Both outcomes may, in turn, reduce their competence and willingness to discuss their field of study and expertise in their native language (cf. Wilkinson and Gabriëls 2021). Here we may also infer, in line with the focus-group results, that the proportion of respondents perceiving the negative implications would have been higher if students had placed greater emphasis on the use and knowledge of Croatian in their future profession. The fact that Croatian is their mother tongue and used daily, which is cited to explain the absence of a perceived threat, will not in itself lead to the development of their Croatian skills for professional purposes. The lack of focus on Croatian proficiency in their future profession can, for many, be explained by the expectation of pursuing their careers abroad. On the other hand, the focus-group results also suggest that students' lack of negative perception may stem from the fact that although they recognise that remaining in Croatia requires adapting to Croatian disciplinary discourse, they do not anticipate this transition to be lengthy or overly demanding. It may also reflect their observation that English terminology is frequently used in professional communication in Croatia and that strong domain-specific English proficiency is highly valued in the local workplace context. Regarding their general Croatian skills, it appears that many attribute any decline primarily to the above-mentioned factors, which are not related to their English-medium education. In this regard, some respondents underscore that EMI may exacerbate already unsatisfactory L1 skills. A focus-group participant adds that EMI would have had a greater impact on their general Croatian skills had they begun their education in English at the primary or secondary level. What the focus-group findings also reveal is a wide spectrum of perceived negative implications for students' L1 skills—from occasional difficulty recalling a specific Croatian expression to instances of being unable to communicate adequately in Croatian, resulting in a switch to English—as well as varying views on what constitutes a negative impact.

With respect to students' attitudes towards the presence and use of Croatian in (English-medium) higher education, the vast majority believe that every study programme, irrespective of the existence of its English version, should be available in Croatian, so that students are provided with genuine choice, and that the individual right to be educated in one's national language is not undermined (cf. Santulli 2015). Opinions are, however, more divided regarding the introduction of a Croatian for Specific Purposes course. Students' views on this matter appear to be closely linked

to their employment plans, that is, driven by instrumental motivation. Primarily those who may remain in Croatia welcome such a course, which, following Basturkmen's (2022: 512) definition of English for specific purposes, embodies the "field of [Croatian] language teaching that seeks to prepare learners to use [Croatian] in a particular domain, such as a workplace or profession, or in study or academic settings". Additionally, focus-group participants report acquiring Croatian terminology by searching for Croatian terms out of interest or to enhance comprehension; through discussions about their field with friends, peers and family members who study or have studied the same field in Croatian; and via part-time jobs undertaken during their studies. In fact, they acknowledge that they prefer these activities, strategies and personal initiatives over formal coursework. Naturally, as the respondents explain, the extent of this acquisition depends on an individual's curiosity, focus, needs, activities, interactions and ambitions. Finally, 38.24% of participants support the occasional use of Croatian in EMI content courses to familiarise students with Croatian terminology and aid understanding (cf. Adamson and Fujimoto-Adamson 2021), with a third noting that this is appropriate when international students are absent from class or not enrolled. Others, who do not approve of translanguaging, believe that English should be the sole medium of instruction in EMI or express concern that translanguaging marginalises foreign students. Excluding students who advocate either an English-only policy or translanguaging regardless of the composition of the student body, the findings indicate that the number of students who support occasional code-switching to Croatian in EMI depends on the presence of international students, being higher when only domestic students are in class. Also, evidence from EMI classrooms suggests that intermittent translanguaging occurs frequently, particularly when only local students are present (cf. Mazak and Carroll 2017). Focus-group participants, however, note that EMI teachers' practices are often not aligned with students' needs, as they primarily switch to Croatian when they encounter difficulty expressing something in English and occasionally to clarify a complex topic, but never to explicitly familiarise students with Croatian terminology.

Efforts and measures to protect Croatian in higher education and beyond, proposed by two thirds of respondents, focus primarily on ensuring that people remain in the country and that study programmes are offered in Croatian, while programmes in English include Croatian for Specific Purposes courses. They view language safeguarding as a combination of

national initiatives—such as improving the quality of Croatian classes in schools and raising students' awareness of the importance of language maintenance and vitality—and individual efforts, including using Croatian in various domains and reading in the language. Finally, they maintain that all individuals studying and working in Croatia should be required to learn Croatian and be offered appropriate training opportunities.

## 6. Conclusion

In today's global context, where English is increasingly used in higher education and perceived as occupying the top of the language hierarchy (Rahman and Hu 2025; Sah 2024), sustaining the role of the national language in transmitting advanced knowledge has become increasingly complex and demanding. Nevertheless, this should not deter nations and individuals from striving to preserve the full status of the national language and safeguard its role as a medium of instruction. Not all initiatives, however, are equally feasible and appropriate. Taking Croatia as an example, a priority should be the maintenance of high-quality study programmes in Croatian after English-taught versions are introduced, as well as the implementation of Croatian-medium programmes alongside programmes originally launched in English. Another key measure is the introduction of Croatian for Specific Purposes courses for EMI students, which would familiarise them with subject-specific terminology and disciplinary discourse in Croatian. In addition, general Croatian language courses should be offered to international EMI students. As Galloway, Numajiri and Rees (2020) corroborate, students need general, academic and discipline-specific proficiency in the national language in order to complete their education, function on the local market and take part in scholarly discussion in the language. The majority of focus-group participants point out that professional aspirations abroad should not serve as an excuse for professionals in any field to neglect their general and domain-specific Croatian skills.

Translanguaging, on the one hand, offers both domestic and international students opportunities to be exposed to and use general, academic and discipline-specific Croatian, making it a useful way of integrating the national language into EMI. However, its feasibility and appropriacy can be limited, as international students may feel excluded from communication, deprived of opportunities to express themselves, receive explanation and learn disciplinary discourse in their native languages, and disappointed in

the expectation that English would serve as the sole medium of instruction (cf. Drljača Margić and Molino 2022).

Unlike in most higher education contexts, where the implementation of EMI is one of the main strategic goals, universities in the Netherlands and Denmark appear to have come full circle. They are now reducing the number of English-taught programmes while simultaneously strengthening education in the national language and reinforcing native language competences in high-status domains (British Council 2024; Schiltmans 2023; Wright and Zitnansky 2021). These examples highlight the importance of adopting a balanced approach to EMI through the development of language policies that both support the internationalisation of higher education and protect and promote the role, use and knowledge of the national language.

The present study not only examined an underexplored aspect of EMI language policy but also provided insights into how EMI students perceive national language issues, thereby advancing our understanding of the complex relationships among languages in (English-medium) higher education. The findings may be of value to EMI teachers, students and policymakers in reconsidering and adapting their decisions and practices. Future research should extend to a wider range of contexts, including students who begin their education in English at the primary or high school level within Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes. It would also be valuable to examine educational settings with a high proportion of international students to explore their attitudes towards and needs related to the use and learning of the host country's national language, as well as their views on translanguaging in class. Finally, the same topic should be investigated among students who chose the same educational track in Croatian in order to explore their motivation, reasoning and perceptions.

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## SAŽETAK

Branka Drljača Margić

### SUŽIVOT ENGLESKOGA I HRVATSKOGA JEZIKA U VISOKOME OBRAZOVANJU: STAVOVI STUDENATA KOJI STUDIRAJU NA ENGLESKOME JEZIKU

Znatan porast uporabe engleskoga kao jezika visokoškolske nastave (EJVIN) otvara pitanja njegova utjecaja na nacionalne jezike. EJVIN rijetko prati eksplicitna jezična politika, a kada se ona provodi, pokriva domene jezičnoga umijeća u engleskome i jezične potpore za EJVIN. Jezična politika međutim ostavlja izvan fokusa ulogu, uporabu i poznavanje nacionalnih jezika. Također, nedostaju istraživanja stavova studenata i nastavnika koji uče i poučavaju na engleskome jeziku u visokome obrazovanju o pitanjima vezanima uz nacionalni jezik. Ovom se studijom stoga, metodom upitnika na uzorku od 71 studenta te metodom fokus-grupe od 14 studenata druge i treće godine prijediplomskoga studija na jednoj hrvatskoj visokoškolskoj instituciji, odgovara na nedostatak istraživanja ispitivanjem stavova i percepcija studenata o uporabi, poznavanju i statusu hrvatskoga jezika u visokome obrazovanju (na engleskome jeziku) i u njihovoj budućoj struci. Kvantitativni su podaci obrađeni metodama deskriptivne statistike, a kvalitativni metodom tematske analize. Rezultati pokazuju da velika većina ispitanika ne smatra da njihova odluka da studiraju na engleskome jeziku ugrožava razvoj i uporabu hrvatskoga jezika. Trećina ispitanika međutim ističe negativne učinke svoje odluke na njihovo umijeće u hrvatskome jeziku, posebice na poznavanje jezika discipline. Gotovo 90 % studenata zagovara postojanje hrvatskih inačica studijskih programa na engleskome jeziku, dok polovica podupire uvođenje kolegija *Hrvatski za posebne namjene*. Manjina ispitanika opravdava povremeno prebacivanje nastavnika na hrvatski jezik tijekom nastave na engleskome jeziku. U radu se ističe važnost očuvanja uloge hrvatskoga jezika u visokome obrazovanju (na engleskome jeziku), odnosno kreiranja jezičnih politika koje podupiru internacionalizaciju visokoga obrazovanja uz zaštitu i promicanje nacionalnih jezika.

**Gljučne riječi:** *hrvatski jezik; engleski jezik; visoko obrazovanje; engleski kao jezik visokoškolske nastave; studenti; jezična politika*