German vs. English?

A plea for a pragmatic Language Policy with view to the University of Cologne
Overview

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1. **Anamnesis**: Language Reality at UoC
Anti-Anglicistic Constraints

Legal Restrictions:
• Undergraduate Study Programs
• State-run programs (Medicine, Law, Teacher Education)

Traditional Reservation:
• Humanities (e.g. Philosophy, Art-/Music-/History, Philology)
• Social Sciences

Administrative Barriers
• Accreditation Process of International Study Programs
• Resistance of administrative and teaching staff
Heterogenous Policies

- **Arts&Humanities**
  - Hesitant, English-taught courses only in „anglophone“ subjects

- **Economics/Social Sc.**
  - Several English-taught courses on MA-level
  - Several international Double-MA-programs in English

- **Human Sciences**
  - Only German, except for single lectures

- **Math./Natural Sciences**
  - BA-programs in German
  - Many English-taught MA-courses and -programs
  - Majority of Labs operated in English

- **Law**
  - All courses in German
  - Except for Summer Schools or specialised lectures
  - Bilingual Double-Programs

- **Medicine**
  - All courses in German
  - Highly specialised Guest Lectures in English
Differentiation and Chaos

- Undergraduate programs require DSH/C2/TestDAF 4*4 German proficiency
- English-taught Graduate (MA) programs may require none, B2, C1 or C2 German proficiency plus English proficiency
- PhD-programs generally do not require any German proficiency, if Thesis can be submitted in English
- International Exchange Students are recommended to have C1 proficiency, but are accepted without evidence and have access to voluntary German classes for free
- No linguistic requirements for International Research Scholars, but free access to voluntary German classes
2. Necessities, Needs and Wishes: The grassroots view
German Students

• Free access to education implies also „free of language obstacles“
• German as an academic language is both obligation and commitment
• International competitiveness implies and requires command of English as global language of science
• Students have a right to acquiring proficiency in English as the universal science vernacular
• Universities are obliged to prepare their students to an international labour market
International Exchange Students

• Can expect to be welcomed
• Can be expected to arrive prepared
• Choose host universities according to their offer
• Need language courses and English-taught courses alike
• Generally prefer English to German
International Degree-seeking Students

• Decide deliberately to study in Germany, hence should learn German
• Are welcome to do so and will be assisted
• Should not expect English-taught classes
• Could be attracted in greater numbers by English-taught programs
• Can be discouraged/deterred by high German proficiency requirements
International Scholars

• Should not be hampered by any communication barriers
• Should not be invited according to a language policy, but for scientific excellence
• Can expect to rely on a lingua franca in their subject (not necessarily English)
• Do need assistance during their stay
3. Strategic Planning: The view from the top
Internationalisation

- Excellent research needs excellent partners worldwide
- International exchange and interaction needs to be implemented and practised at all levels
  - Undergraduate
  - Graduate
  - Postgraduate
  - Postdoc
- ... and at all functions
  - Teaching
  - Research
  - Administration
- Internationalisation takes place
  - Abroad
  - At home
  - Through international recruitment

Internationalisation requires a common communicative basis
Increasing Exchange Quotas

• 50% of student body shall gain international experience
• Number of Incomings shall increase of 30 %
• Introduction of English-taught courses becomes a necessity in order to broaden exchange options
Attracting the Best

- International Recruitment can only be done effectively by liberalising the language policy and opening up to English as a global academic language.
- This is true for all categories: undergraduates, PhD-researchers, scholars.
Preparing for Excellent Careers

• Universities should prepare their students for a global labour market
• Professional careers request more and more international experience
• Being fluent in English is not any longer a unique characteristic. It’s a standard.
• Providing international experience and expertise is essential for a good curriculum – in any subject
4. It‘s the Communication, stupid!
Pragmatic vs. dogmatic

• It’s not the question, if we want to use English as academic language, but just where and how
• We need to decide about a language policy according to needs and objectives, aimed at realising deliberate strategies
• English offers a common ground for communication, where it is needed
• Securing high standards of language use is a challenge and linguistic limitations, if not neglect are inevitable collateral damages
Complex policies for complex questions

- Experience in another international academic language is important for all students
- An intracurricular English-taught course offer serves various strategic goals:
  - Allows for international experience at home
  - Facilitates exchange activities
  - Attracts exchange students
- Full English-taught programs do complement the German course offer and increase the international attractiveness

- German-courses should be obligatory for participants of English-taught programs
- English-run research units are wide-spread, inevitable and by now normal
- Ideally, a University should be a multi-lingual environment in which everyone can use his/her own language and understand the other's
- English is just a device bypassing Human deficiency
Thanks for your attention!