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Motivations to enrol in EMI programmes in China: an exploratory study

Abstract: A recent interest in English Medium Instruction (EMI) has led to the flourishing of studies that examine motivation in EMI classrooms. Some of these studies tend to compare language learning motivation of students who are and are not enrolled in EMI programmes (see e.g. Doiz, Aintzane, David Lasagabaster & Juan Manuel Sierra. 2014. CLIL and motivation: The effect of individual and contextual variables. *The Language Learning Journal* 42(2). 209–224; Sylvén, Liss Kerstin & Amy S. Thompson. 2015. Language learning motivation and CLIL: Is there a connection? *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education* 3(1). 28–50), showing that EMI learners are typically more motivated than their peers in non-EMI contexts. This has led to the common perception that learners enrol in EMI primarily to improve their English. Yet, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies exploring learners' reasons behind their enrolment in EMI programmes and how these change throughout their studies. To address this gap, 247 university students from a range of universities across China filled in the questionnaire, which included scales pertaining to reasons for choosing an EMI programme. The data were analysed in SPSS. The results show that enhanced future job opportunities, opportunities for contact with an international community as well as potential gains in learning content and language specific vocabulary are the most strongly endorsed drivers that motivate EMI students to undertake their studies in English. They also tend to pursue their ideal visions of themselves as bilingual professionals and derive pleasure from EMI classes. To a lesser extent, students are motivated by what is expected of them and the actual pedagogy in the language classroom. Their motivation tends to stay stable over their years of study. However, the survey also revealed that not all students are equally motivated and resolved to continue with EMI studies. The findings highlight that, whereas students tend to be strongly motivated, there is a potential to improve the delivery of EMI courses.

Keywords: Chinese universities; English medium instruction (EMI); motivation

1 Introduction

English Medium Instruction (EMI) is currently seen as “the most significant trend in educational internationalisation” (Chapple 2015: 1). The number of institutions offering EMI programmes, and the number of students enrolling in them are constantly expanding, in particular in European and Asian countries, such as China, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Spain, etc. (Dearden 2015; Li 2017; Rose et al. 2019, 2020). In China, the rise of EMI was spurred on in 2001, when the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMoE) published policies which specified that 5–10% of the content subject teaching in higher education institutions should be taught in English by 2004 (CMoE 2001). The provision of EMI programmes has since been considered a higher education quality indicator in China (Hu and McKay 2012).

The rise of EMI (Dearden 2015) has been closely followed by the rise of studies in the field. However, in spite of a plethora of studies, Lasagabaster (2016) points out the existing body of research tends to focus on whether participation in EMI programmes leads to heightened levels of proficiency, and less is known about how EMI affects students' non-linguistic outcomes, such as motivation. The lack of thorough studies behind the motives to enrol in EMI postgraduate courses is also reiterated by a more recent systematic review conducted by Macaro and colleagues (2018). Yet, motivation is a driving force behind learning. Hence, it is key to understand what motivates EMI learners as the effects of their motivation might extend beyond their enrolment in EMI programmes. Similarly, understanding why students in the first place decide to take up studies through English will help educators better understand their needs.

This study aims to explore the motivation behind students' enrolment in EMI programmes in China. To this end, a survey including a wide range of reasons why students enrol in EMI was used. Students enrolled in EMI programmes at various Chinese universities were asked to participate in the survey study to examine their reasons for enrolment in EMI programmes, changes in their motivation throughout their EMI studies, and the differences between students who would like to be involved in further EMI studies and those who would not.

2 Literature review

2.1 EMI in China

In different contexts, different labels are used to describe instruction that is delivered through the medium of English to students whose L1 is not English, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and immersion. In this article, the label of English Medium Instruction (EMI) will be consistently applied following Macaro et al.'s (2018: 37) definition "The use of the English language 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." This definition highlights the key components that are true of the context of the current study; namely, content teaching is delivered through English (the participants of the study learn a large variety of subjects as outlined in Appendix 1), and the teaching happens in the context where English is not the first language, here in China.

EMI is a relatively new field of research and one that raises a lot of key questions, including concerns about the effect of EMI on language and content learning. Whereas there has been a definite rise in the number of EMI programmes in higher education in China (Gao and Ren 2019), Macaro et al.'s (2018) review of studies in higher education has revealed that so far, these questions have not been properly addressed. They concluded that the existing research does not give a clear answer to the questions regarding EMI's beneficial influence on language learning, nor is there sufficient understanding on how EMI affects content learning. More pertinent to our study, the review also highlights that there are few studies that deal with students' reasons behind enrolling in EMI courses. Further, it also shows that there are a variety of motivators that push students towards EMI studies, and these differ, to some extent, across contexts. These differences can be sometimes explained by the differences in the design of different studies, as scholars often focus on a small subset of motives, rather than the whole range of them. Finally, the review uncovers a lack of studies on how motivation changes throughout the period of study, with the exception of Gao's (2008) work, who followed mainland Chinese students enrolled in EMI courses in Hong Kong. As such, there is a need for more thorough investigations of students' motivation, adopting a wide variety of potential reasons behind their enrolment in EMI studies, and exploring how these motivations change throughout their time at the university.

China is an interesting and important context to study due to its size and recent educational initiatives, the aim of which is to create world-leading institutions that can compete internationally. These include the "211 Project", implemented towards the end of the 20th century, and a more recent initiative, "Double First Class" universities, which was launched in 2015. EMI is one of the relatively recent innovations in China. It is hoped that via adopting EMI, Chinese higher education can become more international (Rose et al. 2020).

Even though EMI has experienced a rapid growth and diversification in China (Rose et al. 2020), there have been few studies within the field in this context (Hu and Duan 2019) and little is known to what extent findings from more proliferate studies in Europe can be applicable (Macaro et al. 2018; Xie and Curle 2019). The existing studies differed substantially in their focus. At the policy-making level, the organised promotion of EMI has been, on the one hand, pictured as facilitating the internationalisation of Chinese higher education and the participation of China in the increasingly anglicised global world (Fang 2018; Song 2021; Zhang 2018). On the other hand, EMI initiatives were considered by some as favouring the majority Chinese-speaking Han group over other non-Chinese speaking minority groups (Feng 2005), and creating distributive injustice by "serving only the elite segment of the Chinese society" (Hu and Alsagoff 2010: 378)

At the university implementation level, a number of studies pointed to the discrepancies between what the policy envisions and the actual practices. Hu and Lei (2014) found that the institutions often lack resources needed to properly implement EMI, for example universities rarely set proficiency

thresholds for teachers or students. This, in turn, impedes the realisation of the policy goals. Hu and Duan (2019) investigated the effect of language of instruction (English versus Chinese) and major on classroom discourses, with findings highlighting that, in the EMI, the types of questions posed and elicited responses, were not conducive to either mastering English nor deepening content knowledge. In Jiang et al.'s (2019) observational study, it was reported that teachers focused more on content, rather than promoting English proficiency. In response to concerns about whether EMI has a detrimental effect on subject knowledge, Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019)'s ethnographic investigation pointed to the use of translanguaging in EMI classroom as a beneficial tool to aid learning. Bilingualism was also found to be a natural part of EMI courses by Rose et al. (2020), with content often delivered via English, whereas Chinese being preferred in interaction.

With regards to EMI outcomes, findings are also conflicting. Hu et al. (2014) compared undergraduates' scores on an English proficiency test to find out whether those enrolled in EMI would perform better than those in Chinese medium instruction courses. The results revealed that, when controlled for background variables, it was prior proficiency, rather than the medium of instruction, which had an explanatory power in predicting students' mastery in English. Similar findings were reported by Gu and Lee (2019), who argued that EMI did not improve students' overall English competence. There was some improvement in reading ability, yet such improvement "could not compensate for their less solid mastery of content knowledge, compared with their peers in CMI (Chinese Medium Instruction) programs" (Gu and Lee 2019: 402). In contrast, Li (2017) found that students majoring in Early-Childhood Education had some gains in English vocabulary, morphological awareness and reading comprehension after receiving one semester's EMI education. Further, Guo et al. (2018)'s results showed that students registered in EMI courses performed equally well in both subject and English learning as those registered in CMI courses delivered by the same lecturer. In Xie and Curle's (2019) mixed-methods investigation, perceived success and proficiency in business English were found to explain variance in the measure of actual success of content learner (scores in Marketing). The latter study, in particular, points to the pivotal role motivation plays in the EMI context.

Similarly, studies at the individual learner level also reveal a contradictory picture. Tong and Shi's (2012) questionnaire survey found that science major undergraduates generally held positive attitudes towards EMI and such attitudes significantly predicted their academic achievements in the EMI courses. Likewise, Kong and Wei (2019) and Li and Ruan's (2015) studies revealed that students tended to hold favourable attitudes towards EMI. Nevertheless, there are also studies that point to the complexity of factors affecting students' attitudes towards EMI. For instance, Wang et al.'s (2018) study on EMI learners' learning experiences revealed that although their participants perceived the necessity for EMI and were satisfied with EMI on the whole, their attitudes fluctuated as they were facing numerous challenges, difficulties, and frustrations during the learning process. Jiang and Zhang (2019: 322) identified that students' perceptions of EMI and agency in learning were "varied and person-alised, mediated by both contextual and individual factors." All in all, research on EMI in China is far from conclusive. More studies are needed to unveil the complexities of EMI from multiple perspectives (Hu and Duan 2019). A small number of studies pointed out the pertinence of students' motivation to EMI learning (e.g., Guo et al. 2018; Jiang et al. 2019). However, systematic studies on motivation and EMI in China are scarce. This study aims to fill in the gap.

2.2 Motivation

Motivation is key as it underlies the individual's decision to start a given course of action, how long one engages in it and how much effort is invested (Dörnyei 2001). Considering that language learning is often a long-lasting process, having sufficient motivation is the basis of success. The field of language learning motivation has experienced a sharp rise in research interest since Dörnyei (2005) proposed a new theory of motivation – L2 Motivational Self System. According to Dörnyei's theory, motivation is a result of tension between the actual state and the imagined future selves, including both the self that is highly desired by the individual (ideal L2 self) and the visions that are created

based on pressures from the environment (ought-to L2 self). Dörnyei further proposed that another component underlying motivation is the effect of the immediate language learning environment (language learning experience). The latter construct is often operationalised in research as attitudes towards language learning (Al-Hoorie 2018). In EMI research, this construct is often examined in more detail, for example Curle's (2018) questionnaire included scales on teaching materials, pedagogy and classroom dynamics.

Whilst a large bulk of recent motivational research on language learning focused on L2 Motivational Self System (Boo et al. 2015), other constructs have been in use that can be highly relevant in EMI contexts. One of them is Yashima's (2000: 57) concept of international posture, which is defined as "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners and ... a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures." International posture appears to be clearly related to one of the aims of EMI programmes, namely internationalisation of higher education. As EMI students study content through English, it is likely that they have professional plans related to that. Here the construct of instrumental orientation, which involves learning English for utilitarian purposes (Gardner and Lambert 1972) is highly relevant.

Motivation is also crucial to success in the EMI context. This is not only because language mastery is often one of the main purposes of EMI (Galloway et al. 2017), but also because studying through EMI is in many ways more difficult than studying in the first language. A range of studies reported on the costs and obstacles encountered by EMI learners, such as difficulties to study content through a second language (Galloway et al. 2017; Halbach and Iwaniec 2020), extra effort and time investment required (Curle 2018; Halbach and Iwaniec 2020; Lei and Hu 2014; Uçar and Soruç 2018), a higher cognitive demand involved (Guo et al. 2018) or even heightened levels of anxiety (Ding and Stapleton 2016; Soruç and Griffiths 2018). Even though, some recent studies in China (Xie and Curle 2019) and Japan (Rose et al. 2019) do not specifically link motivation with academic achievement, motivation is key to sustain EMI studies, considering the additional hurdles that EMI students have to overcome. Therefore, there is a need to fully understand what motivates students to pursue EMI.

Yet motivation in EMI contexts has not been extensively researched (Lasagabaster 2019; Sylven 2017). The focus of the existing studies is often on demonstrating that the EMI context is characterised by an increased level of language learning motivation as compared to students' not enrolled in EMI (see for example Doiz et al. 2014; Shepherd and Ainsworth 2017; Sylven and Thompson 2015). Often there is a lack of baseline data on students' motivation before they join EMI programmes, which makes it difficult to justify whether any differences in motivation can be attributed to the influence of EMI, as opposed to EFL, or whether students decide to join such programmes because they are already more motivated than their peers to study English (Lasagabaster 2019). This makes the findings of such studies difficult to interpret. Hence, the current study centres on the in-depth exploration of motives for EMI studies, rather than the comparison.

Whilst it is often difficult to test EMI students' motivation before they join the programme, a potential solution that enables researchers to trace the influence of EMI on students' motivation is to track changes in motivation as students progress through the course. However, up till now, only one study (Macaro and Akincioglu 2018) in Turkey attempted this as they recruited participants who were about to embark on the EMI programme (enrolled in a prep programme) and those in years 1 and 2. Whereas a number of aspects of motivation remain equally strong throughout the years, there were slight declines in the motivation of year 2 students observed. These students were less likely to endorse reasons for EMI such as improving their financial situation, their proficiency and professional opportunities abroad than their more junior colleagues. These findings point to changes in later year of studies, and since motivation is key when it comes to making vital career choice post-university, there is a need to understand whether this declining trend extends to final year students and other contexts beyond Turkey.

Previous studies have demonstrated that students enrol in EMI tertiary level courses because of the multiple reasons. One of the most frequently endorsed goals is to improve their English proficiency (Jiang et al. 2019; Kojima and Yashima 2017), whilst, at the same time, acquiring relevant content knowledge (Rose et al. 2019). Other motivators include improved career prospects post-graduation (Jiang et al. 2019; Macaro and Akincioglu 2018; Uçar and Soruç 2018), cultural reasons as English is perceived as a global language (Uçar and Soruç 2018), prestige associated with learning in English (Macaro and Akincioglu 2018) and access to information (Macaro and Akincioglu 2018). Additionally, Curle's study (2018) highlights the potential importance of classroom-related factors in EMI, such as classroom interaction or access to materials. This shows that the students' motivations are diverse and there is a need for new studies to consider a broad spectrum of factors.

As motivation plays a key role in decisions to start and sustain learning, this study will explore Chinese students' motivation to enrol in EMI studies. There is a relative dearth of EMI studies in China, despite it being one of the most dynamically developing EMI context, and in particular there is a lack of studies on motivation and how it changes over the period of study. Hence, in this quantitative investigation the following questions will be addressed:

- 1) What motivates Chinese undergraduate students to enrol in EMI studies?
- 2) What are the differences between students who would like to be involved in further EMI courses as opposed to those who do not?
- 3) How does their motivation change throughout the period of their study?

3 Methodology

3.1 Participants

247 university students filled in the questionnaire, of which 69.6% identified as female, 29.6% identified as male and 0.8% identified as non-binary. The students were aged between 18 and 25, with a mean age of 20.42 (SD = 1.28). The students studied a range of subjects, the most common of which included chemistry, English, landscape architecture and management (see Appendix 1 for more information). At the time the participants were filling in the questionnaire, 3.6% of them were in their first year of studies, 64.8% were in the second year, 15.4% were in the third year, and 16.2% in the final year. The majority of participants declared to be enrolled in Double First Class Universities (56.2%), 2.0% in 211 universities and 41.7% in other types of universities.

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained two parts, with the main part including 59 questions about the participants' motivation to enrol in EMI courses, and the background part including seven additional questions about the participants.

The main part was designed to include questions that included a range of reasons behind the motivation to enrol in EMI. The questions were mainly adapted from existing questionnaires, but some new questions were created for the purpose of this study (mainly for the prestige and learning subject-specific language and content scales). A bulk of questions were adapted from Iwaniec's (2014) motivational questionnaire. As the questionnaire was designed to measure motivation in an EFL context, the adaptations mainly included items that reflected the practicalities of an EMI context, for example the instrumentality item "Studying in English will open up new professional opportunities for me" was amended to read "Studying my course through English...". Another example of the adaptations is that the ideal bilingual L2 self items reflected that the participants were likely to interact in a professional environment, rather than having general conversations in English, which the original questionnaire focused on.

The questions touched upon reasons for enrolling in EMI courses, such as (see Appendix 2 for full scales):

- Instrumentality – students decide to enrol in EMI courses because these will give an advantage on the job market. Example: “Studying my course through English will open up new professional opportunities for me.”
- International orientation – students decide to enrol in EMI courses to be able to communicate with other people around the world and feel part of the inter-national community. Example: “I chose to study in English to expose myself to people from all over the world with different opinions and beliefs.”
- Ideal professional bilingual self – students decide to enrol in EMI courses because they would like to attain visions of themselves as successful professionals working in a variety of environments, using English. Example: “I imagine myself having conversations in English with my international collaborators.”
- Enjoyment – students decide to enrol in EMI courses because of enjoyment they derive from them. Example: “I want to study through English because I enjoy bilingual courses.”

The items on the ought to EMI self reflected that some students decide to enrol in EMI courses because they perceive that the individuals they value expect them to do so. These items were adapted from Taguchi et al.’s (2009) ought to L2 self scale. Another major source of items was the JEMIAS questionnaire (Curle 2018). Items from the following scales were used:

- The effects of EMI on pedagogy and classroom dynamics – students decide to enrol in EMI courses because of perceived benefits to the pedagogy used in these classes, such as more active involvement of students and less formal atmosphere.
- Access, quality and difficulty of teaching/learning materials – students decide to enrol in EMI because they believe they will have access to a wider range of quality resources.

Additional items were also created based on the literature review, for example those related to the perceived prestige of EMI courses (students decide to enrol in EMI courses because they perceive them as taught by the best professors and aimed at the most talented students) and those related to learning subject-specific language (students decide to enrol in EMI courses because they will be able to master subject-specific English). In the background section, the students were asked about their age, gender, type of university attended, how many EMI courses they attended, year of study, and whether they would like to take on more EMI courses in the future.

3.3 Procedures

As several questions were newly developed for the purpose of this study, initially, the items were discussed with colleagues who were familiar with EMI courses in China, both as students and/or as lecturers. This allowed us to gain insights into optimal wording as well as the relevance of items in the Chinese context. The colleagues were also invited to propose new items. Then, the questionnaire was piloted with a small number of students (46) from various universities in China to see if any problems emerge, before the main study took place. To recruit participants for the main study, the convenience snowball sampling was used. Initially, key contacts were identified at a number of universities, and these colleagues were asked to forward the link to the survey to their students, who in turn were asked to forward it further.

As the topic of the investigation is EMI, it was decided that the questionnaire will be delivered in two languages, i.e. Mandarin and English, to ensure that the participants have a choice of language. The questionnaire items were translated into Chinese, and to ensure that the items were as close in meaning as possible, colleagues who were not familiar with the questionnaire were asked to translate it back from Chinese into English.

3.4 Analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS. First, confirmatory factor analysis (Maximum Likelihood, Oblimin rotation) was used to reduce the data and identify the underlying factors from the questionnaire. Whenever the scales were found to be highly correlated with each other, additional factor analysis was used to explore whether these could be merged together. The reliability of the emerging factors was then confirmed using the reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha). The descriptive statistics were computed for the emerging factors. To compare students' motivation across different years, ANOVA was used. T-tests were used to identify differences between students who would like to and would not like to engage in more EMI courses.

4 Results

In this section, the results of the quantitative analysis are presented with the aim to address the research questions. As can be seen from Table 1, eight scales emerged from factor analysis. These encompass the reasons for Chinese students' enrolment in EMI courses. Most scales described in the methodology emerged as separate factors. However, there were two exceptions; namely, the scale of 'learning subject-specific language and content', and 'EMI pedagogy'. All the scales have high reliability, starting from 0.872.

Learning subject-specific language and content included not only items about learning subject-specific language but also items related to learning content. It can be defined as reasons for enrolling in EMI in order to not only learn subject-specific language but also to have access to a range of good quality knowledge sources.

Table 1: Results of factor analysis

Factor	NOFI*	Reliability	Eigenvalue	% of VE**	Mean	SD***
Instrumentality	7	.881	4.17	59.52	5.04	.83
Learning subject specific language and content	9	.924	5.95	59.47	5.01	.83
International orientation	5	.871	3.34	66.70	4.92	.94
Ideal bilingual professional self	4	.869	2.88	71.95	4.66	1.12
Enjoyment	3	.851	2.31	77.24	4.65	1.08
Ought to EMI self	3	.799	2.51	62.72	4.34	1.08
EMI pedagogy	8	.903	4.80	60.00	4.31	1.06
Prestige	3	.863	2.36	78.80	2.98	.52

*Number of final items

** Variance explained

*** Standard deviation

The EMI pedagogy factor is related to how teaching is done in EMI classrooms, with the focus on more student-centred approach to teaching, less formal atmosphere, and more interaction.

4.1 What motivates Chinese undergraduate students to enrol in EMI studies?

The first cluster of reasons (see Table 1), which are most highly endorsed by students, consists of three factors. These are: instrumentality, learning subject-specific language, and international orientation. The students tended to agree that they enrolled in EMI courses because of the advantage that this might give them on the job market. Similarly, they were motivated by the opportunities to master job-specific language and learn up-to-date content having access to a range of resources. They also agreed that EMI studies created opportunities for them to communicate with people from other cultures, which they desired. These reasons appear to be the core motivators for the participants, as the standard deviations suggest that most of the students reported to be at least slightly motivated by them.

The next two moderately highly endorsed motives are the ideal bilingual professional self and enjoyment derived from the EMI courses (Table 1). This suggests that the students create a vision of themselves as successful professionals working across two languages. They also reported to derive enjoyment from courses delivered via the medium of English. The scores for these two reasons are only slightly lower than the three core reasons mentioned above with means around 4.6, which suggests that most of the participants agreed or slightly agreed with the statements.

To a slightly lesser extent, the students declared that they were expected to take up EMI courses (ought to EMI self) and because they perceived the pedagogy used in these classes as conducive to their learning, with means oscillating around 4.4, suggesting that pedagogy of EMI courses and the expectations of others are an integral part of their motivation. In contrast, on the whole students did not agree that EMI courses were more prestigious than those delivered in Mandarin. They did not consider staff teaching them as more qualified than staff teaching in Mandarin, or perceived them as more academically challenging, and therefore aimed at more gifted students.

4.2 What are the differences between students who would like to be involved in further EMI courses as opposed to those who do not?

When asked about whether they would like to have more courses taught through English, 72.1% students responded positively and 27.9% students responded negatively. The t-tests analysis revealed that these two groups differed significantly in the level of motivation with a clear pattern emerging that students with higher motivation tended to opt for more EMI courses, whereas those with lower motivation would not like any more EMI courses (see Table 2). The differences were significant for all the variables examined and the effect sizes ranged from small (prestige), through medium (EMI pedagogy, ought to EMI self), and large (the other variables). This translates into a half a point difference for the scale of prestige, and a difference of around one for the other variables, for example students who wanted to take up more EMI courses were more likely to agree or strongly agree that 'EMI studies will enable them to progress in their future careers', whereas those who did not want to opt in for any extra EMI courses were oscillating between slight agreement and agreement. This suggests students with higher motivation and more positive EMI experiences are more likely to take up additional EMI courses.

Table 2: Comparison of students who would like more EMI courses and those who do not

Factor	More EMI Courses?	Mean	SD	t	Sig.	Cohen's d																																																																		
Prestige	Yes	2.95	.51	-2.11	.035	0.27																																																																		
	No	3.09	.56				Learning subject specific language and content	Yes	5.20	.68	7.00	.000	0.99	No	4.39	.96	Pedagogy	Yes	4.50	1.01	5.68	.000	0.74	No	3.75	1.01	Ideal bilingual professional self	Yes	4.90	.97	7.45	.000	0.91	No	3.89	1.22	Ought to EMI self	Yes	4.51	1.12	5.00	.000	0.63	No	3.76	1.24	international orientation	Yes	5.16	.77	7.58	.000	1.06	No	4.18	1.04	Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24	No	3.71	1.10	Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000
Learning subject specific language and content	Yes	5.20	.68	7.00	.000	0.99																																																																		
	No	4.39	.96				Pedagogy	Yes	4.50	1.01	5.68	.000	0.74	No	3.75	1.01	Ideal bilingual professional self	Yes	4.90	.97	7.45	.000	0.91	No	3.89	1.22	Ought to EMI self	Yes	4.51	1.12	5.00	.000	0.63	No	3.76	1.24	international orientation	Yes	5.16	.77	7.58	.000	1.06	No	4.18	1.04	Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24	No	3.71	1.10	Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99	No	4.42	.98						
Pedagogy	Yes	4.50	1.01	5.68	.000	0.74																																																																		
	No	3.75	1.01				Ideal bilingual professional self	Yes	4.90	.97	7.45	.000	0.91	No	3.89	1.22	Ought to EMI self	Yes	4.51	1.12	5.00	.000	0.63	No	3.76	1.24	international orientation	Yes	5.16	.77	7.58	.000	1.06	No	4.18	1.04	Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24	No	3.71	1.10	Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99	No	4.42	.98																
Ideal bilingual professional self	Yes	4.90	.97	7.45	.000	0.91																																																																		
	No	3.89	1.22				Ought to EMI self	Yes	4.51	1.12	5.00	.000	0.63	No	3.76	1.24	international orientation	Yes	5.16	.77	7.58	.000	1.06	No	4.18	1.04	Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24	No	3.71	1.10	Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99	No	4.42	.98																										
Ought to EMI self	Yes	4.51	1.12	5.00	.000	0.63																																																																		
	No	3.76	1.24				international orientation	Yes	5.16	.77	7.58	.000	1.06	No	4.18	1.04	Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24	No	3.71	1.10	Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99	No	4.42	.98																																				
international orientation	Yes	5.16	.77	7.58	.000	1.06																																																																		
	No	4.18	1.04				Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24	No	3.71	1.10	Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99	No	4.42	.98																																														
Enjoyment	Yes	4.95	.89	10.10	.000	1.24																																																																		
	No	3.71	1.10				Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99	No	4.42	.98																																																								
Instrumentality	Yes	5.25	.66	7.01	.000	0.99																																																																		
	No	4.42	.98																																																																					

4.3 How does their motivation change throughout the period of their study?

When the year of study was taken into account, the cross-sectional analysis revealed that no significant differences emerged (Table 3), suggesting that the motivational disposition of EMI students remains relatively stable throughout their period of university study. However, a certain pattern can be observed between years 2–4, with reported level of motivation being higher for students in their final year than in years 2–3. In the case of year 1 students, levels of motivation varied, sometimes being relatively high (ideal bilingual professional self, and enjoyment) and in some cases relatively low (prestige). This variation might be, however, the result of low participation of year 1 students in the study, as only nine participants identified themselves as being currently involved in year 1.

5 Discussion

The first research question posed in this paper attempted to discover reasons for enrolling in the EMI courses in the sample of Chinese university students. Whereas students were generally found to have high levels of motivation, three reasons dominated their motivation for EMI: instrumentality, learning subject specific language and content, and international orientation. First, this suggests that students perceive that graduating from EMI courses would put them at the privileged position at the job market, giving them an edge over other graduates. Second, students seem to be driven by the possibility to master discipline-specific language as well as up-to-date content. Third, students appear to see EMI as a door to the international community that they can become part of. Instrumentality has been previously reported as one of the key reasons for engaging at EMI studies (Jiang et al. 2019; Macaro and Akincioglu 2018; Uçar and Soruç 2018), giving students a potential advantage on the job market. What this study found is that this motivation is not waning as students progress through their studies. This in turn implies that students see that their more senior colleagues are indeed reaping benefits of their bilingual studies on the job market.

Mastering content-specific language and content was the second most strongly endorsed reason for undertaking EMI studies. It is again consistent with previous literature and the general aims of EMI (Jiang et al. 2019; Kojima and Yashima 2017; Rose et al. 2019), it is however worth noticing that in this study the two reasons go hand in hand and are not easily separable for students. This implies that students have a more wholistic attitude towards EMI, rather than the one that is often uncovered in

Table 3: Comparison of students' motivation according to their year of study

Factor	Year	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	Factor	Year	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Prestige	1	2.70	.39	1.40	.24	Ought to EMI self	1	4.37	1.20	.55	.65
	2	3.02	.53				2	4.36	1.18		
	3	2.97	.46				3	4.14	1.15		
	4	2.92	.55				4	4.39	1.28		
Learning language specific language and content	1	5.18	.97	1.67	.17	International orientation	1	4.64	1.28	2.05	.11
	2	5.02	.82				2	4.96	.94		
	3	4.79	.87				3	4.67	.94		
	4	5.08	.79				4	5.01	.90		
EMI pedagogy	1	4.15	1.39	1.48	.22	Enjoyment	1	4.93	.91	1.33	.26
	2	4.36	1.02				2	4.64	1.07		
	3	4.05	1.06				3	4.44	1.14		
	4	4.39	1.07				4	4.78	1.10		
Ideal bilingual professional self	1	4.92	1.34	.85	.47	Instrumentality	1	5.03	1.06	2.39	.07
	2	4.62	1.10				2	5.07	.82		
	3	4.54	1.04				3	4.78	.90		
	4	4.78	1.21				4	5.16	.75		

some literature, for example a clear focus on content without much opportunity to work on English proficiency (Jiang et al. 2019). Interestingly, students reported that learning content and specific aspects of language was more motivating than the more general reasons implying improvement in overall proficiency, such as the ideal professional L2 self, which, in its basic form as ideal L2 self, dominates the EFL learning. This finding is not however entirely surprising considering that students undertaking EMI studies are often already at a relatively high proficiency, even though some studies question whether this proficiency is sufficient to study content in English (see Aizawa and Rose 2019 as an example). Previous studies in the field have shown that for advanced learners, there is a substantial cost related to making progress in a language that they often feel fully functional in, which leads to the decrease of their motivation (Hessel 2017). From this perspective, focusing on more concrete rather than global goals might make sense as these are easier to progress in.

The third highly endorsed reason for engaging with EMI studies was the opportunity and ability to participate in the international community of speakers of English. This is consistent with the overall goals of EMI, one of which is inter-nationalisation (Rose et al. 2020). Previous studies in other contexts also identified the international outlook as an important motivator for EMI learners (see Uçar and Soruç 2018). This appears even more important considering that for an international communication to exist, there is a need for users from different contexts to be willing to engage in communication across national boundaries.

The two factors that were found to moderately motivate students to undertake EMI were the ideal L2 professional self, and enjoyment. Students were able to imagine themselves working in English in various environments and with colleagues abroad but the vision did not seem as motivating as the specific goals of being able to learn content and content-related language, as mentioned in the earlier part of the discussion. Similarly, the goal of instrumentality may have been more appealing than the ideal L2 professional self. It might be that perhaps the specific nature of this vision involving utilising a high level of overall language proficiency in a professional context does not appear to be achievable or perhaps desirable for some students. Students also reported moderate levels of enjoyment derived from learning through English in EMI classes. The fact that they were learning a language and that they were using it to learn content seemed to be giving them satisfaction. This is quite important as this motivation coming from within them allows them to sustain effort investment, even when not

everything is going well, which is, to a certain extent mirrored in the lower scores on the EMI pedagogy scale.

To a lesser extent, students were motivated by the ought to EMI self and pedagogies implemented in the EMI classes. Lower scores on these scales imply that EMI learners might have internalised motives for EMI studies rather than relying on more external motivators. Hence, the sheer pressure from environment, whereas it appears to supplement their palette of reasons to study in English, does not seem to be the main one. Similar findings have been previously reported in other contexts, and indeed it has been shown that ought to L2 self rarely leads to increased learning effort (Al-Hoorie 2018) and increases in proficiency (Dunn, Karen & Janina Iwaniec in press, online). When it comes to EMI pedagogy, what happens in the EMI classrooms in terms of pedagogical choices might not have been the main reason for undertaking EMI studies. This may be because students might not be fully aware of what EMI means in their local context until they join and those who do join are not entirely satisfied with the teaching in EMI classrooms. In fact, previous research has highlighted some concerns in terms of EMI pedagogy, such as posing questions that are limited in how cognitively demanding they are (Hu and Duan 2019), or resorting to translanguaging due to the view that students' are deficient in English rather than the belief that this pedagogical practice is beneficial for learning (Wang and Curdt-Christiansen 2019), and issues with the pedagogical training of EMI teachers (Macaro and Han 2020). All of these might be reflected in the overall positive, although lukewarm reception of EMI courses by students.

Prestige was the only factor that the students did not respond to in a positive manner. It appears that students do not perceive EMI courses as more prestigious than education in Chinese, aimed at the most gifted or delivered by the best professors. This might be perhaps the result of the abundance of EMI courses in China (Rose et al. 2020), which then pushes EMI towards being a necessity rather than a symbol of prestige. Additionally, the quality of EMI courses might be undermined by the problems in their delivery as mentioned in the paragraph above. Problems with the reduction of quality in content teaching have been also highlighted in the most recent British Council report (Rose et al. 2020) by teachers and students.

In spite of very high levels of motivation, not all students would like to undertake more EMI studies, with a quarter providing a negative answer to this question. These students are invariably characterised as having lower motivation in all the aspects examined, in particular the differences appear to be especially large when it comes to the level of enjoyment these students experience, their international outlook, learning and jobs prospects. It is important to notice, however, that even those students tend to show moderate levels of motivation. Yet, the existence of such a substantial group of students who would not like to continue with EMI studies suggests a need for a way to opt out, which might not be currently readily available to them. As previous studies did not explore this question in such a direct way, there is a need for further investigation that would allow for a more in-depth understanding of why these students, despite their still not cold but rather lukewarm motivation, would like to opt out. This question is important in order to make EMI courses sustainable in the long run.

The findings also show that there are no substantial changes to students' motivation as they progress through the university and the learners' motivation remains high. These results are in contrast to Macaro and Akincioglu's (2018) findings, who reported significant differences on some motivators, including improving financial situation, improving career abroad prospects and improving general English. However, a more in-depth comparison reveals that the same pattern was observed in both studies, with students in one but last year experiencing a slight, yet noticeable dip in their motivation. Whereas Macaro and Akincioglu (2018) did not include a sample of students in their final year, this study points to a certain recovery of motivation in the final year, usually to its highest levels. This seems to suggest that our participants are confident in and satisfied with their choice of EMI study.

6 Conclusion

This study has highlighted that there are a variety of reasons why the students in China engage in EMI studies. The students examined were clearly goal-driven, seeing EMI as a facilitator to their career, and giving them opportunities to be part of the international community. They were also highly motivated by learning both content and content-specific vocabulary. The students tended to be intrinsically motivated and had a clear professional bilingual outlook. To a lesser extent, the students appeared to be motivated by the external motives, such as pressure from the immediate environment or the pedagogies utilised in the EMI classrooms. Whereas this is a good sign as students are clearly motivated from within, there is a need to ensure that what happens in the EMI classrooms does not affect students' motivation.

Motivation in the EMI context remains relatively stable as the students progress through the university. This is a positive sign as it seems that it does meet their needs and expectations. However, at the same time, a substantial group of students was unwilling to further engage in EMI studies, and their motivation was substantially lower than their peers. Further investigation is needed to find out why these students would like to opt out and whether these decisions are affected by the design of the EMI programmes.

This study has some limitations that need to be considered. Whereas a substantial number of participants were recruited, the convenience snowball sampling did not allow for a representative sample of all EMI students in China. This led to the disparities in gender representation, as females were overrepresented in our sample. Similarly, few students enrolled in year 1 participated in the study. Regarding these limitations, there is a further need for thorough investigations of the diversity of motives of Chinese EMI students, taking into account not only years of study but also different university types and subjects studied. The longitudinal designs, following cohorts of students throughout their studies, are also needed to avoid the limitations of cross-sectional studies such as ours, i.e. the inability to clearly attribute the identified patterns of differences over the years, or lack of such differences, to the year of study, as such differences can be also the result of differences between cohorts of students. Further, there is a need for qualitative and mixed-methods investigations that would enable us to fully understand the palette of motives of EMI learners, how their motivation evolves throughout the period of their studies and taking it a step further, how it affects students who graduate from EMI courses.

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