

Reading Strategies in EMI: Teacher and Student Perspectives

Sophie Swerts Knudsen
Slobodanka Dimova
Academic Language Consultant
CIP
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UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



Why reading skills?

There is an increase in the extensive use of English textbooks in Nordic countries. (Haberland and Risager, 2008)

It takes more effort and a longer time to read and learn from texts in L2 (Hellekjær, 2009; Pecorari et al., 2011b; Tatzl, 2011; Vinke, 1995; Ward, 2001; Mezek, 2013)

30% of students complete any given reading assignment and many students perceive reading to be of limited importance. (Pecorari et al., 2012)

Students reported a preference for learning course content from other resources, such as lectures and lecture notes. (Pecorari et al., 2012)

Incorrect reading strategies means students are not exposed to the knowledge of the textbooks. When lecturers depend on reading before the classroom, such as in the flipped classroom, students will neither be able to participate nor follow. (Mezek, 2013)

‘I don’t teach language.’

Airey (2012)

EMI Workshop at NEXS

- Dept. of HN (Human Nutrition) at NEXS (Dept. of Exercise, Nutrition and Sports): EMI in graduate years
- Results:
 - Huge drop out rate,
 - High exam failure rate (from 5 to 25 %)
 - Frustration
- EMI workshop in cooperation with CIP - 2011
 - Prior to semester start
 - 2 days
 - Goal:
 - ✓ Equip students with strategies & tools 4 skills in EMI
 - ✓ Raise awareness
 - ✓ Pinpoint individual strengths and weaknesses

Day 1

Morning:

- Introductory lecture - all participants focus on 4 skills in EMI

Afternoon:

- Academic listening test (40 minutes - Cambridge Proficiency)
- Academic reading test (1 hour - IELTS)
- Academic written test (1 hour)

"In your opinion, what are the most important dietary aspects to focus on if you want to be healthy, and why?"

Day 2

Morning:

- Focus on reading, listening and speaking
- Personal scores: locating personal strengths and weaknesses

Afternoon:

- Focus on academic writing
- Students' written material: locating strengths and weaknesses
- Common errors in written academic English

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Intro lecture + tests	Corrections	Corrections	corrections	Workshop group 1
Week 2	Workshop group 2		Workshop group3		

Teachers' workshop:

Overall goal of the workshop:

- Raise teachers' awareness of strategies to support both students and teachers in an EMI context
- Every two years

Collaboration CIP and HN

- Superusers



Outcomes of the EMI workshop

1. High success rate for both students and lecturers
 - Drop-out rate decreased,
 - Exam failure rate dropped with approx. 18%
 - Part of NEXS budget (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015)
2. Students → EMI workshop excellent introduction to EMI
3. Lecturers → EMI workshop a supplementary support in addition to other activities during the course. Lecturers not able to distinguish between students who participated and those who did not.

Research questions

1. To what degree does reading proficiency of students vary across the years 2011 to 2015?
2. How proficient are students in different reading subskills?
3. What are students' perceptions on their reading skills before and after the EMI workshop?
4. What are lecturers' attitudes towards teaching and learning reading skills?
5. What are lecturers' classroom practises with regard to reading skills in EMI?

Participants

- 199 students
 - NEXS
 - First year graduate students
 - 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015
- 5 lecturers from NEXS
 - A,B,C,D,E
 - A = superuser
 - B = superuser
 - C is familiar with the EMI workshop
 - D is not familiar with the EMI workshop
 - E is not familiar with the EMI workshop
- 5 students from NEXS
 - S1, S2, S3, S4, S5
 - First year graduate students
 - Human Nutrition
 - 2015 test group

Instruments

1. IELTS / 5 reading test 1 -> 199 students from 2011 -> 2015

- Test scores students
- Individual question scores – question clusters related to reading skills
- Excel, SPSS

2. Interviews with 5 students Human Nutrition

- 1 student telephone interview (34 min.)
- 4 students group interview (1' 15" min.)
- Transcribed - NVIVO

3. Individual 1- hour interviews with 5 Lecturers NEXS

- Transcribed - NVIVO

The IELTS test

- 60 minutes - 40 questions
- Three reading passages – approx. 2,150 - 2,750 words in total.
- Each correct answer scores 1 mark. No negative marking for wrong answers.
- Variety of question types:
 - Multiple choice
 - Fill in the gaps
 - Sentence completion
 - Identification of writer's views/claims
- Reading skills tested:
 - Reading & understanding the theme/ **general sense of the text**
 - **Skimming**: reading for the main idea/ gist of the passages
 - **Reading for detail**
 - Understand implied meaning / **inferences** of the passages.
 - Recognizing the writer's idea, **opinion**, purpose
 - **Scanning**: being able to quickly find a point/ idea
- Groups of questions refer to specific reading skills



Raw Score	Band Score	level	description
37 - 40	9	Expert user	Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
33 - 36	8	Very good user	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies. Misunderstandings occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation as well.
27 - 32	7	Good user	Has operational command of the language, with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.
19 - 26	6	Competent user	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
13 - 18	5	Modest user	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
8 - 12	4	Limited user	Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
4 - 6	3	Extremely limited user	Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
	2		No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae. Can understand and use simple written
	1		Can understand and use simple written
	0	Did not attempt the test	No assessable information provided.

Results

RQ 1. To what degree does reading proficiency of students vary across the years 2011 to 2015?

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
N = students	50	37	35	48	29
Range Max/Min	38/5	38/14	38/13	38/9	36/12
Median	26.00	26.00	28.00	26.00	28.00
Average	25.694	26.351	27.971	25.574	28.000



IELTS SCORE	6	6	7	6	7
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6 -> Competent User (19 – 26 answers)
Generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

7 -> Good User (27 – 32 answers)
Has operational command of the language, with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

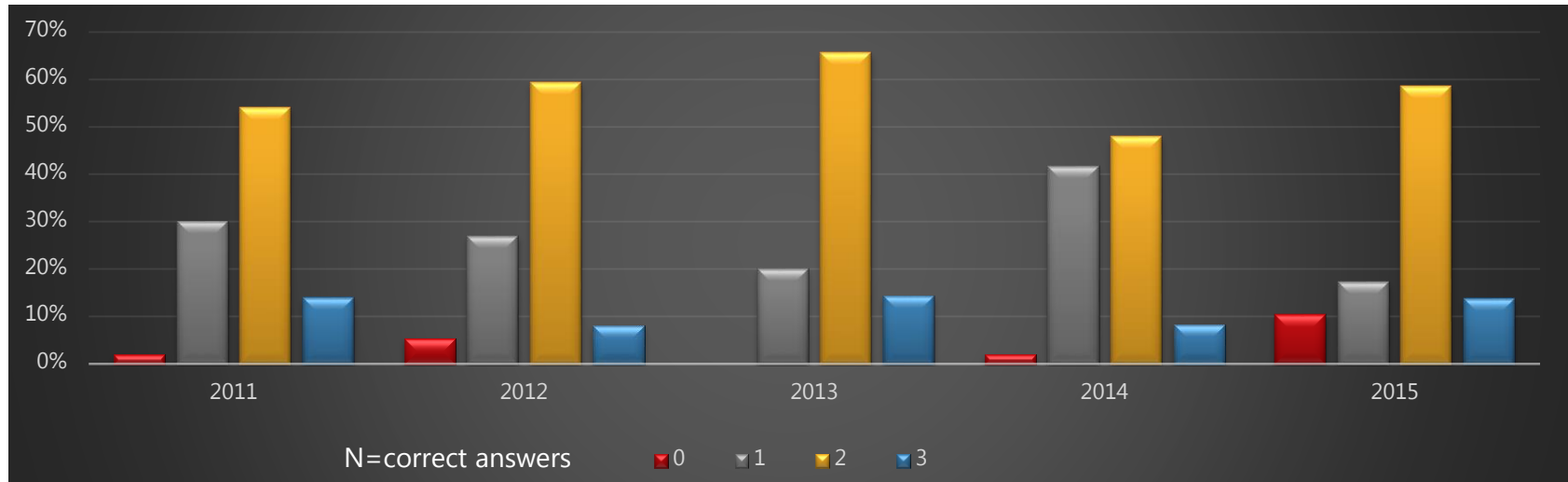
1. Reading skills levels of incoming students have not increased dramatically over the past 5 years.
2. The reading levels were slightly higher in 2013 and 2015, but the range of proficiency levels greatly overlapped across all years.
3. There is a range of reading proficiencies that stretches from 'expert user' to 'extremely limited user'.

RQ 2. How proficient are students in different reading subskills?

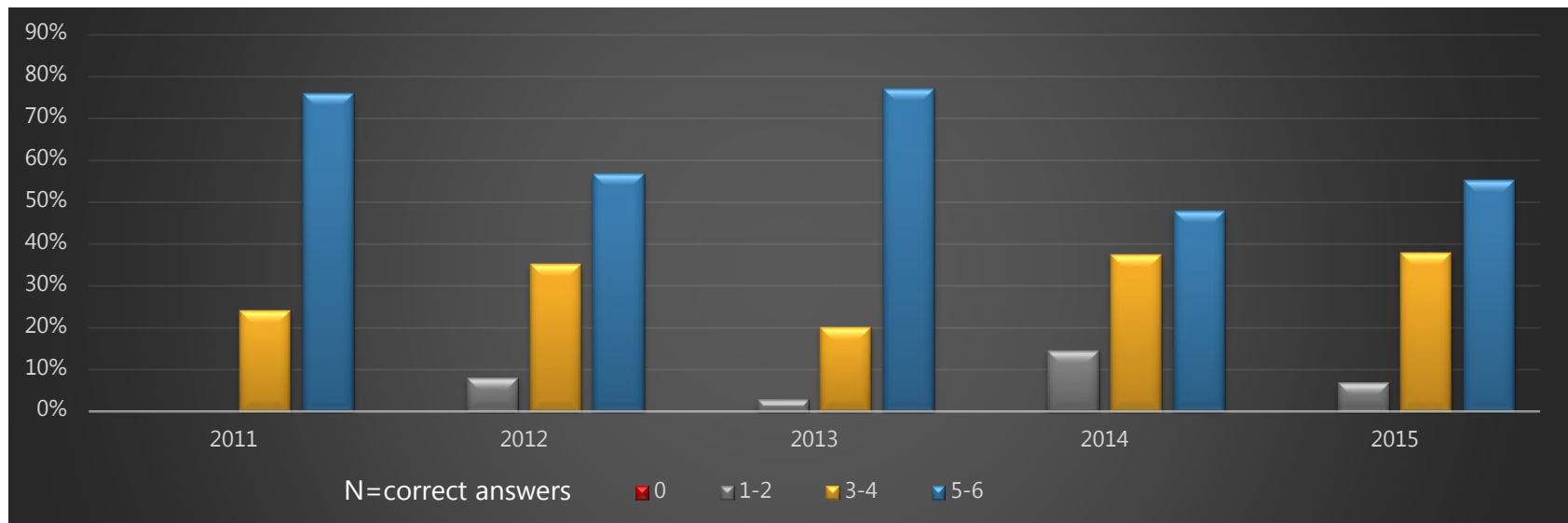
Subskills:

1. Reading in detail
2. Scanning
3. Skimming
4. Identifying opinions
5. Inferencing

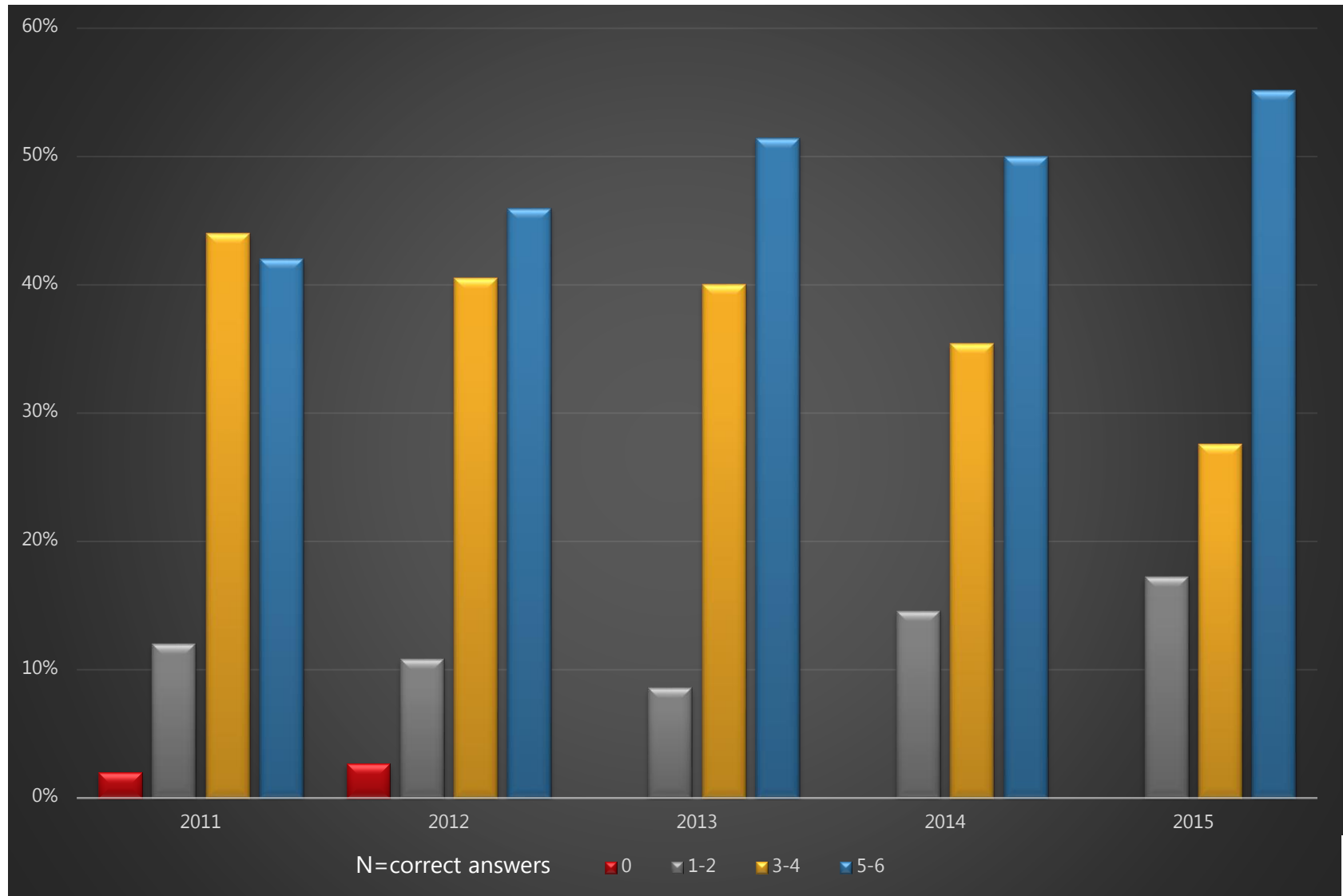
1. Reading in detail



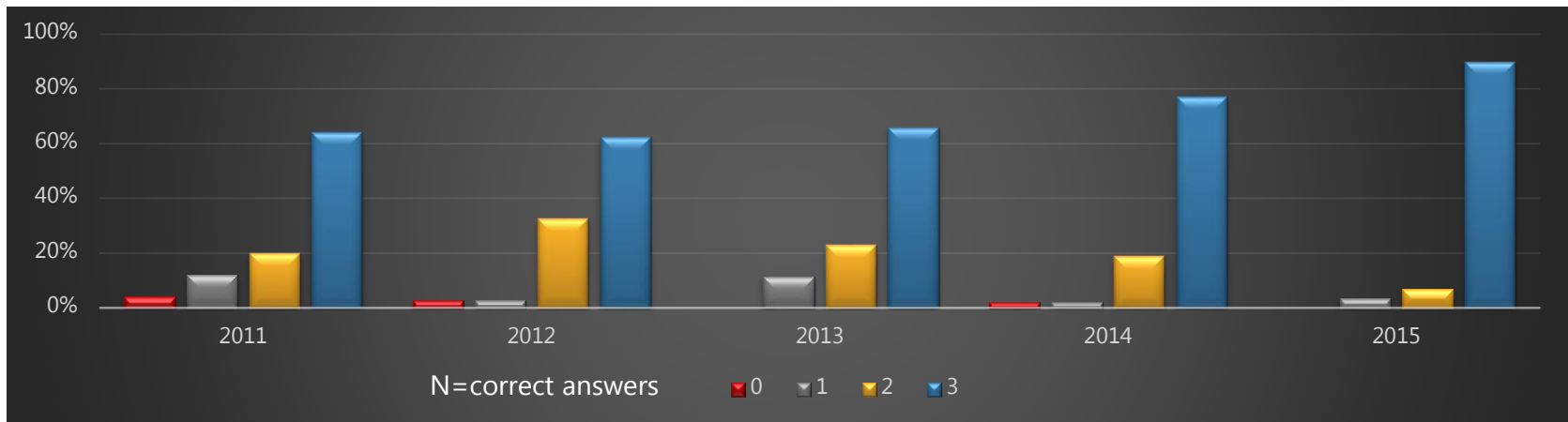
2. Scanning



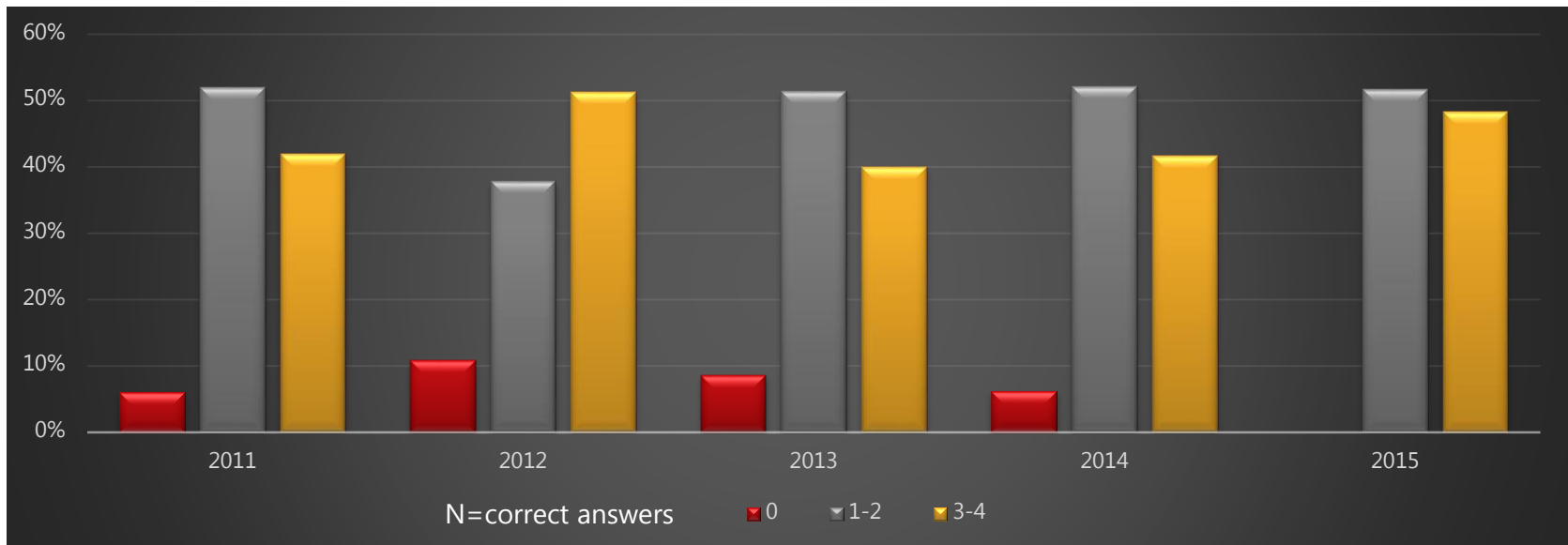
3. Skimming



4. Identifying Opinions



5. Inferencing



Reading in detail

Scanning

Skimming

Locating opinions

strongest

Inferencing

weakest

RQ 3. What are students' perceptions on their reading skills before and after the EMI workshop?

Reading skills prior to EMI workshop	Reading Skills	Application before workshop	Application after workshop
<p>3/5 students -> some instruction on reading skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a course in bachelor years• a lesson in high school• a course during BA in UK	Skim	No	No
	Scan	Yes	Yes
	Read in detail	Yes	Yes
	Dare to ignore words	No	No
	Break down a text	No	No

Reasons for not using reading skills

- Lack time to read all material
- Stick to old routines
- Lack knowledge/practise in their own field of study
- Lack feedback from lecturers
- Focus on absorbing as much content as possible, i.e. reading in detail

S3: I never knew before how to skim a text. I had no clue, and I think that when I was skimming I was trying to read all of it like really really fast so I didn't really get anything out of it. So I usually ended up reading in detail so that I could understand. So skimming and scanning I have never really used before.

S5: I did like S3 actually.

S1: (Nodded) Really fast and everything in detail.

I: To what extent have you implemented reading skills after the workshop?

S3: I actually don't think I've been putting that much effort into the reading part, like how is it all structured. More like, what knowledge do I need to get from all of this.

S3: And there was just so much reading material, and I was not used to that from beforehand, so I think that was the reason why I found it difficult to also think about my reading skills...

RQ 4. What are lecturers' attitudes towards teaching and learning reading skills?

Lecturer	A	B	C	D	E
Knows about EMI workshop	YES (superuser)	YES (superuser)	YES	NO	NO
Feels students implement reading skills	NO	NO in BA Should in MA	Aware of difficulties	Does not know	YES
Feels acquiring reading strategies is students' responsibility	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO

Teacher C: I think I'm just old-fashioned and tough, and say that you have to overcome that because it is the best book.

Teacher D: I think that at this level they should be able to select themselves. And I don't think that we as teachers should have to tell them "so from this paragraph until this, you should read everything, and here you can skip or skim. I think it's... gymnasieniveau. They should be able to do it. But maybe there is something there. A mismatch expectation wise.

Teacher E: No! No... I would have liked to know when I was a student, if someone has the knowledge about how I should attack a certain text, why not give that information right away?

RQ 5. What are the lecturers' classroom practices on reading skills in EMI courses?

Lecturer	A	B	C	D	E
Consciously 'teaches' reading skills	YES	YES	NO	-	YES
Subconsciously 'teaches' reading skills	-	-	YES	-	-
Organises activities on reading skills in courses	YES	YES	YES	-	YES

Types of Activities

- The EMI workshop
- Journal clubs and reading scientific articles
- Reading related articles and thinking critically
- Lists of multiple choice questions
- The IMRAD structure (Introduction-Methods-Results and Discussion)
- Specific advice on how to read
- Overviews

Teacher B: All of the multiple-choice questions are uploaded. This year they are going to be uploaded when the course starts, and then it's electronically, so the students go in and answer and they have one try. And then as a teacher I can go in and see how many have answered correctly and how many haven't. And usually we open the multiple-choice up again after the lecture, so the students can do them again...

'Instructors' feedback on quizzes and worksheets are a strategy to motivate students to read their textbooks, as well as to enhance journal article reading skills and comprehension (Carkenord, 1994; Ryan, 2003).'

Teacher E: I tell them: "do not read this word for word. Skim it" , well I don't believe I use the word skim but I say that they should get an overview of where to find which kind of information, so that when you operate the machine you know where to find the information.

Teacher C: No, I'm trying to give them this overview of how to read the chapters and..uhm...the students' feedback is that it is a very good way of starting the course. I'm telling them where to focus when they read because otherwise it's too much (...)

Conclusion

Is the workshop effective?

- The EMI workshops only seem to scratch the surface of what students need to know. A closer cooperation with the content teachers is crucial to improve the workshops and make them more effective.
- We need to raise 'reading' awareness where there isn't any. We need to introduce the good results across faculties.

Have the students become more proficient readers?

- Incoming students' reading proficiency level increased slightly the past 5 years. However, there is a range of different levels from 'expert user' to 'extremely limited users'.
- Students fail to implement the reading strategies of the EMI workshop effectively.
- Students greatly appreciate receiving any guidance in terms of reading from their lecturers (and outside).

Do content teachers teach language?

- It seems content lecturers do teach reading strategies both consciously and subconsciously, but they do not think of them as "teaching language".
- Teachers who are unaware of the need for reading strategies are interested in knowing how to approach and implement these in their content courses.

Implications

Need for identification of lower levels in test.

- Question participation?
- Organise entrance tests?
- Offer extra help?

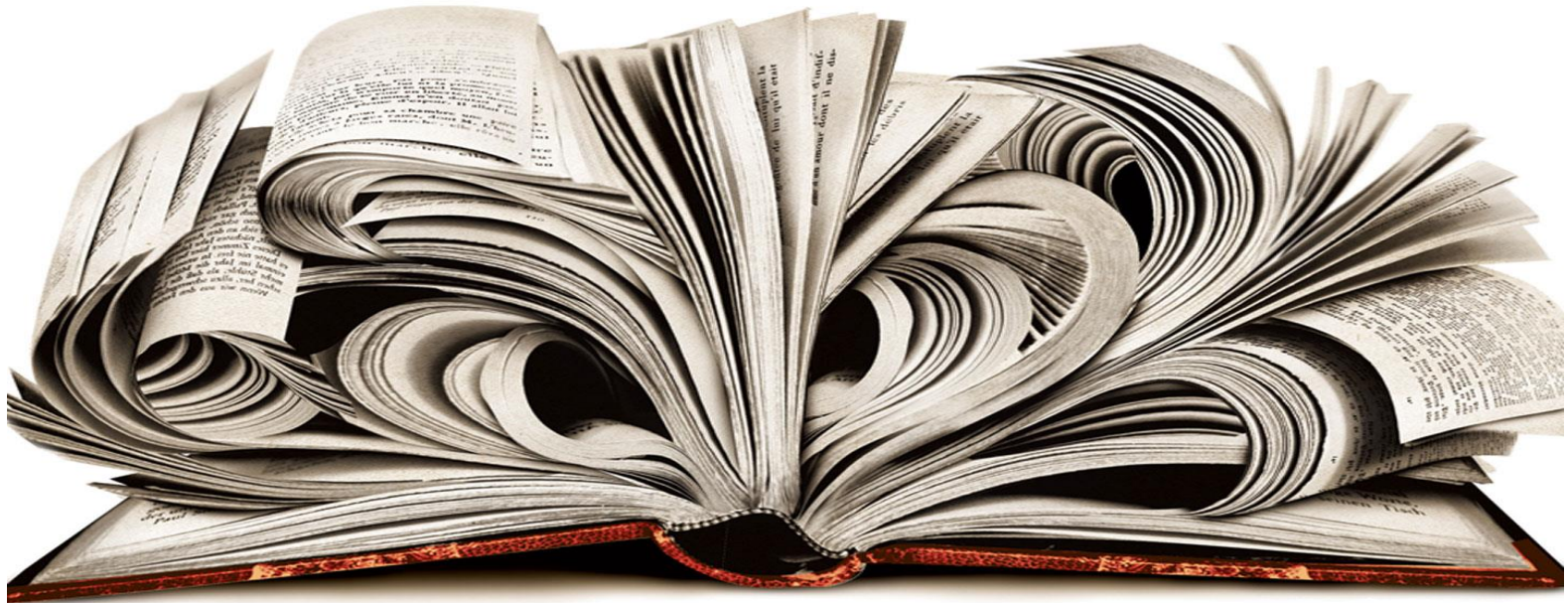
Content teachers teach language consciously and subconsciously.

- Awareness among content teachers exists -> language teachers need to tap into this awareness

The EMI workshop could be reorganised much more effectively through:

- Close cooperation with content teachers
- The use of content teachers material to enhance reading skills of students
- The organisation of workshops implemented in content courses

Thank you!



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