



# German vs. English ?

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



# Overview

## 1. Anamnesis: Language Reality at UoC

- Six Faculties, Six Realities
- Differentiation and Chaos

## 2. Necessities, Needs and Wishes: the grassroots view

- German Students
- International Exchange Students
- International Degree-seeking Students
- International Scholars

## 3. Strategic Planning: the view from the top

- Internationalisation
- Increasing exchange quotas
- Attracting the Best
- Preparing for Excellent Careers

## 4. It's the Communication, stupid !

- Pragmatic vs. Dogmatic
- Complex Policies for Complex Questions



# 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: under-/graduates, 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 !**

