

English language proficiency screening for lecturing staff in Dutch Higher Education

Presently more and more higher education programmes in the Netherlands are providing English-medium instruction. Although the original idea was that the language proficiency of the non-native speaking lecturers is at a sufficient level to provide English-medium instruction (Klaassen 2001, Hellekjaer & Westergaard, 2003), an increasing number of students complain about the level of English language proficiency of the lecturers (AAG, 2005). To accommodate the complaints of the students more and more institutions of higher education in the Netherlands have consequently decided to introduce a screening method for the assessment of the English language proficiency of their staff. The screening methods tend to vary from interviews to official IELTS tests. It remains unclear, however, what the effect is of these screening methods on the lecturing quality of the lecturers in English-medium instruction.

To get insight into the present situation of staff assessment in higher education a small survey study has been carried out in which the following issues were discussed.

- which are the different screening methods used in the different institutions of higher education;
- how are these screening methods embedded in the higher education system;
- how many lecturers are screened at a particular institution and what are the average results;
- whether insufficient level of English language proficiency results in disciplinary or other types of measures; and whether a positive test-result is having a positive effect on the quality of education

In this paper I will briefly discuss the results from this study and the implications for university language planning policies.

Klaassen, R.G. (2001), *The International University Curriculum; Challenge in English-medium Engineering Education*, Thela Thesis (dissertation)

Hellekjaer, G.O. & Westergaard, M. (2003), An exploratory survey of content learning through English at Nordic Universities, pp 65-81 in Ch. Van Leeuwen & R. Wilkinson (2003), *Multilingual Approaches in University Education; Challenges and Practices*, Uitgeverij valkhof Pers Nijmegen

AAG (2005), <http://www.aag.tudelft>