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**English language proficiency, perception and  
competence among the  
academic staff of the Public Universities in Kosovo**

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## English language proficiency, perception and competence among the academic staff of the Public Universities in Kosovo

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*Abstract: English language proficiency remains a problem for universities and their academic staff. This study aims to investigate the English language proficiency, perception and competence of academic lecturers in public universities in Kosovo. In order to achieve this aim, two research questions were raised: 1. How do academic lecturers view their English language perception and competence? 2. Is the role of English language proficiency seen as a working importance by the academic staff of public universities in Kosovo? This research only reflects the lecturers' perceptions based on their personal and linguistic backgrounds, their perspectives on their English language proficiency and their language use in academic situations. The study was conducted using a case study method, supported by qualitative and quantitative data. Participants included a large number of lecturers from public universities in Kosovo. Data was collected through questionnaires. The findings suggest that, overall, they hold a moderately positive view of their English language proficiency, and that the internationalisation of higher education in Kosovo, as well as the development of English as a global language, has created a need for HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) to reassess the role of English in the development of higher education in Kosovo.*

**Keywords:** *English language, proficiency, perception, usage, staff, internationalisation, HEI.*

### INTRODUCTION

**“English, the global language.”** - The statement people articulate every day.

In recent years, the English language has become something you hear on the news from politicians all over the world. English advertisements and billboards are almost everywhere. Crystal (1997, 2003) points out that this does not mean that everyone can speak English. There are also countries in the world that do not recognise English as a global language. But what makes English a global language? Firstly, a language can be declared the dominant language of a country, allowing it to be used as a medium of communication in areas such as politics, the judiciary, the press and academia, and is often referred to as a 'second language'. Secondly, even if a language does not appear to have a formal position, it may be prioritised in a country's foreign language education. Global academies as well as business communities recognise the need for a global language, and it is here that the acceptance of a common global language is perhaps most evident, both in lecture

halls and conference rooms, and in the hundreds of individual connections made every day around the world. What is special about this is that when it comes to education, English as a lingua franca will give us access to knowledge, and the need to learn and use English will not only give us a degree of commonality, but will also introduce us to the fascinating world of ideas (Mashabela, 1983).

As mentioned above, the era in which we find ourselves today is unanimously associated with globalisation, where the need for a common language is felt more deeply and strongly than ever before. Clearly, this language is none other than English, with an unprecedented spread across the world and in many fields. English serves as a bridge between people with whom they have nothing in common. Of all the areas in which English is widely spoken, higher education is certainly one of them. In this context, Brumfit (2004) rightly points out that English has been the language of HEIs, especially those universities that have gone abroad to establish international links. Of course, many higher education institutions, also through the effects of the accelerated process of internationalisation, have adopted many strategies to meet the demands of the internationalisation of higher education, which is described as "the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution". The most notable strategy pursued by universities to achieve 'Internationalization' was to change English as the language of instruction, either fully or partially on campus (Knight, 1993).

The pressure on universities to raise their global profile in the competitive higher education sector has made internationalisation more important for higher education institutions today. Universities are looking beyond their national borders. University governing boards are setting goals and developing strategies for internationalisation. Some of these strategies have been agreed at national and international level, such as the 1999 Bologna Declaration (Barkholt, 2005; Kettunen & Kantola, 2006; Kehm & Teichler, 2006, Keeling, 2006). Since Bologna, the 29 signatory states have implemented the bachelor-master-doctorate structure and are introducing other instruments (ECTS credits, diploma supplements, etc.) to pave the way for higher education. In addition, a European Higher Education Area has been created, which is internationally competitive and attracts students from inside and outside Europe.

These trends highlight the issue of the European language and the challenges of communication in a multilingual environment. They are forcing European higher education policy-makers to face up to the language issue and to consider converting their curricula from the national language to the international standard - English. However, this process is not without its problems, especially as lecturers may face language restrictions. There may also be obstacles at other levels due to the cultural and political sensitivity of the issue. For example, local policy-makers may feel that the move to English is at the expense of the local language and teaching traditions, or there may even be legal restrictions on adopting such a policy (Kerklaan et al., 2008).

Not only the Bologna Process is seen as an important part of the internationalisation process, but so is Erasmus. ERASMUS (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) was established in 1987 with the main objectives of educating young people and supporting the personal and

professional development of students in education in Europe and other countries. Erasmus+ has played a pivotal role in a more comprehensive and deliberate approach to the internationalisation process of higher education institutions in Europe, and has served as a model for universities, countries and regions around the world. The impact is quite far-reaching, or rather, Erasmus+ was the catalyst for a more deliberate approach to the internationalisation of higher education institutions in the 1980s. Erasmus+ laid the foundations for the start of the Bologna Process and created mechanisms to facilitate it, such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (De Wit, H., Hunter, F., Howard, L. & Egron-Polak, E., 2015). When it comes to mobility, the focus is usually on students. While many higher education institutions in Europe have procedures in place to increase student exchanges, there is rarely a deliberate effort to promote staff mobility, despite the fact that the Erasmus+ programme provides funding for academics, including administrative staff (Racké, 2013). A much more systematic approach to academic mobility has obvious benefits in terms of improving research and education, as well as overall professional development. (Colucci et al., 2014). And, as Postiglione and Altbach (2013) noted, it seems self-evident that faculty are critical to the global expansion of any educational institution.

The Bologna Process and higher education institutions have been confronted with the issue of quality assurance, and there has also been a greater emphasis on the globalisation of quality assurance, as well as on how national mechanisms in Europe work together to produce common criteria and generally recognise their certification judgements. Accreditation departments are expected to keep abreast of developments and identify the most complex issues involved, as the ideology of higher education (HE) becomes increasingly globalised and cross-border proposals such as franchises, campuses, distance learning, joint and dual degree programmes influence accreditation and quality assurance. Clearly, the process of internationalisation of higher education in Europe appears bright, but its impact will only be realised if the different stakeholders and partners in this ongoing transition process embrace a new discussion on justifications, benefits, resources, opportunities and challenges (De Wit, H., Hunter, F., Howard, L. & Egron-Polak, E., 2015).

### **Limitation and Statement of the study**

The conclusions of the study must be considered with a number of limitations. The questionnaire was sent by email to each lecturer in the period from October 2021 to December 2021. It covers the public universities of Kosovo, where the absolute number of participating lecturers was 336. Regarding the gender of the respondents, 55.4% of the participating lecturers were male and 44.6% of the participating lecturers were female. The aim of this study was to determine the level of English language proficiency among the academic staff of the public universities in Kosovo. As the importance of English language is defined as a key for better work on the university campus, where do the academic staff stand with their English language level, what do they think about the use of English language when their mother tongue is not helpful enough during their lectures or campus work, has the lack of English language proficiency set back or slowed down their academic work, and how do they evaluate the importance of English language in the universities?

## **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. How do academic lecturers view their English language perception and competence?
2. Is the role of the English language proficiency seen as a working importance by the academic staff of the Public Universities Kosovo?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Known as the Latin of the 21st century, English is now playing the most powerful role in the internationalisation of higher education. Rostan (2011) found that on a global scale, English is the primary language used by 53 per cent of professionals in the CAP (Changing Academic Profession) survey; 17 per cent use it as their first language and 36 per cent use it as their second or third language. Despite the fact that 51 per cent of academics use English as a lingua franca for research rather than teaching, only 30 per cent use it for teaching. This disparity particularly affects non-native speakers. Almost all native English-speaking academics use English for both teaching and research. While the use of English as a foreign language is a strong sign of the internationalisation process of universities in countries where English is not a dominant language, the link between the use of English and the internationalisation process of universities is less evident in English-speaking countries. Academic institutions and professors in these countries have an advantage because practically all or most of the academics speak English. However, the use of English as a language cannot be taken as an indicator of involvement in global research networks. Furthermore, the use of English is related to academics and their contributions to the internationalisation process of their higher education (Rostan, 2011).

Today, internationalisation and globalisation have a significant impact on higher education. This is because higher education is both an actor and a reactor in these processes. It is an actor in the sense that it is the agent of internationalisation and globalisation, and a reactor in the sense that it responds to the effects of internationalisation and globalisation. In terms of higher education, internationalisation of higher education can be defined as the process of integrating the international/intercultural dimension in teaching, research and institutional service functions (Ratananukul, 2006).

Looking at universities at a more local level, despite global pressures, responses depend on their past and history (Vaira, 2004; Beerkens & Derwende, 2007). Although internationalisation is seen as an indicator of success, a university will thrive if it has developed strong links with local partners and agencies. This global-local dialectic is evident when we look at universities, which are global institutions rooted in local traditions and networks. Clark (1998), for example, has studied universities that have become entrepreneurial organisations. They are



characterised by a strong core of leadership, a periphery of development, a diversified funding base, a strong academic heart, and strong incentives for internationalisation and transfer.

Universities may be right to be concerned about the English skills of their students. But what about teachers' English? Do universities require them to demonstrate their English skills in order to determine whether they are competent to teach in English? At the time, Karakas (2014) noted that such a policy or practice did not appear to be under consideration in higher education, at least not in the form of a written or official statement in white papers. In the absence of clear, written or unwritten standards for lecturers' English proficiency for employment, there is relatively little information in the literature about professors' attitudes towards their English proficiency and practice.

EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) describes the use of English to teach a non-linguistic course in a culture where English is not the dominant language, and has become one of the most significant trends facing HEIs in such situations today. The first wave of growth occurred in Europe, where most of the EMI's research was conducted. According to Wächter and Maiworm (2014), there were almost 11 times more EMI programmes in Europe in 2014 than in 2001. Linguistically, only a few academics have been involved in studies of the perceived English language skills of higher education stakeholders and their use in EMI institutions. For example, in their study of the effectiveness of EMI policies in the Korean context, Byun et al. (2010) found that lecturers were dissatisfied with their English language skills. A group of non-native English-speaking lecturers in Klaassen and Graaff's (2001) study reported a variety of problems with their language use and skills, mostly related to oral language output, such as pronunciation, accent, fluency and intonation-related complaints. Similarly, Ball and Lindsay (2013) identified the same issues among 44 lecturers who were reported to have the most difficulties with pronunciation when teaching subject courses. However, it was found that professors expressed a common concern about their linguistic competence: not being able to cope linguistically with EMI at a desirable and desired level. Finally, in contrast, Jensen et al. (2011) found that lecturers were satisfied with their English language skills and gave favourable self-assessments.

On the other hand, Klaassen and Bos (2010) claim that more than 45 per cent of academic staff at Leiden and Delft universities in the Netherlands have a proficiency level of C1 or above, and O'Dowd (2018) cites this level as the minimum required for teaching in English at more than half of the 70 European universities surveyed.

According to Klemencic (2013), internationalisation of higher education institutions in the Western Balkans is largely seen as a tool to support national transformation and strengthen productive capacities. Numerous international organisations, especially the European Union, provide economic support for most internationalisation activities. Because the countries and systems in the Western Balkans are so diverse, it is difficult to make broad generalisations. Higher education institutions and studies are still poorly funded in many countries, universities are losing their best academic staff and students - who have already gone abroad - and fundamental reforms are difficult to implement due to a lack of ideological will and

weak governance at both systemic and institutional levels. Transnational proposals, such as the Bologna Process Communiqués, often lead to very minor changes in national systems. Cross-functional and cross-collaboration offers enormous potential for the internationalisation process. There are already a number of important programmes in place to promote collaboration in academic programmes.

According to the results of an opinion poll, academics in the country are willing to collaborate with partners from Western Balkan institutions. When asked whether their institution should prioritise cooperation with universities or higher education institutions in the Western Balkans, academics from Kosovo (98.3%) and Albania (93.5%) agreed with this statement, while those from North Macedonia (77.6%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (60%) disagreed. The other four countries that disagreed with this statement were Montenegro (44.3%), Serbia (27.5%), Croatia (26.2%) and Slovenia (20.4%). Individual countries are looking for partners and forming connections in the burgeoning European higher education arena based on a sense of proximity and a shared tradition that they want to preserve and strengthen (Klemencic, 2013).

Ultimately, the purpose of English in higher education today is becoming more important by the day. Abdulsalam (2014) stated that English is now the most widely spoken and utilised language, both nationally and internationally.

## **METHODS**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the English language proficiency, perception and competence of academic staff at public universities in Kosovo, the internationalisation of higher education in Kosovo and the development of English as a global language in public universities in Kosovo. The main objective of the study was to investigate the English proficiency of lecturers, the function of English and the potential problems that academic staff might face with their English proficiency. The current study uses a quantitative and qualitative survey technique to analyse the perceptions of the lecturers of public universities in Kosovo, whether English language proficiency is seen as a critical helper, whether it has its good sides in campus universities or not, and the effect of English language in the internationalisation process.

### **Participants**

The data was collected in the context of higher education in Kosovo by surveying lecturers at public universities in Kosovo. The participants came from the following universities University "Hasan Prishtina" in Prishtina, University "Ukshin Hoti" in Prizren, University "Haxhi Zeka" in Peja, University "Kadri Zeka" in Gjilan, University "Isa Boletini" in Mitrovica, University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova, University "Applied Sciences" in Ferizaj. The sample of the research consisted of a total of 336 lecturers. The survey consisted of a group of full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers and teaching assistants, aged between 25 and 60 years. The questionnaire was designed and implemented using Google Forms and emailed to each participant.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (336)

		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	150	44,6
	Male	186	55,4
Age	25-30	32	9,5
	30-39	85	25,3
	40-49	104	31,0
	50-59	86	25,6
	60+	29	8,6
Years of teaching	0-10	124	36,9
	11-20	133	39,6
	21+	79	23,5

### **Research Design**

This study employs mixed methods for data collection and analysis. Quantitative methods such as survey research design (including the answered questions shown in pie charts by percentage), and qualitative methods (previous findings and studies from various authors and open-ended questions to achieve the aim of this study) based on data collection through questionnaires. The effectiveness of English language proficiency at the university level was assessed based on the perspective of lecturers.

### **Instruments and Data Analysis**

The questionnaire was designed only as a spreadsheet for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions to test the main objectives of the research, yes/no questions, multiple choice questions and open response questions. The results are presented in pie charts consisting of all questions and answers expressed as a percentage of the questionnaire, including two of the questions that are presented as a



summary at the end of the results, bearing in mind that they were open-ended questions. The survey on language perception and proficiency was carried out from October to December 2021. The results from the data show that the majority of lecturers had a positive view of their English language skills and the use of English in their academic work.

## RESULTS

A questionnaire is employed to investigate English language proficiency, perception and competence among the academic staff of public universities in Kosovo. The results of the examination of the researched aspects are presented and discussed. The first question was “How well do you master the English language?” The majority of the respondents (39.2%) responded ‘Good’, 35.0% of the lecturers answered ‘Very good’, 42 of them, or 12.6% of the lecturers voted ‘Excellent’, 9.9% of them claimed ‘Sufficient’, whereas 3.3% of the participants responded ‘Poor’ (Figure 1).

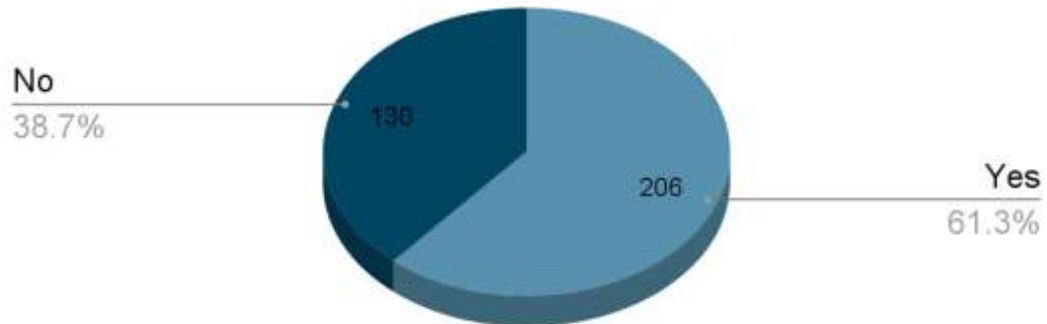
**Figure 1.** *The mastering of the English language*



In the second question the participants were asked “Has your English proficiency helped you land the job you currently have?” They had the choice to select between two answers. More than half of the respondents, or more likely to say, 61.3% of them answered ‘Yes’, claiming that the English language usage has helped them land their current academic job. On the other hand, 38.7% of the lecturers answered ‘No’, stating that it was unnecessary (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** *The lecturers’ English language proficiency and their current academic job*

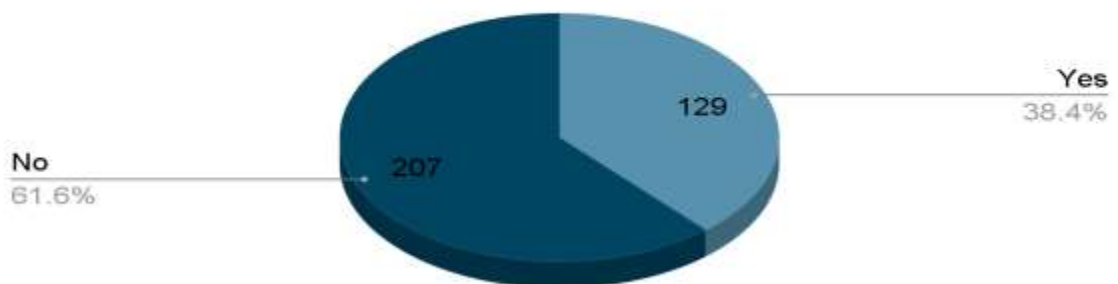
### Has your English proficiency helped you land the job you currently have?



The third question highlights "Was English language competence a requirement for your job?" On this question 38.4% of the lecturers answered 'Yes', whereas 61.6% of them answered 'No', since the majority of the participants have been lecturing at universities for a long time now, English language was not a requirement back then (Figure 3).

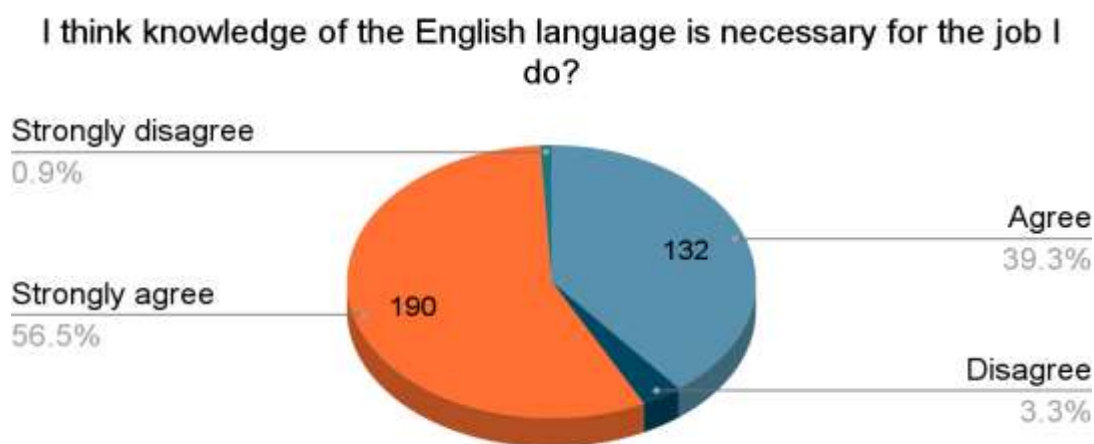
**Figure 3.** *English language acknowledgment as a requirement for job application*

### Was English language competence a requirement for your job?



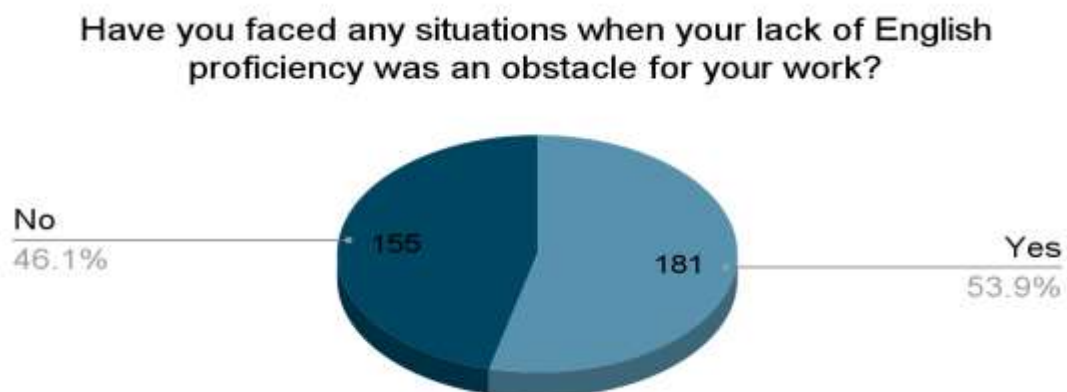
The fourth question (Figure 4) examines "I think knowledge of the English language is necessary for the job I do" The respondents (39.3%) responded 'Agree', whereas 56.5% answered 'Strongly agree' based on their daily academic job necessities. On the other hand, a small percentage of the participants (3.3%) responded 'Disagree', and 0.9% of them answered 'Strongly disagree.'

**Figure 4.** *English language as a necessity for the academic work*



The following question exemplifies the responses of 336 participants based on the statement “Have you faced any situations when your lack of English proficiency was an obstacle for your work?” The majority of the participants, 181 of them responded ‘Yes’, and 155 of them answered ‘No’ (Figure 5).

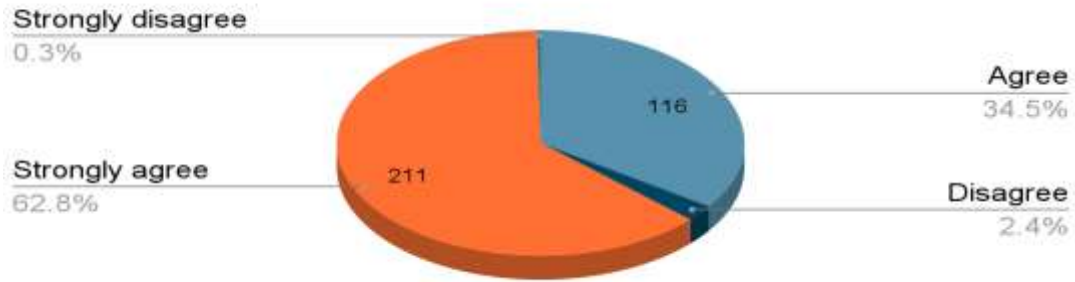
**Figure 5.** *The lack of the English language proficiency in the lecturers’ academic work*



On the sixth question (Figure 6) “I believe knowledge of the English language improves performance in other academic areas.”, the lecturers had to choose one answer among four multiple choices, where 62.8% of them answered ‘Strongly agree’, 34.5% of them answered ‘Agree’, and ‘Disagree’ with 2.4% of the lecturers, and 0.3% of them claiming ‘Strongly disagree.’

**Figure 6.** *English language proficiency and improvements in other academic areas*

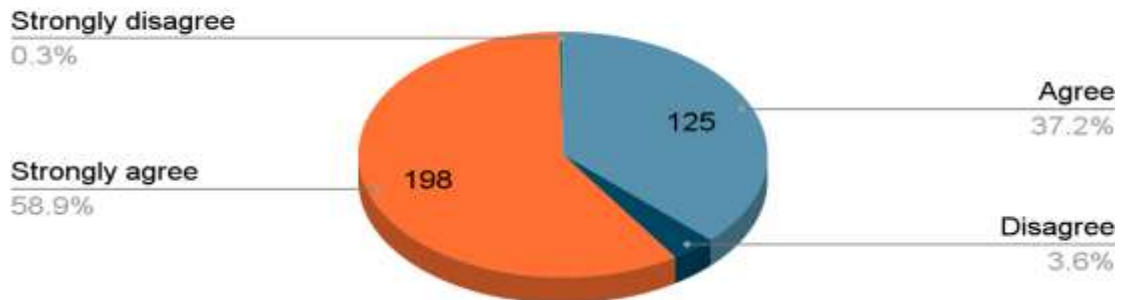
I believe knowledge of the English language improves performance in other academic areas.



The seventh question (Figure 7) was “My English proficiency has helped me in such cases as when particular materials in my mother tongue were hard or impossible to find.” The responses of the participants were clear, where 58.9% answered ‘Strongly agree’, 37.2% claimed ‘Agree’, 3.6% responded “Disagree”, and 0.3% answered “Strongly disagree.”

**Figure 7.** English language proficiency and the positive sides

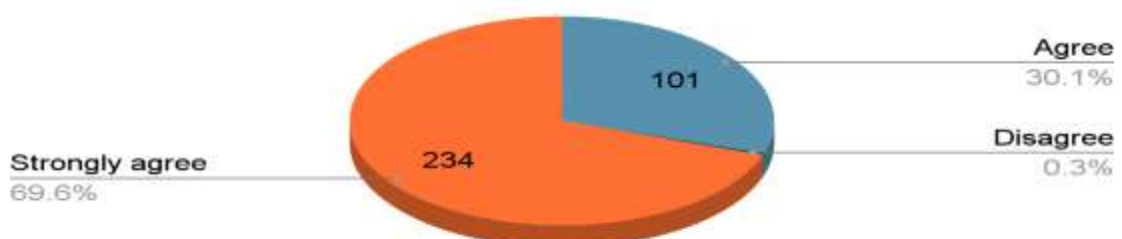
My English proficiency has helped me in such cases as when particular materials in my mother tongue were hard or impossible to find.



The eighth question (Figure 8) highlights “University staff must be proficient in another language other than their mother tongue.” More than half of the respondents, 69.9% of them selected ‘Strongly agree’, whereas 30.1% of them voted for ‘Agree’, and 0.3% of the lecturers answered ‘Disagree.’

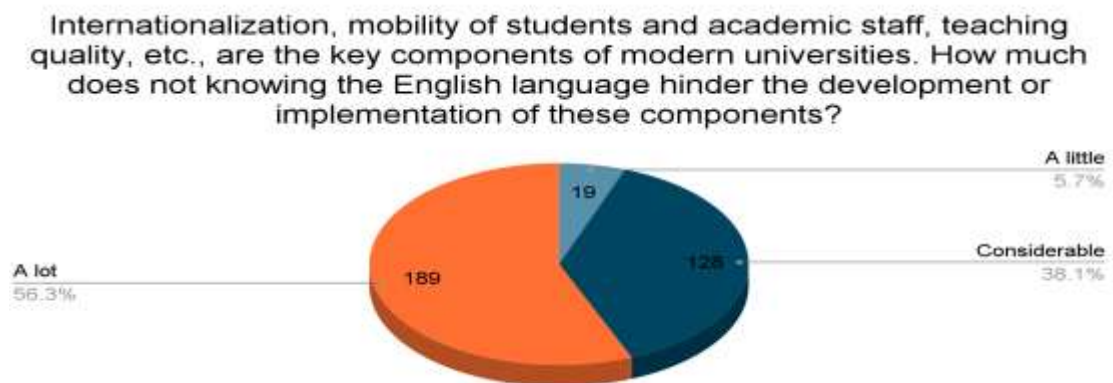
**Figure 8.** Foreign languages in the University

University staff must be proficient in another language other than their mother tongue.



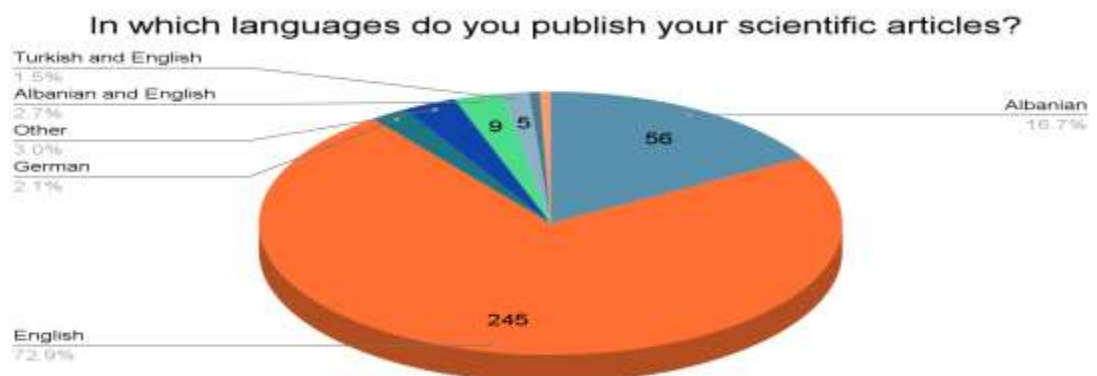
Next was the ninth question asking “Internationalisation, mobility of students and academic staff, teaching quality, etc., are the key components of modern universities. How much does not knowing the English language hinder the development or implementation of these components?” 5.7% of the lecturers responded ‘A little’, 38.1% of them voted ‘Considerable’, and 189 of them or 56.3% answered ‘A lot’ (Figure 9).

**Figure 9.** *The lack of the English language proficiency in the development of internationalization*



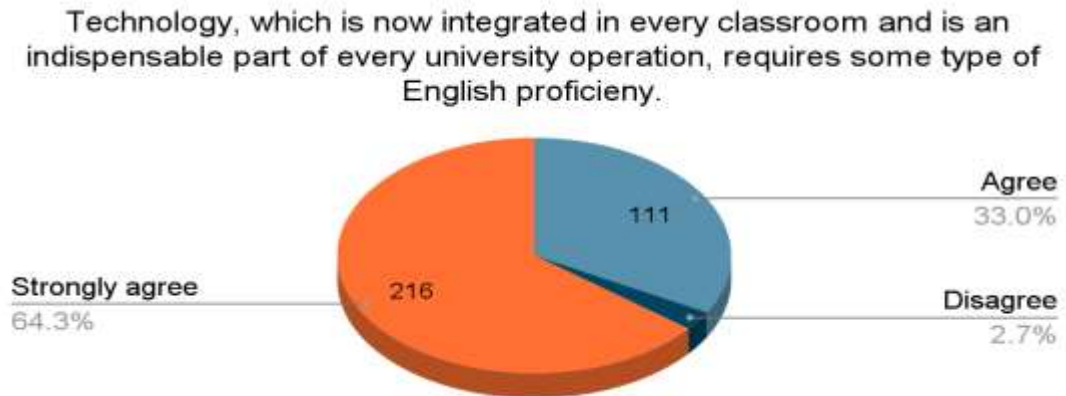
The tenth question (Figure 10) “In which languages do you publish your scientific articles?” They had to choose multiple answers among six multiple choices; “Albanian”, “Bosnian”, “Turkish”, “English”, “German”, and “Other”. 56 or (16.7%) of the lecturers participating answered ‘Albanian’, 245 or (72.9%) of the lecturers voted ‘English’, 7 or (2.1%) of them answered ‘German’, and then we have 9 or (2.7%) of them claiming that the languages of their publications are ‘Albanian and English’, 5 or (1.5%) of them voted ‘Turkish and English’, 2 or (0.6%) of them answered ‘Albanian and German’ (the one in blue), another 2 or (0.6%) of them answered ‘English and German’ (the one in orange), and lastly 10 or (3.0%) of the lecturers participating claimed ‘Other.’

**Figure 10.** *The lecturers’ scientific articles and their language of publications*



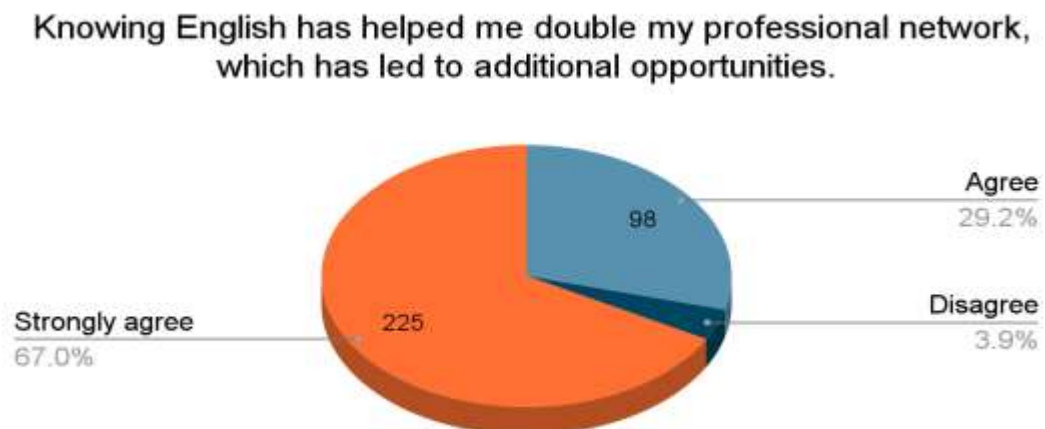
The following question exemplifies the responses of 336 participants based on the statement “Technology, which is now integrated in every classroom and is an indispensable part of every university operation, requires some type of English proficiency.” The majority of the participants, or 216 of them responded ‘Strongly agree’, 111 of them answered ‘Agree’, along with only 49 of them voting ‘Disagree’ (Figure 11).

**Figure 11.** *The use of technology with the help of the English language*



The twelfth question (Figure 12) was “Knowing English has helped me double my professional network, which has led to additional opportunities.” 67.0% of the lecturers answered ‘Strongly agree’, 29.2% of the lecturers claimed ‘Agree’, and 3.9% of the lecturers responded ‘Disagree’.

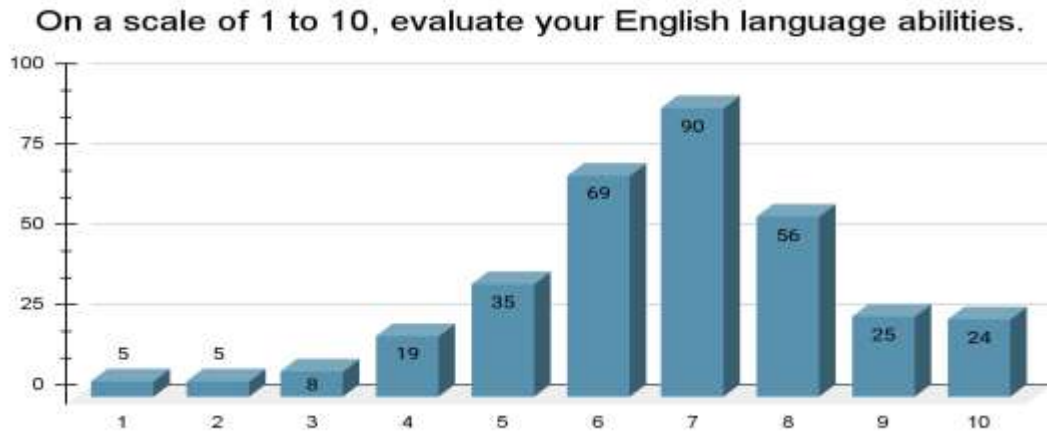
**Figure 12.** *English language proficiency and the professional work*



On the thirteenth question “On a scale of 1 to 10 (one being the lowest and ten being the highest), evaluate your English language 'abilities.’” 5 of the lecturers voted ‘1’, another 5 of the lecturers answered ‘2’, 8 of the respondents claimed ‘3’, 19 of the respondents answered ‘4’, 35 of them responded ‘5’, 69 of the lecturers voted ‘6’, 90 of them answered ‘7’, 56 of the respondents answered ‘8’, 25 of the lecturers claimed ‘9’, and 24 of them voted ‘10’ (Figure 13).

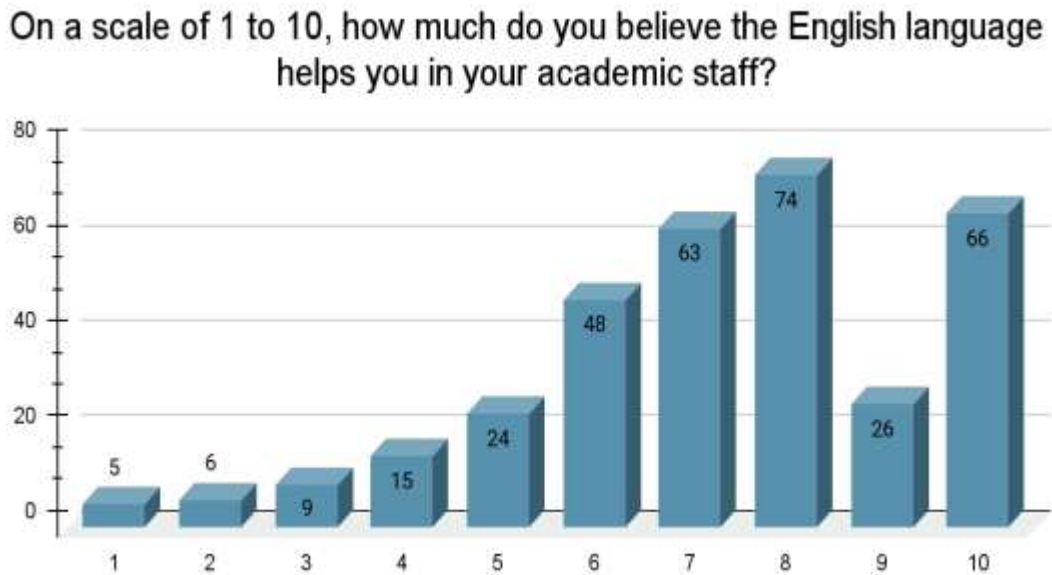


**Figure 13.** *English language abilities evaluation scale*



And the fourteenth question asking “On a scale of 1 to 10 (one being the lowest and ten being the highest), how much do you believe the English language helps you in your academic staff?” 5 of the participants answered ‘1’, 6 of them answered ‘2’, 9 of them answered ‘3’, 15 of the lecturers claimed ‘4’, 24 of them answered ‘5’, 48 of the lecturers responded ‘6’, 63 of the respondents voted ‘7’, 74 of the respondents voted ‘8’, 26 of them responded ‘9’, and 66 of them voted ‘10’ (Figure 14).

**Figure 14.** *English language importance in the University*



### **Open-ended questions - Summary section**

The first one asked the lecturers, “Why is it important for you to improve your English language skills? (If you are already proficient, comment on why you

think it is necessary for others to have some type of knowledge in another language).”

As for the responses, they were quite impressive and the most key ones were:

“ 1. No serious research can be done without using international publications, and the main language of those publications is English; 2. Nowadays, being bilingual is very important because it helps in your work; 3. For communication, literature, and lectures; 4. Because the English language mastery gives you more opportunities for everything an intellectual person needs, especially the academic staff; 5. English is the main language in the world used in fields such as: science, technology, and business; 6. To have access to more innovative literature; 7. To increase the quality of teaching; 8. To publish scientific works in English without having to pay for translations; 9. All science is in English, so proficiency in English is essential; 10. Mastery of English is essential at this time so that you can be up to date with the information and changes that are happening in the field of study. Given the fact that all the publications are being published in the English language; 11. As a lecturer, you must speak English in order to be as close as possible to developed countries; 12. English is the *Lingua franca* today; 13. Since I do not know English well, I suffer the great consequences of not being able to speak with foreign colleagues; 14. Today everything is in English; even university documents are translated into English; 15. If I knew English well, I would have a higher position; 16. Improving English language skills is a big step for all university employees; 17. Because English language proficiency is as important as the doctoral degree; 18. Knowledge of English is something elementary; it is a passport for us; 19. Indeed, English is more valuable than other diplomas and certificates. We translate research works mainly through translators who lose their value and quality; 20. It is important to improve English language skills because of scientific studies and international mobility; 21. It is seen as a helper for the lecturers’ careers; a supreme helper for presentations, participation in conferences, scientific projects, and publications; 22. The lecturers must improve their English skills so that they can have access to materials that are not translated into their mother tongue, but only in English; 23. The mastery of the English language is valuable because nowadays, all of the scientific articles are published in English, and the English language proficiency leads us to professional development and improves our academic performances.”

And the second question was, “Because university staff continuously work with international institutions, does English language proficiency play a role in quality communication between the two?” The most key answers were:

“ 1. The main role, the better the communication, the more influential in fulfilling the requirements for reciprocity between institutions; 2. Increasing the quality of cooperation; 3. Development, quality improvement, exchange of experiences and knowledge; 4. An extremely important place in developing various areas of the University; 5. There is no quality communication without knowing English very well, and there is no international cooperation without mastering the English language; 6. The reputation of the university is different if there is quality communication; 7. Without communication, there is no cooperation, precisely in English, meetings with international colleagues take place mainly; 8. With quality communication we show our values as wise and hardworking people; 9.

Applications, for example, for Erasmus+, Heras+, Horizon Europe, are done in English; 10. English language proficiency plays an incomparable position in international collaborations and strengthens the reports of these international collaborations; most importantly, it plays a key role in the exchange of academic experiences with various universities around the world.”

## **DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses the results of the research and the questions asked in the questionnaire. Based on the findings, it can be said that the participants in this study usually considered their English proficiency to be at a medium level, with 65% of them rating their overall academic English proficiency as 'good'. This finding provides a counter-evidence to what Sawaki (2017) stated, where the Japanese lecturers organised by the Japanese government (Education Rebuilding Implementation Council, 2013) released a series of proposals to start testing all four skills (English language mastery in general) in university admission exams, as well as to encourage the use of English language so that individual universities can choose the best choice for their requirements, since the Japanese university lecturers were rated with a very low English language level.

Regarding the next three questions about the recognition and use of English in Kosovo's public universities, English language proficiency was seen as a help to get academic jobs, but when it came to job requirements, most of the lecturers responded negatively, as the majority of the lecturers have been lecturing at universities for a long time and English was not a requirement at that time, and as for being seen as a necessity, 4.2% of the participants claimed that they did not see the use of English in that way. Furthermore, Dearden and Macaro (2016) claimed that hardly any of the lecturers interviewed from Austria, Italy or Poland seemed to have a clear understanding of what an adequate level of English could be, and some assumed that their selection was based on whether they had a Ph.D. from an Anglophone country, had taught abroad, or were simply considered by managers to speak English well. Dearden's (2015) survey found that 83% of 'informed observers' in 54 countries believed that there were not enough competent lecturers in their country, even though the term 'qualified' was left ambiguous, allowing it to be construed only in terms of English language or qualification. Finally, it is clear from various sources of research that lecturers in many academic fields believe that their subject is less dependent on language. Nevertheless, given the lack of English proficiency among lecturers, it is clear that the vast majority of respondents believe that a high level of English proficiency is required (Choi 2013).

According to the participants' answers to the next question, their response that the lack of English language skills hinders the work of the lecturers can be seen as a demonstration of their lack of English language skills in general, since the recognition of the English language enables the lecturers to establish a fruitful correspondence in their academic work. Inadequate resources certainly have an impact on the effectiveness of EMI policies (Hamid et al., 2013; Kaplan & Baldauf Jr., 2003; Kaplan et al., 2011; Manh, 2012), and the shortcomings seemed to harm the professors in this study. The EMI programme was introduced by various foreign

universities, where superior facilities were expected. Due to the lack of basic resources, lecturers were put under unexpected pressure to change their teaching materials and techniques. According to Dang et al. (2013), the Internet, for example, can provide a wealth of English teaching tools. The findings also suggest that lecturers at public universities in Kosovo see English as a notable help in cases where certain materials in the lecturers' mother tongue were difficult to find. However, Jensen and Thorgesen (2011) point out that the Danish language may be threatened by the increasing use of English as the language of lecturers' publications, and if Danish "ends up losing its domains", i.e. if it is no longer used in premium domains such as higher education, it will lose value and lead to a less developed vocabulary, which will lead to more use of English.

In response to the following questions on the development of internationalisation and the proficiency of academic staff in a language other than their mother tongue, the lecturers voted positively on these two questions, claiming that they see the need for proficiency in other languages as English language proficiency itself and components such as student and academic staff mobility, teaching quality, etc. play a crucial role in the development of internationalisation. Correspondingly, many European countries and systems remain committed to teaching in the national language, including the policies developed to promote the use of national languages alongside English (Haberland, Lönsmann, & Preisler, 2013).

According to the results, most of the lecturers stated that the language they use for their scientific articles is English, while the rest of them stated that they also publish their works in Albanian, German, Turkish, Bosnian and other various foreign languages. In line with this, Koros (2015) stated that although Newton's Principia Mathematica was written in Latin, nowadays scientific articles are mostly published in English. A 2012 study published in the scientific journal Research Trends examined publications collected by Scopus, the world's largest collection of peer-reviewed journals. To be included in Scopus, a publication published in a language other than English must at least have English abstracts. The study found that 80 per cent of the more than 21,000 articles from 239 countries already in the database were written in English. The study focused on eight nations that produce a high number of scientific journals and found that the ratio of English to non-English articles had increased or remained stable in all but one of them in recent years. According to Porzucki (2014), words like oxygen or hydrogen sound scientific. But these words come from Russian, Greek and French. Nowadays, even scientists and professors publish their work or new discoveries in English. Some people believe that Latin is the language of science, but when it comes to publishing, they definitely use English. In the 1920s, Gordin, a professor of the history of science, claimed that this was when the American scientific establishment began to take over the world. Gordin's (1920) study found that:

*“In 1915, Americans were teaching foreign languages and learning foreign languages at about the same level as Europeans were. After these laws go into effect, foreign language education drops massively. Isolationism kicks in the 1920s, even after the laws are overturned, and that means people don't think they need to pay attention to what happens in French or in German.”*

Based on the results, it is reasonable to say that 65% of the lecturers from public universities in Kosovo rated their English language skills in general as "good". In contrast, Karakas (2014) found that a large percentage of lecturers from Turkish universities rated their English language skills positively, with more than 90% of the participants rating their English language skills as "good". Several studies agree in emphasising the importance of the linguistic and methodological expertise of teaching staff in ensuring the quality and proper delivery of overseas programmes. Furthermore, recent publications by several European authorities emphasise the importance of verifying these competences (Baumann et al. 2006, 3; Lauridsen 2013, 8). However, there is no agreement among Spanish universities on the level of English required to teach subjects in this language. Halbach and Lázaro (2015) found that the majority of Spanish universities required a B2 level for lecturers to enrol in EMI programmes, 28 per cent required a C1 level, and 34 per cent had no requirement at all. Not only are there enormous differences between universities in terms of prerequisites, or lack thereof, and the level required - should the prerequisite exist - but there are also huge differences in the process of confirming them (O'Dowd 2018).

After analyzing the impact of the use of English in public universities in Kosovo, the internationalisation process, English as a global language, all the results concluded that the use of English is seen as a dominant tool among academic staff, that it presents opportunities and challenges to higher education, opportunities for educational development, and that it helps academic staff to access the diverse knowledge of the world. The internationalisation of higher education also promotes cultural interaction, knowledge exchange and research collaboration. At the same time, it fosters understanding, interdependence and friendship among universities and institutions worldwide.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study, the researchers focused on the functions of English language use and the role of English language in the internationalisation process of higher education in Kosovo. The researchers have discussed the concepts of internationalisation and globalisation and their implications for higher education. They also identified the potentials and problems that Kosovo's public universities may face. In this paper, the researchers have tried to show that English, as a prominent language of global communication, has an important role to play in the internationalisation of higher education in Kosovo. There is no doubt that lecturers at Kosovo's public universities believe they are able to teach their subjects in English. This dispels doubts about the lecturers' command of English, as there is no publicly defined or implemented procedure for evaluating the English of lecturers who wish to work at EMI universities. As this study has shown, the mandatory implementation of EMI without reference to the language proficiency of the lecturers, the lack of a much-needed support structure and usable lecturers to deliver EMI courses, and the voluntary implementation of EMI in all academic fields has led to several unintended consequences. Findings such as those presented in this study have significant implications for the future implementation of EMI policies in Kosovo's public universities. Although the internationalisation process poses challenges for higher education in Kosovo, it can be argued that the establishment of a transnational

academic system in the form of joint programmes provides excellent opportunities for Kosovo's public universities to improve and update their curricula towards standardisation.

English is considered the lingua franca in academia, serving as the dominant language for scholarly communication and collaboration. Academic staff members recognize the importance of English as a means of effective communication and see it as a necessary tool to navigate the global academic landscape. Proficiency in English enables academic staff to access a vast range of knowledge and research from around the world. Since a significant portion of academic resources, such as scholarly articles, books, and conferences, are predominantly available in English, having strong English language skills allows them to stay updated with the latest developments in their field and engage with global scholarly discourse.

English language competence directly affects the quality of academic work. It ensures clear and effective communication of research findings, ideas, and scholarly debates. When academic staff possess strong English language skills, they can convey their thoughts accurately, contribute to meaningful discussions, and produce high-quality research papers and publications that meet international standards.

Proficiency in English facilitates staff and student mobility by breaking down language barriers. English is commonly used as the language of instruction in international academic programs and exchange programs. When academic staff and students have a good command of English, they can participate in exchange programs, collaborate with institutions abroad, and engage in academic activities that promote intercultural understanding and learning.

English language competence enables higher education institutions (HEIs) to establish collaborations, partnerships, and joint research projects with universities worldwide. This fosters cooperation and capacity building, as academic staff can engage in collaborative research, share expertise, and exchange best practices. Such collaborations contribute to the overall development and advancement of the institution. English proficiency facilitates effective networking within the global academic community. Conferences, seminars, and workshops often use English as the primary language of communication, allowing academic staff to connect with colleagues, share knowledge, and build professional relationships. Engaging in international networks expands opportunities for research collaborations, grants, and participation in academic events that enhance professional growth.

Academic staff play a vital role in the internationalization efforts of higher education institutions. Their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively in English is crucial for establishing global partnerships, attracting international students and faculty, and creating a culturally diverse and inclusive academic environment. Academic staff serve as ambassadors of their institution, contributing to its international reputation and competitiveness. Proficiency in English is seen as a clear indication of an institution's commitment to internationalization. HEIs that prioritize the development of English language skills among their academic staff demonstrate their readiness to engage in global academic networks, foster international collaborations, and provide quality education to international students.



English language competence enhances the institution's international profile and demonstrates its capacity to operate in an increasingly interconnected world.

The English language proficiency of academic staff affects the reputation and prestige of the institution. Institutions with a high level of English language competence among their academic staff are more likely to be recognized as globally competitive and reputable. A strong English language program and competent staff contribute to the overall academic excellence and standing of the institution, attracting international students, researchers, and funding opportunities.

In conclusion, the internationalization of higher education in Kosovo, as well as the development of the English language as a global language has created a need for us to reassess the role of English in the development of higher education in Kosovo.

## **RECCOMENDATIONS**

Higher education institutions (HEIs) should recognize the significance of English language competence in the context of internationalization and prioritize its development within their academic community. This involves creating awareness among staff, students, and administrators about the importance of English as a lingua franca for global communication, research collaboration, and academic mobility.

HEIs should establish a policy that mandates English language competence as a requirement for newly-hired academic staff. Additionally, current staff members should be encouraged and supported to improve their English language skills through training programs, language courses, and professional development opportunities. English language competence should be considered as one of the criteria for promotion within the academic hierarchy. By including language proficiency as a requirement for career advancement, HEIs can incentivize staff members to invest in their language development and ensure that those in leadership positions possess the necessary skills to contribute effectively to internationalization efforts.

HEIs should consider offering study programs in English, either partially or fully, to attract international students and promote cultural diversity within the institution. Providing English-medium instruction (EMI) can enhance the institution's global visibility and increase opportunities for international collaboration and student mobility. HEIs should create an English-medium instruction (EMI) environment on campus by promoting the use of English in academic settings, such as classrooms, lectures, seminars, and conferences. This can be achieved through encouraging faculty members to deliver their lectures in English, providing English language resources and support, and facilitating English-language discussions and presentations.

Collaborating with other institutions, both locally and internationally, to develop joint study programs can offer students and staff the opportunity to study and work in an English-speaking environment. Joint programs enable the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, while fostering intercultural understanding and promoting the use of English as a common language of instruction.

HEIs should continuously review and update their curricula to align with European standards and guidelines, such as the European Higher Education Area

(EHEA) framework. This includes integrating English language skills development into the curriculum and ensuring that graduates are equipped with the necessary language competencies to thrive in an increasingly globalized academic and professional environment.

HEIs should actively participate in programs such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and Heras+ that provide grants and funding opportunities for international cooperation, capacity building, and staff and student mobility. These programs can support initiatives aimed at enhancing English language competence, promoting collaboration with other institutions, and facilitating internationalization efforts.

By implementing these recommendations, HEIs can prioritize the development of English language competence, create an environment conducive to English-medium instruction, strengthen international collaborations, and ensure that their curricula and programs meet global standards. This will ultimately contribute to the institution's internationalization efforts, enhance the quality of education, and provide students and staff with the necessary skills for success in a globalized world.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

### 1. Comparative analysis:

- a) Conduct a comparative analysis of language skills among academic staff from different disciplines or departments. This research could identify discipline-specific language demands and evaluate how language skills vary across academic fields.
- b) Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the development and improvement of language skills among academic staff over time. This research could explore the impact of language training programs, immersion experiences, or other interventions on the enhancement of language proficiency.

### 2. Future research on the distinction between BICS and CALP language skills among academic staff could delve into the following areas:

- a) **Language Skill Profiles:** Examine the language skill profiles of academic staff and identify the dominant skills within BICS and CALP. This research could investigate the relationship between these skills and specific academic tasks, such as lecturing, conducting research, or engaging in scholarly discourse.
- b) **Language Development Trajectories:** Explore the progression of academic staff from BICS to CALP proficiency levels. This research could investigate the factors influencing the transition and identify effective strategies for supporting the development of CALP skills among faculty members.

### 3. Research on the Readiness of Academic Staff to Teach EMI Courses:

To further understand the readiness of academic staff to teach courses through English-Medium Instruction (EMI), future research can focus on the following areas:

- a) **Faculty Development Programs:** Investigate the effectiveness of faculty development programs designed to enhance the readiness of academic staff for EMI instruction. This research could examine the impact of training initiatives, pedagogical support, and language enhancement courses on faculty members' confidence, competence, and instructional practices in EMI settings.
- b) **Student Perspectives:** Explore the perspectives of students who are taught by academic staff in EMI courses. This research could examine the students' perceptions of the language proficiency of their instructors, the impact of instructor language skills on learning outcomes, and the potential challenges students face in understanding and engaging with course content delivered in a non-native language.
- c) **Cross-cultural Competence:** Investigate the role of cross-cultural competence in the readiness of academic staff to teach EMI courses. This research could explore the impact of intercultural communication skills, awareness of diverse cultural backgrounds, and sensitivity to the needs of international students on the effectiveness of EMI instruction.

By conducting further research on the evaluation of academic staff language skills, the distinction between BICS and CALP proficiency, and the readiness of faculty to teach EMI courses, institutions can gain valuable insights to inform language training programs, curriculum development, and support mechanisms for academic staff. The findings can contribute to the design of evidence-based policies and practices that promote effective language instruction, enhance academic quality, and support the internationalization efforts of higher education institutions.

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