

Talking about teaching in English: Swedish university lecturers' experiences of changing teaching language

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Abstract

This study documents the experiences of Swedish university lecturers when they change from teaching in their first language to teaching in English. Eighteen lecturers from two Swedish universities took part in a training course for teachers who need to give content courses in English. As part of the course the participants gave mini-lectures in their first language in a subject area that they usually teach. The following week, the lecturers gave the same lectures again, this time in English. The pairs of lectures were videoed and commented on by the lecturers themselves and the whole course cohort in an online discussion forum (an input of approximately 60 000 words). In addition, twelve of the lecturers were interviewed about their experiences of changing language in this way (total of 4 hours of recorded material). The paper presents a qualitative analysis of the thoughts and experiences expressed by the lecturers in their online discussions and in the interviews concerning the process of changing the language of instruction to English. These results are presented as nine themes. Nine recommendations for teachers changing to teaching in English are also presented. The findings replicate those of earlier studies with one notable exception: the lecturers in this study were acutely aware of their limitations when teaching in English. It is suggested that this may be due to the lecturers' relative inexperience of English-medium instruction.

Keywords: parallel-language education, university lecturing, teaching in English, ELF, medium of instruction.

Resumen

Hablando sobre la enseñanza en inglés: experiencias de los docentes universitarios en Suecia respecto de cambiar su enseñanza a otra lengua

El presente trabajo documenta las experiencias de profesores universitarios en

Suecia cuando pasan de la enseñanza en su lengua materna a la enseñanza en inglés. Dieciocho profesores pertenecientes a dos universidades suecas participaron en un curso de formación para profesores en el que debían impartir en inglés el contenido de cursos de materias específicas. Como parte del curso, los profesores participantes impartieron una serie de “mini-lecciones” en su lengua materna sobre una materia específica de su ámbito profesional. A la semana siguiente los profesores volvieron a impartir la misma lección pero, esta vez, en inglés. Se grabaron con técnicas de vídeo y audio los distintos pares de lecciones, los propios profesores hicieron comentarios a las sesiones y los seguidores del curso participaron en un foro de debate en línea (que consta de aproximadamente 60.000 palabras). Además, se entrevistó a doce de los profesores acerca de sus experiencias sobre este cambio de lengua en las clases dando como resultado un total de cuatro horas de material grabado. En el presente trabajo se analiza desde un punto de vista cualitativo los pensamientos y las experiencias relativos al proceso de pasar de la lengua materna a la lengua inglesa como lengua de instrucción y manifestados por los profesores en los debates en línea y en las entrevistas. Los resultados se clasifican en nueve temas. Asimismo se presentan nueve recomendaciones para los profesores que cambian a la lengua inglesa en su docencia. Los resultados se asemejan a los obtenidos en estudios anteriores aunque con una excepción notable: los profesores participantes en este estudio eran muy conscientes de sus limitaciones a la hora de enseñar en inglés, y se entiende que esto puede deberse a su relativa inexperiencia en cuanto al uso de la lengua inglesa como medio de instrucción.

Palabras clave: docencia en una lengua paralela, clases universitarias, enseñanza en inglés, inglés como lengua franca, medio de instrucción.

Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing trend across Europe towards teaching university courses through the medium of English. In this respect, Sweden has been shown to be at the forefront of this change along with the Netherlands and Finland (Maiworm & Wächter, 2002; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008). For example, in a recent snap-shot of the situation in Swedish higher education approximately 50% of master’s courses offered in autumn 2007 were scheduled to be taught through the medium of English (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, 2007). In my earlier work I have extensively examined the effects of such changes on Swedish students’ experiences of learning and the resultant consequences for learning (Airey, 2009a, 2009b, 2010 & 2011; Airey & Linder, 2006, 2007 & 2008). For this paper the focus now shifts to the experiences of lecturers who teach on such

courses. How do Swedish lecturers experience the process of changing to teaching in English? What problems do they encounter and what advice can they give to others faced with the same situation?

Research background

The past 20 years have seen a large number of studies dealing with diverse aspects of English-medium instruction in European university education. One of the main drivers of this research has been the steadily increasing numbers of overseas students reading courses at European universities – due in part to the implementation of the Bologna process (Benelux Bologna Secretariat, 2010). In the Nordic countries in particular there has been a great deal of discussion in the research community about the use of English in the educational sector (Teleman, 1992; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Falk, 2001; Höglin, 2002; Wilson, 2002; Hyltenstam, 2004; Josephson, 2005; Preisler, 2008; Shaw, 2008; Mortensen & Haberland 2009). These discussions have centred on questions of domain loss, parallel language use and the necessity of English as a the language of international research. There has also been a corresponding flood of empirical work. The majority of this work has taken the form of surveys that focus on the extent to which English is used in higher education, and the attitudes of lecturers and/or students to teaching and learning in English (Gunnarsson & Öhman, 1997; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Falk, 2001; Hellekjaer & Westergaard 2002; Carroll-Boegh, 2005; Melander, 2005; Bolton & Kuteeva, 2009; Jensen, Stæhr & Thøgersen, 2009). Others have attempted to describe and document the language environments of university courses taught in English (Tella, Räsänen & Vähäpassi, 1999; Schwach, 2005; Brandt & Mortensen, 2008; Ljøsland, 2008; Björkman, 2010; Söderlundh, 2010).

A smaller number of studies deal with the ability of students to learn in English. For example, in terms of reading comprehension, both Karlsgren and Hansen (2003) and Söderlundh (2004) suggest that reading in English leads to a more surface understanding of text. Similarly, Skriver Didriksen (2009) finds that many students do not appear to have the necessary academic reading skills to cope with studies in English. However, Shaw & McMillion (2008) provide a slightly different picture, suggesting that Swedish students read an English biology textbook as well as their British counterparts provided they are given extra time (see also this volume). In terms of listening, Hellekjær (2010) finds that a considerable number of

students have problems of comprehension when lectures are given in English. The problems found involve the meaning of particular terms and difficulties in taking notes. Suviniitty (2010) relates student ratings of lecture comprehensibility to the number of questions asked by the lecturer, suggesting that lectures with a higher degree of interaction are judged to be easier to understand. On a similar theme, Airey (2009a) finds that whilst Swedish students may suggest that they learn equally well in the local language or English, the same students can point out a number of important differences in their learning when shown video footage of actual lectures in a process of stimulated recall (Calderhead, 1981). The differences found here relate to difficulty experienced in simultaneously following a lecture and taking notes, and a smaller number of questions asked and answered when lectures were in English. This reduction in the frequency of questions in English-medium instruction was also noted by Björkman (2010).

Very few studies have been made of Nordic teachers lecturing in English. Thøgersen & Airey (2011) analysed five science lectures: three in Danish (L1) and two in English (L2) given by the same experienced lecturer. They found that the lecturer took longer to present the same subject matter, speaking more slowly and using more repetition in L2. They also noted that in L2 the lecturer's language was more formal – with a number of similarities to written, textbook style.

However, for this particular paper, the most relevant research comes from the Netherlands. Working at a technical university, Vinke (1995) administered a questionnaire to 131 lecturers and, in a follow-up study recorded 16 engineering lecturers when they taught in both English and Dutch. Vinke's analysis of this data set led to a number of interesting conclusions with direct relevance to the questions raised in this paper. The first and most striking conclusion is that the lecturers in the study say they hardly notice any difference in teaching in English or in Dutch. This finding is similar to earlier work carried out by Zonneveld (1991). Despite this belief, there are a number of differences noted by Vinke. For example, teaching in English "reduced the redundancy of lecturers' subject matter presentation, lecturer's speech rate, their expressiveness, and their clarity and accuracy of expression" (Vinke, Snippe & Jochems, 1998: 393). Moreover, lecturers themselves report an increase in preparation time needed for English-medium teaching. Finally, Vinke points out that the lecturers in the study are a select group who are highly experienced and who teach in English on a daily basis. It is thus suggested that Vinke's findings may not be generalisable

to other contexts with less experienced teachers who only teach in English occasionally.

Working at the same technical university in the Netherlands, Klaassen (2001) studied the relationship between lecture intelligibility and the language competency and pedagogical approach of lecturers. Lectures were video-recorded and rated for comprehensibility and student-centredness. The lecturers' language level was also tested using TOEFL. Klaassen concludes that student-centred lecturing is in fact a much more important factor in the success of a lecture than the lecturer's language competence. Klaassen (2001) suggests a threshold level of TOEFL 580 – approximately equal to level C1 on the Common European Framework – as the limit below which language training should be necessary (see also Council of Europe, 2001; Educational Testing Service, 2004).

Finally, returning to the Nordic context, Lehtonen and Lönnfors (2001) working in Finland administered a questionnaire (n=43) and carried out interviews with 9 university teaching staff. Their findings are similar to Vinke's (1995). In addition, the lecturers in this study mention problems of pronunciation and also suggest that they would feel uncomfortable correcting students' English.

Setting and data collection

The interviews and written material analysed for this paper come from eighteen teaching staff at two Swedish universities. These lecturers were participants on the flexible staff training course Teaching in English. The aim of this 7.5 ECTS course is for university lecturers to train in the use of English to teach their subject area. During the course participants discuss and reflect on the demands and consequences of such teaching. The course is delivered almost exclusively online, with only three physical meetings after the initial course start. The course participants come from eight separate disciplines: six from business administration (B₁-B₆), five from media studies/journalism (J₁-J₅), two from physics (P₁-P₂), and one each from environmental science (E₁), maritime studies (M₁) industrial engineering (I₁), nursing (N₁) and law (L₁) (identification codes in brackets). Six of the lecturers had never taught in English before, eleven of the lecturers teach in English occasionally and one of the lecturers had just begun to teach exclusively in English, thus this group had much less experience of teaching

in English than the cohorts of the previous studies presented in the research background (Zonneveld, 1991; Vinke, 1995; Klaassen 2001; Lehtonen & Lönnfors, 2001).

In general, there were three reasons mentioned by course participants as their motivation for taking the course. The first motivation mentioned by participants was the desire to fulfil part of the pedagogical qualification requirements for promotion to senior lecturer, the second motivation mentioned was an interest in language issues *per se* and the third reason was lecturers' uncertainty about their own language skills – one participant puts it as follows:

I have the knowledge of the subject – but the English is “homemade”!

Prior to the course start the lecturers filled out a self-assessment questionnaire based on the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001). Due to the confidence-building nature of the course, no attempt was made to validate the participants' self-assessments through language testing. The majority of participants rated their English skills as either B2 or C1, two lecturers rated themselves as B1 and two rated themselves as C2. The majority of the participants thus assessed their English as being either at or below the level at which Klaassen (2001) suggests language training may be necessary.

The course duration was twelve weeks, with participants required to take part in some form of online activity each week based around their experiences of changing their teaching language to English (an input of approximately 60 000 words in total). All such online input was carried out in English. An important part of the course centred on the participants giving mini-lectures. First the participants gave a lecture in their first language in a subject area that they usually teach. The following week, the lecturers gave the same lectures again, this time in English. The pairs of lectures were videoed and made available online for comparison and (friendly) critique in the discussion forum. Each participant commented in detail on his or her own pair of lectures directly to me and was required to comment on two other sets of lectures in the online discussion forum. In this way each participant received feedback and critique from two other participants as well as that of the course leader. The format with online lectures that could be readily viewed led to many of the participants commenting on more than the two lectures prescribed and in many cases long discussion threads developed.

During the twelve weeks of the course I kept a simple logbook where I jotted down topics that arose during my feedback and in the online discussions. Based on these notes I created a semi-structured interview protocol (Kvale, 1996), which I used to interview twelve of the lecturers about their experiences of changing language in this way. These interviews were carried out towards the end of the course and were digitally recorded and transcribed (approximately 20 minutes per interview, total of 4 hours of recorded material). The language used in the interviews was English.¹

Data analysis

Qualitative analysis involves “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992: 145). In this type of work iterative cycles are made through the data looking for patterns and key events. Each cycle results in loosely labelled categories that may then be split up, renamed or amalgamated in the next iteration. In this spirit, the data analysis proceeded as follows.

As mentioned earlier, I had kept a log during the course and had used this to inform the interviews. Similarly, I had my logbook open during transcription and made further notes as issues arose. Next, using a function in the online course platform (Moodle) I identified the postings of each individual and copied them into a single document. I then copied the interview transcripts into this document at the appropriate places. This resulted in a single text with eighteen sections, each section detailing the data from one of the course participants. My plan was to analyse the thoughts of each individual and potentially relate these to the subject taught and/or the lecturer’s self-assessment forms. However, this first text was often disjointed and difficult to follow, since the online submissions of each individual often formed part of a larger debate. This prompted me to create a second document where each thread in the discussion forum was extracted. Thus, whilst the first document potentially allowed me to examine the input of each individual, the second document allowed me to follow particular themes of discussion. In the event, it was this second document, together with the transcribed interviews, that proved to be the most fruitful for the purposes of analysis. Drawing on the phenomenographic notion of a “pool of meaning” (Marton & Booth, 1997: 133) I elected to treat the interview transcripts and written

online contributions of the participants during the whole course as a single data set. However, unlike phenomenographic research, my goal was not to create an outcome space showing logical relations between qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon, but rather to simply document the expressed experiences of teaching in English that I could identify in the data.

In many respects, the course participants had done much of the preliminary work themselves in the process of their online discussions. Initially, I set out with a number of tentative themes collated from my logbook. The analysis involved reading and re-reading the data in order to refine these themes and identify further themes as follows. First, I worked my way twice through the complete data set (transcribed interviews and discussion threads) marking any sections that seemed important. Next, I collected each of my highlighted sections in groups under my tentative themes and placed any highlighted sections that could not be immediately sorted this way into a separate document. I then examined each section of this new document to decide whether the data constituted a new theme in itself, whether it could be combined with other data by amending the original themes, or whether in retrospect this was not something that I could include. Once I felt reasonably happy with my themes, I reread the complete data set in order to check the themes against the original data and in an attempt to identify anything I had missed that could be a potential theme. This process resulted in the identification of 14 themes and 9 recommendations for teachers. Since the goal of my analysis was to describe the lecturers' experience of changing their teaching language, I sent the 14 themes and 9 recommendations by e-mail to the participating lecturers for comments. This process of member checking (Emerson & Pollner, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) allowed me to ascertain the extent to which the themes coming out of my analysis resonated with the lived experience of the course participants. I then made further additions and rationalisations in the light of the lecturer feedback. Thus, I triangulated between multiple data sources – the online submissions, the interviews and the feedback from member checking.

Discussion of results

The process of data analysis described in the previous section finally resulted in nine themes. I assigned each of these themes a two-word descriptive label during the writing up of this paper. These nine theme labels are listed below:

Theme 1: Short notice

Theme 2: No training

Theme 3: More preparation

Theme 4: Less detail

Theme 5: Less flexibility

Theme 6: Less fluency

Theme 7: No correction

Theme 8: Few differences

Theme 9: Confidence boost

I will now describe each of the nine themes, illustrating where appropriate with direct quotes from the data.

Theme 1: Short notice.

The first theme is that many of the lecturers told stories about receiving very short notice before their first experience of presenting something in English. Often lecturers started teaching in English by filling in for others. As one lecturer explains:

I've just been thrown in to these kind² of exchange courses with international students to fill up for other teachers from the beginning. (J₂)

Another lecturer puts it like this:

Why I am teaching the course? Simply because I was "thrown in"! All of a sudden I was supposed to teach on English. (B₆)

Thus the first theme expressed by the lecturers in this study is that far from being a considered decision, the change to teaching in English is often unreflected and haphazard. For anyone who has worked in higher education this will probably not come as a surprise, last-minute changes in teaching staff due to research, administrative or other commitments are not uncommon. However, taken together with the other themes presented in this paper we can expect that late decisions related to courses taught in English will often have more negative consequences than the same decision taken in relation to a course taught in L1.

Theme 2: No training.

The second theme that could be discerned from the comments of the course participants is the lack of training available for lecturers embarking on teaching in English.

Today I'm stunned by the fact that you are expected to teach in English, without any support from your employer! If there are strong demands up on us to take [courses for teaching in higher education]³ to teach Swedish students then why are we expected to automatically do well when we teach in English – without any training or education at all? (J₂)

Taking into account the short notice and lack of training, it is perhaps not surprising that lecturers also report being very nervous the first time they had to present something in English.

Theme 3: More preparation.

The third theme is a simple replication of the findings of Vinke (1995). The lecturers report that it takes much longer to prepare for teaching in English. Although none of the lecturers had attempted to quantify this extra time taken, their subjective experience was that significantly more time was needed. This extra time is due to lecturers looking up terms and phrases and planning in greater depth than they would in L1. However, despite this shared experience that preparation takes longer, few of the course participants had been granted a reduced teaching load to compensate for this extra work.

You need to plan more carefully in order to communicate what you want in the given amount of time (B₅)

Theme 4: Less detail.

The fourth theme relates to the way that lecturers experience the level of disciplinary detail in a lecture. Many felt that their lectures in English were shallower and less precise.

I think that I, in some ways, are losing some depth as I have a feeling that it's much easier to be precise in my native language. (B₄)

At this stage it is unclear whether this is merely a nagging feeling or something that will be confirmed in an analysis of the transcripts of the lectures. For now it is enough to point out that lecturers have this experience,

but that a surface comparison of the L1 and English lectures of the eighteen participants shows very few differences in terms of material covered, with lecturers using similar (translated) powerpoint slides with the same content for their English lectures. This is a similar finding to those of Thøgersen and Airey (2011) who show that a Danish lecturer of English covers almost identical material in the same lecture given in Danish and in English. In this case differences were found, but these were in areas such as register and redundancy rather than actual content. This mirrors the findings of Vinke (1995) and Bailey (1984).

Theme 5: Less flexibility.

In this theme lecturers felt they changed their pedagogical style somewhat in English, using fewer examples, jokes, asides, etc. Below are a number of comments related to this phenomenon:

In a “normal” situation, in the Swedish language, I would probably have been trying to tell some funny stories connected to marketing. But I don’t think I would dare too do that in English. (B₄)

You are more tightly bound to your plan in English, with less chance for improvisation. (B₅)

I talk about the power points but do not feel confident enough to make digressions. (J₃)

During the Swedish lecture [the lecturer] jumped back and forth in the pictures. In the English version he did not. (L₁)

Theme 6: Less fluency.

All the course participants experienced fluency problems in their lectures to some extent. These could be seen in a higher level of hesitations, false starts and use of filler phrases in the English lectures. This is attributed to lecturers searching for the right word or phrase (Vinke, 1995; Lehtonen & Lönnfors, 2001). Below are two quotes related to this phenomenon:

You at some times seemed to look for the correct words, in the way that you started the sentence, and then changed your mind after a few seconds (I recognise the same pattern from myself). (M₁)

In Swedish my presentation is quicker and much more lively than in the English version. In English I have to struggle with pronunciations

and use more time to find the right words, even though I have written a “manuscript”, which I usually do for my lectures, as I tend to forget things (...) But I did not look in the manuscript (and I normally don’t – just having written it helps me to remember). (J₄)

One finding that is new here is the effects of teaching in English on the “fluency” of non-verbal communication such as gesture and body language:

Your non-verbal communication was more extrovert in the Swedish version. (J₁)

I turn to the students with questions more in the Swedish version and I feel much more relaxed. In English I don’t move so much, I put my arms behind my back and I use fewer gestures. So my body language does not work – either. (J₄)

Finally, lecturers suggest that they are more afraid of silence when teaching in English, so they talk more. The lecturers do report that fluency problems reduce with time, suggesting that teaching in English gets easier the more you do it. However, there appears to be a relationship with the frequency level of such teaching, where infrequent lecturing never really seems to improve.

It’s not functional to have one course per semester or even one course a year and expect of a teacher to adjust to this situation ... (J₂)

I talk about this subject once a year and it always feels like starting from scratch. (B₄)

Theme 7: No correction.

In findings that replicate those of Lehtonen and Lönnfors (2001) and Uys et al. (2007), most of the lecturers suggest that they would feel uncomfortable correcting students’ English:

During the lessons or at examination I do not correct the students if they are using a wrong expression or making any mistakes when using English. In my opinion I am not that skilled in English and have not the confidence to correct another person. (L₁)

If I would have had this course in English, I would not correct students’ grammatical or stylistic errors, as long as the text is understandable. But now when they write in Swedish, I do correct

severe grammatical or spelling errors (...) I could not do this in English, as I am not an expert on this language. (J₄)

I usually manage to guess my way through and I avoid making language a factor when it comes to the grades. I am not a teacher of English. I've also stopped correcting their mistakes. (B₂)

Northedge (2002) suggests that lecturers should be leading students on excursions into specialist discourse and, on a similar theme, Airey and Linder (2009) suggest that science teachers are, in fact, teachers of disciplinary discourse. In this respect an interesting question relates to the nature of such disciplinary discourse when two languages are used in the teaching and learning of a discipline. Airey and Linder (2008) suggest that the goal of university science is the production of scientifically literate graduates. They coin the term bilingual scientific literacy – which they define as scientific literacy in two languages – to describe the range of discursive skills developed within a typical undergraduate science degree programme. Clearly this characterization of learning as initiation into a disciplinary discourse, with the lecturer as a discourse guide is not something that the lecturers in this study feel comfortable with in English. A solution to this problem is offered by one of the course participants:

You also describe your fear of not being able to function as an English language expert. I feel the same way about this. But maybe it's not our job to correct their work like a "traditional" English teacher. Maybe it's enough if we provide the students with the typical discourse language, e.g. technical vocabulary and specialised expressions. (M₁)

Theme 8: Few differences.

Despite all of these (admittedly negative) themes, the lecturers were surprised that they noticed so little difference when they viewed the videos of their own and their colleagues' lectures in English and Swedish on the course – things were, in fact, much better than they had predicted. This in turn led to an increase in confidence, which is the final theme presented in this paper.

After having seen both presentations I feel that they look pretty much the same, which maybe was a bit surprising (...) I was maybe expecting more differences between the presentations, but at the same

time I am quite pleased with the result even though there are always improvements to be made! (B₅)

Theme 9: Confidence boost.

All of the teachers said that the course had raised their confidence. This fact alone will probably have a positive effect on their teaching performance.

As I never give lectures in English I'm a bit surprised that it wasn't as terrible as I thought it would be. This has clearly strengthened my self confidence – and I'm very happy and thankful for that! (B₄)

Recommendations for teaching in English

In addition to the nine themes, the teachers in the study were asked to provide recommendations for other teachers who were faced with the transition to lecturing in English. Below is a summary of these nine recommendations:

1. It is even more important to be well prepared when teaching in English.
2. Less is more. Decide what are the key ideas in your presentation and emphasize them.
3. Try not to translate a lecture you already have – think and prepare in English.
4. Use powerpoint to structure your lecture, but remember it's even more important to keep the amount of text on a slide to a minimum.
5. Make a list of key terms/vocabulary.
6. Put all new terms on powerpoint or in handouts (increased redundancy).
7. Pronunciation, check if possible – this can be a problem if your pronunciation is different than that of your (international) students.
8. Depending on your level of English either: prepare by writing a full manuscript but don't read this out in class! (low level) or prepare by immersing yourself in English e.g. by reading a novel or disciplinary

literature in English (higher level). Take every chance available to practice your spoken English.

9. Practise your lecture!

Whilst the reader may well find these recommendations helpful, the relative inexperience of the lecturers in teaching in English should be recognized. Thus, the above recommendations are perhaps best seen as representative of the areas that these lecturers focused on whilst changing their teaching language to English. Thus, no claim is made about the merit of the list of recommendations and it may well be the case that more experienced lecturers employ quite different methods of dealing with English-medium instruction.

Conclusions

In many ways the findings presented in this paper are unremarkable since they often replicate research already reported elsewhere. What is truly new here is that this paper follows a group of Swedish lecturers from a range of disciplines who, unlike the cohorts of earlier studies, are relatively inexperienced in teaching in English. In creating an online space for these lecturers to discuss the differences when teaching in English, the course allowed the participants to reflect on their teaching during the process of change – in a kind of self-administered stimulated recall (Calderhead, 1981). I argue that there is higher validity in asking lecturers to comment on video footage of themselves in this way than there is in simply using a questionnaire or interviewing lecturers about changing their teaching language. I suggest that in the latter case one risks simply accessing lecturers' unreflected thoughts and beliefs about changing their teaching language, which may in fact be quite different than their actual lived experience (Säljö, 1997). Unlike the findings of Vinke (1995) and Zonneveld (1991) – where lecturers reported hardly noticing differences between lecturing in one language or another – the lecturers in this study were acutely aware of their limitations when teaching in English. This is doubtless a product of the lecturers' relative inexperience in English-medium instruction.

I will now summarise my thoughts regarding the nine themes discussed in this paper.

Regarding the themes “short notice” and “more preparation”, it seems that awareness of these issues needs to be raised in Swedish higher education.

Lecturers need to be given sufficient time to prepare for teaching in English and course administrators need to acknowledge this fact. In one area, however, there is good news – the lack of training for teaching in English is beginning to be addressed, with many Swedish universities now offering English courses for lecturers – indeed the course described in this paper is an example of such provision.

Regarding the themes “less detail”, “less flexibility” and “less fluency”, these ideas need to be better understood and discussed by faculty. All things being equal, the teaching quality of a lecturer who only teaches occasionally in English will be lower than that of a lecturer who teaches in English on a daily basis. No one gains when a lecturer only teaches in English sporadically.

The theme “no correction” is a complex one, and I believe there is much work left to be done in this area. Until lecturers see their role as one of socialising students into the discourse of their discipline, there can be no discussion of the discursive goals of parallel language education. Without such a discussion lecturers will continue to insist that they are not language teachers and that this should be a job for someone else. Finally, regarding the themes “few differences” and “confidence boost”, my thoughts are perhaps best described by one of the course participants:

Maybe everybody in fact is good enough in English, and the real problem is that neither teacher nor students feel that they are good enough (...) it's not only a question of language skills, but also a question of self confidence. (J5)

Clearly there are a number of limitations of the study presented in this paper. First, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the findings presented here may be generalized to other settings. The fact that the findings replicate earlier work is encouraging in this respect. Second, the lectures that were commented on in the discussion forum were produced especially for the staff training course, rather than being part of the lecturers' regular teaching, i.e. the data was not collected in a naturalistic setting. Finally, we are dealing with lecturers' expressed perceptions of changing their teaching language, these perceptions are necessarily subjective.

In my continuing work, I am carrying out a detailed comparison of the eighteen pairs of videos collected during the course in terms of content, length, speech rate, register, etc. In a pilot study with one Danish lecturer,

Thøgersen & Airey (2011) found that lectures in English took longer and were in a more formal register. It will be interesting to see the extent to which the data from these eighteen lecturers are similar to this single-lecturer data.

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NOTES

¹ Due to teaching commitments only 12 of the 18 lecturers finished the course on time. Since the interviews took place directly after each lecturer's final presentation on the course, there are only 12 interviews. The other six lecturers either did not finish the course or submitted a web-based final presentation. No interview was possible in these cases.

² All lecturer quotes are reported verbatim. Any grammatical or spelling issues in the quotes have been left unchanged.

³ In Sweden all new recruits to the grade of senior lecturer must have attended courses for teaching in higher education equivalent to 15 ECTS.