

## STUDENT AND ACADEMIC STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION: INSIGHTS FROM A ROMANIAN COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDY PROGRAMME

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the motivational factors influencing Romanian students' decision to enrol in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programmes, with a focus on the intersection of language and content learning. While EMI has gained prominence in higher education, limited research exists on the motivations of students in the Romanian context. This paper addresses this gap by examining the motivations of Computer Science students at the Faculty of Automation, Computers, and Electronics (FACE), University of Craiova. Through a questionnaire-based survey, the study identifies intrinsic and instrumental motivations as predominant drivers for EMI enrolment (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 2001, 2009, aligning with findings from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts (Somers and Llinares, 2018). Additionally, the research highlights the opportunities and challenges students face when engaging with academic content in a foreign language. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of contemporary trends in English language studies by offering insights into the motivational factors of EMI students and the implications for curriculum design and language support in higher education.*

**Keywords:** *motivation; English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI); self-determination theory; higher education; language learning; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).*

### 1. Introduction

The internationalization of higher education has led to the widespread implementation of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programmes, particularly in non-Anglophone countries aiming to enhance internationalisation and their students' global competitiveness (Coleman, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Doiz et al., 2014; Dearden, 2014; Wächter and Maiworm, 2014; Galloway and Rose, 2015, Macaro et al., 2018; Rose, McKinley and Galloway, 2021; Bowles and Murphy, 2021). This has also emerged as a strategic response to global academic and economic demands.

In Romania, this trend is increasingly visible especially in technical and professional disciplines such as computer science, medicine, business or engineering, where English serves both as the language of instruction and as a means of participating in the global economy.

While substantial attention has been given to the linguistic and pedagogical challenges of EMI (Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012; Smit and Dafouz, 2012; Jiang et al., 2019), less is known about the motivational factors

that drive students to engage with such programmes—especially in highly specialized fields where the academic demands are compounded by the need to operate in a second language (Rose et al., 2019).

Recent literature highlights motivational overlaps between EMI and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) contexts, where students simultaneously acquire subject content and language skills. Research by Somers and Llinares (2018), for example, shows that learners in CLIL programmes are similarly driven by a combination of instrumental goals (e.g., employability), integrative aims (e.g., intercultural openness), and internal satisfaction derived from bilingual academic competence.

These findings support the use of theoretical frameworks that account for motivational complexity, such as Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). L2MSS posits that motivation is shaped by three interrelated components: the Ideal L2 Self (a vision of oneself as a competent L2 user), the Ought-to L2 Self (socially constructed obligations), and the L2 Learning Experience (contextual influences), which has a role in shaping learner engagement (Doiz and Lasagabaster, 2018). This framework has been widely applied in EMI and CLIL studies to examine how personal aspirations, external pressures, and classroom realities interact to shape learners' engagement (Doiz and Lasagabaster, 2018; Kojima & Yashima, 2017). For instance, Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018) found that while teachers were more influenced by the ideal L2 self, students' motivation was evenly split between the ideal and ought-to selves, a distinction which has implications for instructional practices and curriculum design in EMI programmes.

Complementing this perspective, the study by Rose et al. (2019) in a Japanese EMI business programme explored the relationship between language proficiency, academic preparedness, and motivation. Their findings revealed that while English proficiency and academic skills (measured via English for Specific Purposes [ESP] courses) significantly predicted content mastery, motivation, as measured through ideal L2 self-scales, did not correlate with academic performance. Interestingly, qualitative data from the same study suggested that students perceived motivation as an essential driver of effort and engagement, indicating a potential disconnect between psychometric measurement and student self-perception.

This understanding is also discussed in Kojima and Yashima's (2017) study, which combined Self-Determination Theory with the L2MSS to examine EMI motivation in Japan. They found that intrinsic motivation was significantly influenced by students' ideal L2 selves and perceived competence. High-motivation groups reported greater EMI self-study time and stronger alignment between personal goals and EMI content, reinforcing the idea that motivational constructs must be contextualized and multidimensional.

From a broader regional perspective, Jiang et al. (2019) analysed EMI implementation in Chinese tertiary institutions, noting that while pragmatic teaching strategies ensured subject comprehension, language acquisition goals were often sidelined. Their study emphasized the critical need for collaboration between subject matter experts and language instructors, especially when learners enter EMI programmes with subthreshold English proficiency.

In another study of a different educational context, Hengsadeekul et al. (2014) present insights from Thailand, showing that instrumental and integrative motivational goals both play important roles in students' preference for EMI programmes. Interestingly, the study revealed gendered nuances, with female students displaying stronger integrative motivations, and found that classroom anxiety and social support significantly influenced EMI preferences.

Moreover, Rose et al. (2019) also highlight the role of academic language skills, noting that success in EMI is strongly predicted by performance in ESP courses, arguably more so than by general English proficiency tests like TOEIC. This aligns with calls for discipline-specific language support to bridge the gap between content knowledge and linguistic competence, a point particularly relevant for technical disciplines like computer science.

Lastly, a systematic review by Nyoni et al. (2023) underscores the variability in EMI outcomes depending on institutional context, curriculum design, and teacher qualifications. Their findings warn against one-size-fits-all policies, advocating for adaptive strategies that account for students' linguistic backgrounds, disciplinary needs, and motivational profiles.

Although EMI is increasingly present in Romanian higher education, studies specifically addressing student motivation within these programmes remain limited. Existing research has offered valuable but narrow insights. For example, Radu (2015) explored motivational factors among business students, identifying international exposure and career advancement as key drivers, but her study focused primarily on economic disciplines. She also highlighted the added challenge and opportunity of learning through English, suggesting that both students and teachers experience higher motivational demands when EMI is involved. To support this motivation, she called for targeted strategies, particularly in disciplines like business and economics, where content complexity and language demands converge.

More recently, in Reșceanu, Preda and Dumitrașcu (2021, 2023), we examined EMI in computer science education, offering preliminary remarks on institutional policies and objectives, as well as on students' pragmatic motivations and the linguistic challenges they face. These contributions also pointed to the scarcity of comprehensive, theory-driven analyses of motivation

in EMI across diverse Romanian academic contexts. As such, further research is needed to systematically explore motivational dynamics.

In response to the above, this study starts from the theoretical foundation presented above, in particular from Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), and aims to investigate the motivational drivers of Romanian computer science students engaged in EMI (case-studying students attending the Bachelor programme in Computer Science at the University of Craiova) with a focus on how instrumental, integrative, and experiential factors interact in a technical academic context. More specifically, the investigation is guided by the following research question: What are the primary motivational factors that influence Romanian students to enrol in EMI programmes? To answer this question and to offer a more comprehensive understanding of motivational dynamics in EMI, the study adopts a dual-perspective approach. It examines not only students' self-reported motivations for enrolling in English-medium programmes, but also academic staff perceptions of what they believe motivates students. This comparative analysis aims to identify areas of alignment or discrepancy between the two perspectives. By using L2MSS as a conceptual tool and acknowledging parallels with CLIL motivation, this study offers insights that deepen our understanding of motivation in EMI-oriented higher education contexts.

## **2. Methodology**

This study adopts a quantitative, comparative research design to explore the motivational factors associated with EMI from two complementary perspectives: those of the students enrolled in EMI programmes and the academic staff teaching in such settings. As stated in the introduction, the research was conducted at the Faculty of Automation, Computers and Electronics (FACE), within the Computer Science specialization at the University of Craiova, a Bachelor programme delivered in English since 1993.

### **2.1 Participants**

There were two distinct groups of participants who were surveyed during 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years. The first group consisted in total of 112 undergraduate students enrolled in the EMI Computer Science programme. These students represent the primary stakeholders in the EMI experience, and their responses provided direct insight into the motivational factors influencing their decision to pursue a degree in English. Participants were drawn from across all academic years, with a prevalence of senior students (4<sup>th</sup> year), ensuring a diversity of experiences and exposure to EMI over time.

The second group comprised 17 academic staff members actively involved in teaching subject-specific content courses (e.g., programming, data structures, computer systems) within the same EMI programme. These participants contribute the institutional and pedagogical perspective, offering insight into how instructors perceive students' motivations and how these perceptions align or contrast with students' own views.

## **2.2 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality were strictly observed in the research process. Before accessing the survey, all respondents were provided with a brief statement explaining: the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any stage, and guarantees of anonymity and data confidentiality.

No personally identifying information was collected. Participation was entirely anonymous and voluntary, and consent was implied through the agreement expressed in the initial section of the online questionnaire, and through its completion and submission. These measures ensured adherence to ethical standards for educational research and were in line with our purpose to obtain open and honest responses.

## **2.3 Data collection instruments**

The research was conducted using a questionnaire-based survey, developed following the validated model proposed by Galloway et al. (2017) for investigating EMI in higher education. The questionnaire was designed to investigate a broad range of aspects related to EMI, including motivation, language proficiency, perceived benefits and challenges, institutional support, and classroom practices. Among these, a central focus was placed on exploring motivational factors associated with EMI, as perceived by the two already-mentioned key stakeholder groups: students and academic staff.

To better investigate the distinct roles and experiences of these two groups, two versions of the questionnaire were prepared:

- One version, consisting of 16 items, was administered to students enrolled in the EMI Computer Science programme.
- The other version, containing 24 items, was designed for academic staff teaching within the same programme.

While both instruments included items targeting perceptions of EMI-related objectives and experiences, each was tailored to reflect the different lenses through which students and instructors engage with EMI. For example, students were asked about their reasons for enrolling in the programme, the perceived benefits of EMI, and the challenges encountered in language-mediated content learning. Academic staff, in contrast, were asked about their

perceptions of what motivates students, their own experiences delivering instruction in English, and the institutional support in place.

The questionnaires combined multiple item types:

- Closed-ended (multiple choice) and open-ended questions to collect qualitative insights and categorical data.
- A series of 4-point Likert-scale items, with no neutral midpoint, to measure attitudes and perceived importance regarding EMI objectives, motivational drivers, and language-related challenges. This scale format was selected to encourage clear positional responses on key issues.

Participants accessed the surveys online, and their responses were collected anonymously.

This study presents new findings derived from the full dataset, focusing on motivational dynamics from both the students' and staff's perspectives. However, it also builds on previous partial analyses of the same dataset presented in Reșceanu, Preda and Dumitrașcu (2021), which addressed institutional strategies and internationalisation, and Reșceanu Preda and Dumitrașcu (2023), which explored aspects of foreign language proficiency in EMI settings. By extending those earlier works, this investigation presents a comparative analysis of motivational factors in EMI, hoping for a deeper understanding of its direct stakeholders' engagement.

## **2.4 Limitations**

First, as noted in earlier analyses of this dataset (Reșceanu, Preda and Dumitrașcu 2021; 2023), the results are based on a single institutional context, i.e. the Faculty of Automation, Computers and Electronics (FACE) at the University of Craiova. While this setting provides valuable insight into EMI implementation in a technical discipline, the findings may not be generalizable to other fields or universities within Romania, particularly those with different linguistic, pedagogical, or internationalisation profiles.

Second, the study employed a self-report questionnaire, which, while efficient for collecting large-scale perceptual data, is inherently limited by respondents' interpretations of items, self-awareness, and willingness to disclose their attitudes honestly. As acknowledged in the 2023 study, open-ended responses were underused by participants, which restricted the depth of qualitative insights.

Finally, the survey was conducted at a particular moment in time and reflects perceptions formed within the institutional and societal conditions of that period. Given the evolving status of EMI in Romania, marked by growing global academic networks, increased student mobility, and shifting labour market demands, it is important to recognize that motivation itself is a dynamic construct. Therefore, we acknowledge the limitation of temporal

context and suggest that some motivational patterns may change as Romania becomes more integrated into the global higher education landscape.

In light of these limitations, we intend to continue this line of inquiry through a revised and expanded version of the questionnaire, adapted to reflect more recent developments in EMI policy and student experience. A follow-up study would allow us to track changes over time, refine our measurement of motivational constructs, and include additional Romanian institutions and disciplinary contexts. We believe that such longitudinal and comparative research could offer more robust insights into how the motivational dynamics of EMI evolve in response to ongoing globalisation and internationalisation trends in Romanian higher education.

#### **4. Discussion of results**

To interpret the motivational dynamics investigated in this study, we draw on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). Both offer valuable perspectives for the understanding of what drives students to enrol in EMI programmes, and how academic staff perceive those motivations.

On the one hand, SDT distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, where individuals engage in activities out of genuine interest or enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or pressures such as career advancement, academic requirements, or social status. This framework is useful for interpreting how EMI-related motivations reflect broader patterns of autonomy, competence, and goal orientation among learners.

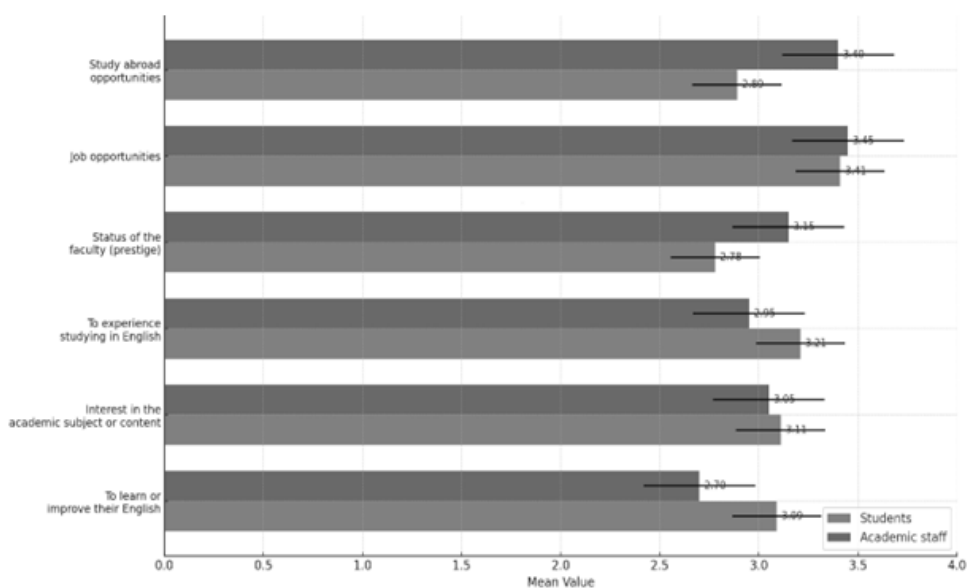
On the other hand, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2009) proved to be a particularly useful framework for interpreting the survey data, as it allowed us to differentiate between students' self-driven aspirations, perceived external expectations, and their reactions to the actual EMI learning environment. As stated in the introduction, L2MSS postulates three key components shaping learner motivation in second-language contexts:

- The Ideal L2 Self, referring to the learner's vision of themselves as a successful user of the language in the future;
- The Ought-to L2 Self, representing externally imposed expectations, such as parental, institutional, or societal pressures;
- The L2 Learning Experience, encompassing the immediate learning environment, including curriculum, teaching methods, and classroom interactions (Doiz and Lasagabaster, 2018).

These frameworks guide our interpretation of the question from the survey, which asked to evaluate potential reasons why students choose EMI

programmes (Q14 in the students' questionnaire, and Q20 in the one of the academic staff). The listed motivations spanned several categories, including language development ("To learn or improve their English"), academic interest ("Interest in the subject"), experiential learning ("To experience studying in English"), and external outcomes ("Job opportunities," "Study abroad opportunities," "Faculty prestige").

Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 4 = Strongly agree), and both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were applied. The findings suggest that both instrumental (extrinsic) and developmental (intrinsic or integrative) motivations play a role, but that students and academic staff differ in how they prioritize them (see Fig. 1 below).



**Fig. 1** Perceived importance of EMI motivational factors (students and academic staff).  
Mean values and standard deviation

Overall, the results reveal a divergence in how students and academic staff perceive the key motivational factors behind students' participation in EMI programmes. While academic staff tend to emphasize external, future-oriented goals, such as employability and international mobility (Ought-to L2 Self), students display a more balanced profile, placing high value not only on career prospects but also on language improvement and academic interest, which align with the Ideal L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience dimensions.

In terms of response consistency, academic staff showed more variability in their assessments ( $SD = 0.282$ ) compared to students ( $SD =$



0.225), suggesting staff perspectives are slightly more heterogeneous or less aligned on what motivates students.

In the following sections, we present in more detail these findings by category, examining how each motivational factor reflects broader trends in EMI participation and its implications for curriculum design, language support, and institutional policy.

#### **4.1 Job opportunities and study abroad (Ought-to L2 Self/Extrinsic Motivation)**

“Job opportunities” was rated the highest by both groups (Students:  $M = 3.41$ , Staff:  $M = 3.45$ ), showing strong alignment on the belief that EMI is a strategic choice for enhancing employability. This strongly reflects the Ought-to L2 Self, where decisions are shaped by economic, societal, or institutional expectations.

However, the “Study abroad opportunities” factor revealed a marked gap (Students:  $M = 2.89$ ; Staff:  $M = 3.40$ ). Academic staff may overestimate the role of international mobility as a motivator or students' enthusiasm or capacity for such mobilities<sup>1</sup>—possibly due to institutional objectives such as prestige, ranking or international visibility—whereas students rated it much lower. While EMI programmes are often promoted as opportunities for global academic exchange, this assumption may not correspond with students' realities or personal priorities.

This misalignment highlights the need for more accurate student profiling during programme planning and suggests that while internationalization is seen as an attractive policy goal, especially for the current ambitions of the Romanian higher education institutions, it may not be the primary driver for all learners.

#### **4.2 Language improvement (Ideal L2 Self/Integrative & Intrinsic Motivation)**

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<sup>1</sup> According to Radu (2015), Romanian students often encounter significant barriers to participating in study abroad programmes, particularly within the Erasmus+ framework. These include: financial constraints, such as inadequate funding to cover the real cost of living abroad despite scholarships; limited institutional support, including administrative burdens and unclear procedures; low confidence in language proficiency, which may make students feel unprepared to fully engage in an academic environment abroad; cultural and familial factors, especially among students from rural or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who may face familial pressure to remain close to home or contribute financially. Radu further emphasizes that while students value the idea of international exposure, their actual participation is often shaped by local conditions, personal risk assessments, and logistical feasibility, not simply by aspiration. This suggests that students may view EMI more as a practical way to enhance their career opportunities within their home country or local job market, rather than as a means to pursue study abroad.

Students rated “To learn or improve their English” relatively high ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.225$ ), suggesting that language development remains a strong intrinsic motivator and aligns with the Ideal L2 Self (i.e. students’ vision of themselves as proficient English users). This motivation is also closely tied to intrinsic goals, particularly in a technical field like computer science, where English proficiency is essential for accessing up-to-date resources, global collaboration, and technical documentation. This preference may also derive from a genuine personal interest in mastering English, either as a means of self-improvement or due to prior positive language learning experiences. For some students, the opportunity to study in English represents not just a strategic advantage, but a form of identity expression, a way of aligning themselves with global, tech-driven professional communities. This view was expressed in the follow-up open-ended questions, which asked them to list other reasons not listed in the motivation question (Q15 in the students’ questionnaire). At the same time, the strong emphasis placed on English language improvement could also reflect wider educational and societal trends. In recent years, the omnipresence of English as a foreign language at all levels in the Romanian educational system and as the default language in science, technology, and academic publishing has made EMI increasingly attractive. Students may therefore perceive EMI programmes not only as beneficial, but as the standard path for those who aspire to be competitive in a globalized workforce.

In contrast, staff rated this factor the lowest ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.282$ ), indicating a possible underestimation of students’ language-driven motivations. This misalignment has important implications: EMI programmes may fail to adequately support students’ language goals unless staff recognize their significance. It also suggests the value of integrating language scaffolding or ESP (English for Specific Purposes) components into EMI curricula (Dragoescu Urlica and Stefanović, 2018; Dragoescu Urlica et al., 2019).

#### **4.3 Interest in subject and studying in English (L2 Learning Experience/Intrinsic Motivation)**

The L2 Learning Experience was also a key motivational driver. Students rated “To experience studying in English” and “Interest in the academic subject” highly ( $M = 3.21$  and  $M = 3.11$ , respectively), reinforcing that many are motivated by engagement with content and the medium of instruction itself, not just with future benefits.

Staff were slightly less confident in this area, with lower means for both items ( $M = 2.95$  for studying in English and  $M = 3.05$  for subject interest). While these differences are not extreme, they point to a subtle undervaluation by staff of the experiential and affective dimensions of EMI for students,

especially the novelty and cognitive challenge of learning through English, which may contribute to students' self-efficacy and motivation.

This finding shows that teaching methods should focus on making course content engaging and using English actively in the classroom to boost motivation, particularly within the Romanian higher education system, where EMI programmes in fields like computer science are growing in popularity.

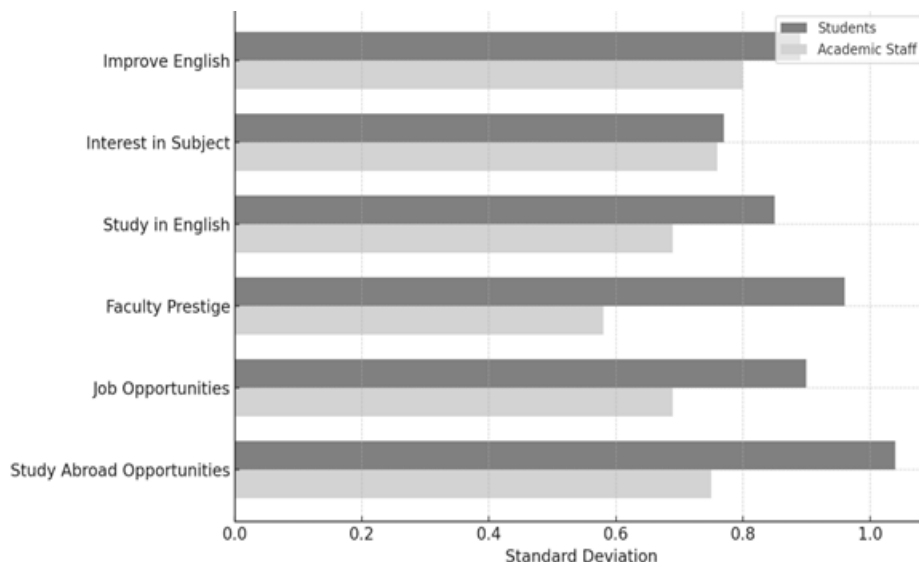
#### **4.4 Faculty prestige (institutional branding / Ought-to L2 Self)**

Both groups assigned a lower importance to “Faculty prestige”, though staff scored it higher (Mean = 3.15) than students (Mean = 2.78). This indicates that institutional reputation is not a major motivator for students, even if staff perceive it as a secondary extrinsic benefit.

From a motivational standpoint, prestige reflects more of an Ought-to Self-dimension, aligned with institutional goals rather than individual learner identity. The relatively low student rating indicates a shift in motivational focus away from symbolic affiliations and toward practical and personal goals. EMI branding strategies should therefore be careful not to overemphasize institutional prestige if they wish to connect with students' actual motivational profiles.

#### **4.5 Response variation**

In addition to mean scores, standard deviations (SDs) provide important insight into the consistency or variability of responses within each group. A lower SD indicates a higher degree of agreement among respondents, while a higher SD suggests more diverse or polarized opinions. Fig. 2 below graphically summarises the standard deviations for both students and academic staff calculated based on their responses about motivational factors.



**Fig 2.** Standard deviation of motivation ratings by category for students and academic staff

Among the student group, SDs were generally higher, ranging from 0.68 to 0.93, indicating more variation in how students perceive different motivational factors. For instance, the SD for “Faculty prestige” (SD = 0.93) was the highest, showing that students were divided on whether institutional reputation plays a role in their decision to study in EMI programmes. This might reflect differing socio-economic backgrounds, access to information, or personal priorities. In contrast, “Improving English” had a lower SD (SD = 0.73), suggesting more consistent agreement that language development is a key motivator. This spread implies that while certain motivations (like language improvement) are broadly shared, others (like prestige or study abroad) are more context-dependent or individualized among students.

In the academic staff group, SDs were generally lower, ranging from 0.46 to 0.77, reflecting a more unified perception of what motivates students. For example, the lowest SD appeared for “Job opportunities” (SD = 0.46), showing strong consensus among staff that employability is a top student priority. Even the more variable items, such as “Study abroad opportunities” (SD = 0.77), still exhibited tighter clustering than student responses, indicating a shared institutional outlook. This uniformity among staff could be the result of shared professional experience, institutional discourse, or alignment with broader EMI policy goals (Reșceanu et al., 2021). However, this also highlights a potential disconnect between staff assumptions and the more complex or varied motivational realities among students.

The observed differences in variability have several implications. First, students’ higher variability suggests the need for flexible, student-centred EMI approaches that acknowledge diverse motivational profiles. Programmes may

benefit from integrating both instrumental outcomes (e.g., employability) and developmental goals (e.g., linguistic growth, subject engagement). Second, staff's lower variability implies a coherent but possibly oversimplified view of student motivation. Professional development initiatives could help academic staff gain a deeper understanding of student drivers, potentially leading to more empathetic and effective teaching strategies.

	Students Mean	Staff Mean	t-stat	p-value	U-stat	p-value
Improve English	3.09	2.7	2.521593	0.013	3630	0.922
Interest in subject	3.11	3.05	0.420404	0.675	3641	0.890
Study in English	3.21	2.95	1.879941	0.063	4087	0.079
Faculty prestige	2.78	3.15	-2.78692	0.006	3566	0.913
Job opportunities	3.41	3.45	-0.28283	0.777	3760	0.567
Study Abroad opportunities	2.89	3.4	-3.23339	0.001	3206	0.234

**Table 1.** Results of the Welch's t-test and p-values and Mann-Whitney U Test and p-values

In Table 1 above, we present the results of the Welch's t-test and Mann-Whitney U Test comparing students' and academic staff's mean ratings for each motivation objective. The Welch's test checks whether the differences in group means are statistically significant without assuming equal variances. Thus, "Improve English" and "Faculty Prestige" show statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ), which means staff and students likely perceive these motivations differently. Other differences (e.g., "Interest in Subject" or "Job Opportunities") are not statistically significant, suggesting similar perceptions between groups.

In the case of the Mann-Whitney U Test, which compares student vs. academic staff responses for each motivation objective using ordinal (Likert) data, the fact that all p-values are above 0.05, indicates no statistically significant difference between student and staff distributions for these items. "Study in English" ( $p \approx 0.079$ ) is the only one where a potential difference might exist. So, this aspect could be further investigated, with more data and a more focused analysis.

## Conclusions

This study set out to explore the motivational dynamics that shape participation in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) within a Romanian Computer Science Bachelor's programme, drawing on the perspectives of both students and academic staff. The results from the questionnaire-based survey revealed both convergence and divergence between the two groups. Academic staff predominantly attributed student motivation to extrinsic, outcome-oriented factors, such as employability and international mobility,

reflecting alignment with the Ought-to L2 Self and institutional expectations. Students, on the other hand, while acknowledging the importance of these external rewards, placed greater emphasis on intrinsic and integrative motivations, especially the desire to improve English proficiency and engage with subject content, indicators of the Ideal L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience.

Furthermore, the analysis of standard deviations complemented these results. Student responses exhibited greater variability, suggesting a more heterogeneous motivational landscape influenced by individual aspirations, personal goals, and contextual factors. In contrast, academic staff showed more uniform perceptions, likely shaped by shared institutional and professional assumptions about what drives student behaviour.

These findings point to the importance of applying the L2MSS model and SDT in EMI contexts, particularly in under-researched educational systems such as Romania's. They also highlight the need for institutions to recognize and accommodate the diversity of student motivations, rather than relying solely on top-down assumptions. This could involve providing more language support, fostering engaging learning experiences, and ensuring that EMI policy is responsive to student realities rather than driven only by internationalisation metrics.

In conclusion, a more refined learner-informed approach to EMI design and delivery—one that integrates both instrumental outcomes and intrinsic motivations—will be key to enhancing student engagement and programme success. We intend in our future research to build on these findings by expanding the sample across other Romanian institutions and disciplines, and by incorporating longitudinal designs to track how motivations evolve over time in Romania's increasingly globalised higher education context.

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