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Teaching English in higher education
A comparative study between the system at Ca' Foscari, Venice and Ludwig-Maximillians-Universität, Munich

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Abstract

When it comes to students studying English in higher education, Universities in Europe aim to have a uniform level of outcome for the students to achieve at the end of their course. Yet, we find different approaches and systems behind institutions that might affect student's proficiency. Over the past five years of higher education, I have spent nearly two years at the University of Munich (LMU) Germany through the project Erasmus+. Having attended a number of language classes, I am able to comment on the differences between the teaching methods of my home University, Ca' Foscari and the LMU. This thesis will outline how the two systems deliver their lectures, how they are structured, but more importantly, how students of both universities engage with the teaching methods. Based on online surveys distributed to students from both universities, an analysis of the data will show how much students are engaged with their institution and if they wish their University to apply different systems and methods based on the other University's system and methods. Not only will this lead us to an overall view of both structures, it will also provide an insight into what students find more efficient and where improvement could be made.

Quando consideriamo studenti di inglese nel settore dell'istruzione accademica, le università in Europa mirano ad avere un livello uniforme di risultati che gli studenti possono raggiungere alla fine del loro percorso. Tuttavia, troviamo diversi approcci e sistemi dietro le istituzioni che potrebbero influenzare le competenze finali degli studenti. Negli ultimi cinque anni di istruzione accademica, ho trascorso quasi due anni presso l'Università di Monaco di Baviera (LMU), Germania, attraverso il progetto Erasmus +. Dopo aver frequentato numerosi corsi di lingua, ho ottenuto una adeguata conoscenza da poter commentare le differenze tra i metodi di insegnamento della mia Università, Ca' Foscari e quella in cui sono stato ospitato, LMU. Questa ricerca studia come i due sistemi impartiscono le loro lezioni, come sono strutturate, ma soprattutto, come gli studenti di entrambe le università interagiscono con i metodi di insegnamento. Sulla base di sondaggi distribuiti a studenti di entrambe le università, un'analisi approfondita dei dati metterà in risalto quanto gli studenti sono coinvolti con il loro istituto e se desiderano che la loro Università applichi sistemi e metodi diversi in base al sistema e ai metodi dell'altra Università. Il ciò non solo ci condurrà a una visione d'insieme di entrambe le strutture, ma fornirà anche una visione di quegli aspetti che gli studenti trovano più efficienti e in cui è possibile apportare miglioramenti.

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to study and compare the English language courses in higher education at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), Germany, and the one of Università degli studi di Venezia (Ca' Foscari), Italy. We will study the structure of English studies in the Bachelor context of Ca' Foscari and *Anglistik* of the LMU.

This research has been divided in four main chapters. The first chapter will introduce the main aspects of teaching to adults. It will explain why teaching to adults differs from younger learners, and what are the main aspects we need to know before moving on. Whilst the first part will provide us with an overview, the following sections will highlight those aspects relevant to age group that are doing English studies in higher education systems. This chapter is fundamental to study all those aspects that have shaped our research. We will understand why such aspects have been studied, and why we decided to base our research as it is now.

The second chapter will analyse the structure of English language courses at Ca' Foscari. We will describe the structure of these courses and how they are distributed during the Bachelor course. Moreover, we will outline the courses and aspects we will study as a whole, since this will be the best way to study them according to the structure of this institution. It is important to understand this structure, since chapter 4 will focus on the survey where questions have been asked according to the literature studied in chapter 1 and the structure analysed in chapter 2.

The third chapter will study the structure of English language courses at LMU. We will outline the structure of the English language courses and how they are distributed in the *Anglistik* studies in this institution. Furthermore, we will outline each course we will study in subsections, since this will be the best way to investigate properly and according to the structure. It is important to understand this structure, since chapter 4 will focus on the survey where questions have been asked

according to the literature studied in chapter 1 and the structure analysed in chapter 2.

Last, chapter 4 will lead us to the research study. In order to collect data, two surveys (one for each institution) have been distributed to students. A total of 100 surveys have been collected for each university whose English language courses structure is studied in this research. This chapter will be divided in four main sections. In the first two we will understand how we collected the data and what the limits of this study are. Following these two sections, the 4.2 part will study each question of each survey alone. We will learn how each question has been formulated. We decided to divide this section into two sub-sections where each institution will be analysed alone. Moreover, according to the literature of chapter 1 and the description of the structure, we will argue what we expect from each structure to work efficiently to make students feel satisfied. Our goal is to prove that both English language courses structure of each institution fulfil students' satisfaction. To do so, we provided means and percentages for the question we are asking. Such expectations will still be provided in chapter 4.2. Following this, we will study the data we collected in section 4.3. Here, to help us understand the results at their best, we decided to provide a visual representation with pie charts, bar charts and scatter plots. By reading the results, we will argue that these met our expectations set in chapter 4.2. If this is the case, we can argue that the structure works efficiently. However, if this is not the case, we might argue that some aspects argued in chapter 1 have not been fulfilled. This leads us to the last section; 4.4. Here, we will compare the results of the two institutions, where, according to their structures, we can detect similarities and differences.

At the end of the thesis, we will find the bibliography needed for this study in chapter 1, where we stated what adult learners needs are and what these implies in the higher education context we are studying. Following this we will see the two appendices; the first one contains the survey distributed to LMU students, while the second one contains the one distributed to Ca' Foscari students.

1. Teaching to adults: an overview

In this very first chapter of our research we are going to discuss the main aspects of teaching to adults. We are going to focus on different experts in the subjects such as Jarvis Peter, Serragiotto Graziano, Knowles Malcom and Dewey John, just to name a few. For the purpose of this research, it will be stressed that we are focusing on a specific age group. That is why the next sections of this main chapter will focus on those aspects that are relevant for our discussion. We will implement this chapter with three further sections. In the first one we will highlight the aspects of teaching English in higher education. This section will include further aspects to be discussed when teaching to adults and will be the basis for our research. The second section will highlight the role of assignments in teaching to adults. We will notice that the role of assignments has been pointed out several time from experts' resources. That is why we decided to dedicate a section to discuss its role in teaching to adults. The last section will discuss the major aspects of teaching English. Here, we will focus on the skills we are going to study in the next chapters and are relevant for our research.

When thinking of teaching to adults, we need start pointing out that there are different stages of human development. From this, we learn that each stage corresponds to a different level of approach to learning. We will start saying that "because an adult is in a different position in the lifecycle than a child, […] adults' learning needs and interests vary from children" (Knowles 2005: 12). This makes us understand that adults have different needs when it comes to learning. In his work about teaching Italian as second or foreign language, Balboni (2014: 58-60) divided the learners' age in three main categories, attributing to adults, the third one; the role of someone who is not in the years of the mandatory education. However, we need to argue that he collocated university students between being adolescents and adults. For this research, we are focusing on students in higher education. Therefore, we will rely on the fact that they are not in school anymore and will be considered adults for the fact that they chose to

be in a higher education context, which is not mandatory neither in Germany nor in Italy. To be more specific, we will mention another author which argues the age of students according to teaching English to adult learners. While discussing few teaching aspects to adults, Cozma describes the adult learners, she refers to adults as "persons over the normal age of traditional schooling […] who freely chose to get involved in a particular form of instruction" (Cozma 2015: 1210). It is very releavnt to underline how both Balboni and Cozma refer to adults as those learners who chose to learn a specific subject, and not others who have been either obligated or were under the mandatory school age. In fact, Cozma continues her point about defining the age of adult learnes pointing out how "unlike youger learners, the adults almost always have a sound reason why they are studying, and that reason will be their primary motivation" (Cozma 2015: 1210). The main reason why we needed to define the age group is due to the compulsory education. Other experts, such as Beder and Darkenwald (1982) hihglighted the same for the age group we are studying. They defined this age group as *pre-adults* referring to them as college students. This could not be more precise than the age group we are studying. However, for the discussion of our study, we can agree with their terminology when it comes to allocating college students in adult education. Morevoer, it has been poited out that motivation is "one of the most reliable predictors [for] long-term intended effort" (Dornyei and Kubanyiova 2014: 9). Being that learnes are not in a compulsory context anymore, we know for sure that they chose to be in the higher education context we are discussing. When we argue about important aspects of learning, we always need to include the external and itnernal factors. These are relevant aspects discussed by Caon (2008: 12-18) when we detect what are the main points of teaching. Some of these aspects include the motivation that would lack by being at a school. Assuming this is the main reason they enrolled in first place, when it comes to learners in higher education, we know that their motivation is one of the most important aspects to consider. Therefore, we assume that their interest in the academic life is rather high. This only speaks in favour of adults learners. As stressed before, the importance of being in the academic

context is led from their motivation. By saying this, we can avoid considering all those aspects that are important for younger learners, and focus on those who come directly from adults' interest and motivation. We can conclude saying that we will go on highlighting and choosing the aspects we need from this age group from the literature we will analyse. For these reasons, we will consider the aspects we are going to study to be applied to the age group we will focus on: students int university. Being that we stated adults can be considered universityt students, we will refer to these as students to semplify the discussion in our research.

Now that we stated what the age group we are studying is studied as adults and these are referrable as universtity students, we can approach a new topic; the relevancy of their preception. In chapter 4 we are going to discuss students' perception of the structure in ther institution. Before doing this, we need to point out why we decided to study their perception on some aspects of the English courses, and why we can use this feedback to study it. According to Maugeri and Serragiotto (2014: 417-418), students have a key role when it comes to the quality of the foreign language course. In their essay, they highlighted how to monitor and control the efficency of the language courses. After having described models for quality teaching of languages, they came up with a proper schema for analysing and monitoring the process of learning. Here, we learn that there are several figures to take into acount such as the director, the educational coordinator, teachers, didactic management team, students and the head of didactic services. From their essay we see how students have a relevant role when it comes to acquire information data from monitoring learning processes. In fact, they argue that from this feedback we get a clear picutre to work on, enlarging the participants based on needs and instution need (cf. Maugeri and Serragiotto 2014: 418). Furthemore, they argued what some benefits from listeing to students' opinion could be from both the institution and students'side. Some of these are "accrescere l'engament e il senso di responsabilità degli studenti coinvolti […] incrementare la trasparenza e la visibilità dell'organizzazione agli occhi del suo publico […] rafforzare il senso di autoefficacia" (Maugeri and Serragiotto 2014: 418). Only from

naming three out of the twelve mentioned, we already learn the key role of students' perception when evaluating and monitoring a language course structure.

Furthremore, we will mention another expert point of view about the students role for research in language teaching. Brown (1988: 2-5) defines research in language teaching as primary and secondary. Brown (1988) argues that secondary reserch differs from primary in terms of data acquisition. The issue of secondary research is that the data we would aquire is filtered and not directly from the learning. Unlike this, primary research fouces on the direct elemnts of the study. One of these is students. That is why, for this reason and for Maugeri and Serragiotto (2014), we decided to base our research and rely on students feedback to study the English language classes at LMU and Ca' Foscari. In addition to this, we can argue that "'all learners, particularly older learners, have strong beliefs and opinions about how their instruction should be delivered" (Lightbown e Spada 2006: 66-67). From this, we learn that students have strong opinion about their perception of the teaching systems, and for thi, we will rely on students' perception and feedback for our research. We will not study other sources for the efficency of the studied cases, since the amount of information we will obtain from students is already plenty and allows us to study the strucure of Ca' Foscari and LMU as much as we need. However, it is important to stress that we will only collect data from students who attended the courses mentioned. We need a direct experience on the field from students to study what we need. According to this perspective, the data collected from students will speak for the learning experiences in order to understand the courses (cf Maugeri and Serragiotto 2014: 425).

A further topic we are going to highlight are the learning aspects of adults. For this, we will focus on the literature arguing about teaching English to adults in higher education. While analysing the challenges of teaching english to adults, Cozma (2015: 1210) stated that when compared to young schoolars, adults are certainly more cooperative learners. Moreover, "the mature age students have more learning experience behind

them" (Cozma 2015: 1211). One of the main aspects we need to point out is that from an attitudinal factor adult learners are very cooperative. As argued from Balboni (2014) and Cozma (2015), adults come to learning contexts with a high interest for what they are studyng. Consequently, their predisposition to the learning processes erases those aspects where teachers need to pay a lot of their attention to external factors. For instance, teachers of adults will not deal with the daily discipline problems that one might expect from younger learners (cf Cozma 2015). These are not the only two experts who stated this. Even Jarvis (2010: 5) while introducing aspects of adults learners states that the ability to learn rises until twenty and then after a stationary period of some years slowly declines. When we discuss about adult learners in general, we might argue that after a certain age the number of difficulties for learning processes increases. However, since we are studying an age range that goes from nineteen till twenty-five, we can still argue that this age range is probably considered as the highest. This means that we stil need to discuss less issues than we would for younger learners and adults over twenty-five years. For this, we can argue that the age range we are studying is probably the best for understanding learning processes and undergo through the structure of the two universitites Ca' Foscari and LMU.

As noticed before, we need to focus on few important aspects when it comes to teaching to adutls. We already learnt that we can rely on the fact they could compare in a learning context. Furthermore, we pointed out that the age range we will study in chapter 4 is considered as probably the highest peak for expose adults to learning processes. This being said, we can argue that the data we will collect is reliabale. We can now proceed underlining a new aspect of adult learning that has been pointed out by several experts in this subject; adults need practical tasks and exercises to benefit the most from the learning process. For this, we picked the work of experts in the field of language teaching and, where possible, those focusing on the English language only. We will start arguing that while younger students need different approaches to learning, adults do not need to learn "how to make a living but rather how to live" (Lindeman 1935: 45). From

the overall perspective, Lindeman (1935) was discussing the role of adults learning in society and how relevant some aspects are. For this research we are going to highlight those regarding the higher education. By stating that adult learners feel the need to use what they have learnt to live outside the insitution context, we can highlight what they need basing these needs on our research. In fact, as argued by De Grève (1973: 48), argued that for foreign languages, advanced learners need good attention when it comes to teaching, especially to skills; these must be aimed and indispensable. Furthermore, when it comes to comparing the adult age of learners with the one of children for learning languages, some experts have strong opinion about this. Even if it is arguable that children could learn faster, we need to consider that "adults are able to draw upon cognitive capabilities, which enable them to learn about and understand language in more abstract ways than children" (Hall 2018: 127). Since we are focusing on the English language courses and their structure in two universities, we will point out the two main aspects we will study in the next sections: skills and syllabus.

Analysing the teaching strategies to adults, we find different relevant aspects. While we can say that adults decide to study a specific area of studies in higher education, we need to argue what lead them to choose their academic career. We will now introduce a further and main aspect when it comes to adult learners; motivation. "Learning occurs as a result of change in cognitive structures produced by changes in two types of forces: change in the structure of the cognitive field itself, change in the internal needs or motivation of the individual" (Knowles 1988: 23). Motivation of the indivudal is stated to be an important feature of the learning experince. Knowles (1988) highlights the important role of adult education and learning processes. Furthermore, he argues that "motivation is also attained through clearly stated learning objectives at the beginning of instruction" (Knowles 2005: 244). From this, we learn that adults need to be satisfied with their learning contexts and experience. In fact, it has been discussed that "adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy" (Knowles 2005: 31). We need to say that motivation is different for every learner. Klimova (2011) argues that

motivation comes from six different conditions for learnes in the university context. We can say that all these are referred to what the learner's expectation is form their studies and their self-image. She states that learnes wish their academic career will help them achieving their lifetime goals, and these will eveltually play a role in the way they see themselves. From this, we can argue that adult learners in university context come with an approximate idea of what they want to do career-wise. That is how they choosed their academic courses. The idea of achieving their goal is what motivated them into their studies. It has been pointed out how important it is having goals in education. In fact, Dornyei (1997) formulated theories and referred to them in the educational context as goal-setting theory [which] is well-suited with learner's expectancy as commitment is seen to be enhanced when people believe that achieving the goal is possible and important.. Furthrmore, Workun (1971: 324) argues that adult learners in universitties decided to enrol to succeed goals they have set for themselves. However, during our research, we will learn that instituions need to keep learners' motivation high in order for them to suceed. In fact, to detect this, we need to mention few aspects on how instituions should shape their learning processes. Some of the guidelines are "identifying the learning outcomes to be assessed […] preparing a plan that specifies the sample of tasks to be used […] preparing an assessment procedure that closely fits the set [before]" (Gronlund and Waugh 2009: 48-49). By detecting this, we can argue that an institution should shape their teaching on these guidelines mentioned. However, we need to say that we will consider these as examples. They might be true for specific-purposes courses. Yet, for the university context we are studying, there are different guidelines which occur according to other factors.

When discussing the important aspects of teaching to adults, we need to include important theories discussed by experts during the studies of adult education. We will now discuss main theories and approaches, starting with the behaviourism one. The behaviourism is described as a monistic theory which "mantains that statement about the mind and a mental states turn out, after analysis, to be statements that describe a person's actual

and potential public behaviour" (Maslin 2001: 106). Maslin argued that behaviourism explains some of the outcomes of the learning process. The behaviourism apporach has been discussed by Pavlov Ivan (1927).

> "Behaviourism is the most influential and generalizable theory of learning that claims a scientific basis. This is because, like the most useful theories in any field, it is universal and underpinned by only a few principles. As its name suggests, it concentrates on behavioural changes in organisms. Thus, behaviourists define learning as a relatively permanent change in behaviour as the result of experience." (Jordan *et al* 2008: 21)

We can summarise the behaviour theory in the learning context saying that "classical behaviourists believe that all learning conforms to observable scientific laws governing behavioural associations and patterns; the learner simply responds to external stimuli in a deterministic manner" (Jordan *et al* 2008: 21). Of course, we need to apply these theories to the learning context. That is why we will state that

> "neo-behaviourists acknowledged the importance of learners' internal characteristics, such as personality, motivation and habit. Hull (1943) factored in motivation and habits as variables in his scientific 'laws'. Skinner (1953) talks about students developing self-control and self-monitoring programmes where they identify their own reinforcers and apply behaviourist principles to themselves. For example, a student might identify tendencies towards lateness, monitor performance, decide which stimuli are effective, set goals, and consider reinforcers" (Jordan *et al* 2008: 27).

After Pavlov (1927) studies, other experts applied the behaviourism theory to the learning and teaching contexts. Hull (1943) and Skinner (1953) highlighted how motivation leads students to a development process where

behaviourist principles can be applied on them. For our research, we already stated that motivation is at the base of adult learner studies. Moreover, they will try to improve in those aspects where they lack. But, for them to understand their weaknesses, the intervention of an expert is fundamental. In fact, we can argue that for this approach to function properly, we need teachers' attention. Their role is important, since students will obtain their corrections from them. That is why in our survey we will study the dynamics of teaching aspects at the two institutions. We will detect if the structure of English language courses will allow teachers to pay enough attention to trigger student's motivation and responding to this positively. Before discussing other theories, we need to embrace that these studies are slightly dated for the age group we are studying. In fact, some researchers pointed out some issues with the behaviourism; "while behaviourism can point the outcomes of the learning processes, it is incapable of explaining the processes themselves" (Jarvis 2010: 9). That is why, we will include a further study in our research; functionalism

Functionalism is described as another monistic approach "which regards the mind as a function of the brain" (Jarvis 2010: 9). This aproach sees the brain as a complex computer. Since functionalism analyses the inputs and outputs of the brain, studies have tried to apply the mechanism behind it to the learning processes. However, it has been argued that this approach cannot be applied to the human brain. Jarvis (2010: 10) included this study of analysing the incomes and outcomes of students if data from learners would be studied as data from computers. He underlined how the studies about functionalism cannot be applied for adults and learners by genearlising them, stating that "human beings are not computers, [and] are less rational [because they have] emotions" (Jarvis 2010: 10). Therefore, when we apply the functionalism theory to our research, we need to consider that we cannot argue the data collected as if it was coming from the same source. University students enrolled because of different resaons and different aims. That is why we decided to formulate questions which will consider students' aim and purposes for studying in higher education. Furthermore, we will ouline the different curricula of each institution in the

chapters 2 and 3 to underline how each university takes into acount learner's choices for their academic path. Had students brain worked as computers, there would have not been any curriculum to choose in universities.

The last two theories we can discuss for our study are the constructivism and cognitivism.

> "Because constructivism is a natural progression from cognitivism, and both are interested in cognitive processes. But whereas cognitivism focuses on how information is processed, constructivism focuses on what people do with information to develop knowledge. In particular, constructivism holds that people actively build knowledge and understanding by synthesizing the knowledge they already possess with new information" (Jordan *et al* 2008: 255).

To understand the difference between the two, we might want to try to think about reading. This skill requires the cognitive processes of understanding and recognising the letters in a text and recall how they sound in one's memory. However, this differs when we need to understand the meaning of a given text. According the contructivism theory, the learner must consciously make an effort to understand the meaning, and through this effort, meaning is constructed through the knowledge structures. According to the constructivism theory, this one is more of an educational method. This is based on the constructivist learning theory; "it […] adds the idea that this happens especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity" (Seymour and Idit 1991: 1). In fact, we can sumarise it as the recall of previous knowledge;

> "in terms of learning, this model suggests that it is important for learners to look back on what they have already done. In this way, associations can be made between new material arriving […] from the environment and […] material already stored in memory" (Jordan *et al* 2008: 47).

While for behaviousrists the role of the teacher is to control the enviroment and stimuli, it is to apply cognitive principles to facilitate the cognitive process in the cognitivism, and to support meaning-making challenges in existing ideas for the constructivism theory. The mental activity motored by these last two focuses on the perception, attention and processing for the cognitivists, and the meaning-making for the constructivists. We can argue that, since these last two are related, they differ to behaviourism in different ways. One of this is that behaviourism is about explaining things through learners outward behaviour or observation. On the other hand, cognitivism is based around cognitive processes such as decision making and memory. For our research in the teaching context, we need to pinpoint that when a teacher is deciding the teaching styles, they can tell if these are working or not. University students have different learning behaviours, since they all come from different contexts. As we already argued, adult learners already have previous knowledge. Moreover, they come from different schools and consequently, they have developed different learning techniques. That is why for our research, we need to remember what we learnt from behaviourism, functionalism, constructivism and cognitivism. These are very relevant, since we are studying students' perspective and our data is based on their experience and feedback.

When it comes to the teaching aspects and pedagogy to adults, Knowles Malcom studied and introduced the term *andragogy*. *Andragogy* is the form of teaching and learning aimed at the adult public. The assumptions are directed at providing autonomy and participation of adult learners in their experience. This differs in the traditional pedagogical aspect, which covers a methodological format which is applied to children. Moreover, this model is present in several higher education institutions, where the age group and learning aspects differ a lot with those of children.

> "Our position is that *andragogy* presents core principles of adult learning that in turn enable those designing and conducting adult learning to build more effective learning processes for adults. It is a transactional model in that it speaks to the characteristics of the learning transaction, not to the goals and aims of that transaction. As such, it is applicable to any adult learning transaction, from community education to human resource development in organizations" (Knowles 2005: 2).

In his work, Knowles stated that his intention "was to present an alternative set of assumptions to those that had been traditionally made by teachers of children" (Knowles 1979: 52). In fact, he made an example of him as a learner underlining the current studies were centred on children. As a consequence, such approaches were directly applied to adults (cf. Knowles 1979: 52). It is always Knowles (2005: 64-69), in a further work of his, who highlights the six main aspects of adult learners. Since these have highly influenced todays' research on adult learners, we will analyse them in this section. To do so, we will cite them individually, and argue them applying Knowles statements on this aspects to our research. The first one we will analyse, is the need to know.

> "Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it. [Adults] will invest considerable energy in probing into the benefits they will gain from learning it and the negative consequences of not learning it. Consequently, one of the new aphorisms in adult education is that the first task of the facilitator of learning is to help the learners become aware of the need to know*"* (Knowles 2005: 64)

Knowles argued an important aspect that we already introduced before. For adults, the need to know is a central aspect. While children might not be interested in knowing things they are not concerned with, adults manifest a high interest instead. In fact, applying this first aspect in the learning context, adult learners want to know what they need in order for them to succeed. Moreover, this concept increases its value when it comes to adult

learners in higher education. Being that they are not under the compulsory school time, it is their choice to be in the university. In fact, they need to learn if they want to pass their exam and finish their studies obtaining a degree. It needs to be argued that "because time is such a valuable commodity, participating in educational programs is often a personal sacrifice" (McIntire 1988: 47). This first aspect makes us also argue that we can rely on the data we will collect from students, since all the entries will be from students who chose to be and to study where they are. Therefore, no students' feedback can be argued as coming from a bad or unwanted experience. The second aspect argued by Knowles (2005) will be the learner's self-concept.

> "Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives. [Adults] develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction. They resent and resist situations in which they feel others are imposing their wills on them. This presents a serious problem in adult education: the minute adults walk into an activity labelled "education," "training," or anything synonymous, they hark back to their conditioning in their previous school experience, put on their dunce hats of dependency, fold their arms, sit back, and say "teach me." (Knowles 2005: 65)

Knowles argued few important points for the adult learners. He claims that adults are responsible for their decision. In fact, for our research context, we can say that we argued this with the first point of *andragogy*. He also claims that the issue with their will is to be related back to their previous approach to activities recalling education, training and anything similar to their past experiences. In fact, he claimed that they might depend on the leader role, in our case teachers, and be passively involved in the teaching context. However, in his previous works he stated that "the adults self-concept of self-directivity is in direct conflict with the traditional practice of the teacher telling student what to learn" (Knowes 1970: 291).If we try to apply this second point to our research, we need to discuss the learning environment. We are studying adult learners who used to be in high school and are now at university. While in contexts argued by Knowles (2005) we

might find adults not cooperating with subjects not of their interest, we expect that in the higher institution context we are analysing, learners decided to study what was in their area of interest. Therefore, their cooperation and willingness to be active in the class context will be rather high. Of course, such aspect will be further discussed in the sixth point of Knowles (2005) since it is about motivation. The next aspect we are going to analyse is the role of learner's experiences.

> "Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from that of youths […] they have accumulated more experience than they had as youths. But they also have had a different kind of experience. This difference in quantity and quality of experience has several consequences for adult education" (Knowles 2005: 65-66).

From this, Knowles states that experience comes in quantity and quality. In fact, this causes major problems in adult education. Being that each context is different, we expect that a class of adult learners will not be equal in terms of quantity and quality of experience. On the contrary, such difference will lead to further issues. Harmer (1998) states that the biggest difference between adults and younger learners is that they come to the class with great learning experience. Usually, they have gone through many years of education and then may have studied at a higher level (cf. Harmer 1998: 20). Applying this to our research, we need to consider that this issue can take place in higher institution classes as well. Students might have a better preparation than others. Being that they all come from different contexts, we need to argue that it will be up to the teacher to unify a teaching method that will benefit each student. However, it is not up to us to decide how. Since we are studying students' perception of English language courses at University, we will not argue further. We will consider that the data we collected comes from students with different background. Yet, no high schools can provide what higher education institutes do. That is why even

with their qualitative and quantitative differences, we believe that a higher education institute will still teach these students new things they did not know, and will foster their skills up to the final level that is the goal of their academic career. The next aspect we are going to discuss, is the readiness to learn

> "Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations. [This] is the developmental tasks associated with moving from one developmental stage to the next. The critical implication of this assumption is the importance of timing learning experiences to coincide with those developmental tasks" (Knowles 2005: 67).

For our research, we find that this statement highlights two important aspects to discuss: real-life situations and timing. While young learners might not have a clear idea of the career they want to achieve, we can already see how much adults come to higher institutions with a clear mind; even if they do not know it yet, they know which area of studies they want to pursue. Of course, having real-life situations help adults into see that what they are learning will benefit them after their academic career. That is why we can argue that a higher education context should prepare students for what their purposes after their degree are. However, a single institution cannot provide this to each student. That is why, as we will learn from chapters 2 and 3, both institutions we are studying offer different curricula. In this way, students subjects diverge in their interest closer than they would if there were no curricula to choose from. From these, we also learn that adults need to both learn new things, but also to foster skills. In the foreign language context, skills are vital for students. The second aspect we want to include in this discussion is timing. For our research context, timing is essential. We relate timing to assignments. Correcting students' outcome is important to detect their development, in this case, the more the better. That is why we will study the number of assignments students had to hand to teacher in our survey, and we dedicated a full section, 1.3 and 1.3.1 about

assignments. Moving to the fifth aspect of *andragogy*, we find the orientation to learning.

> *"*In contrast to children's and youths' subject-centred orientation to learning […], adults are life-centred - or task-centred or problem-centred - in their orientation to learning. Adults are motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive that learning will help them perform tasks or deal with problems that they confront in their life situations. Furthermore, they learn new knowledge, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes most effectively when they are presented in the context of application to real-life situations" (Knowles 2005: 67).

Knowles (2005) provides a clear example of what adult learners need from their learning contexts. In this research, we will often mention the skill aspect. In fact, skills are studied in section 1.2, and throughout the whole chapter 4. We will see in the next section 1.2 that skills are relevant to adult learners, when it comes to learning a foreign language, in our case, English. Knowles highlighted how adults are oriented through life, which we discussed in the previous points, and tasks. Tasks are crucial in this research. It is thanks to them that adult learners feel they have been improving in their studies. In fact, we decided to focus on tasks too. These are the fastest way to receive feedback. The next aspect mentioned by Knowles (2005) is motivation.

> "Adults are responsive to some external motivators - better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like - but the most potent motivators are internal pressures - the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life, and the like – […] all normal adults are motivated to keep growing" (Knowles 2005: 68).

Knowles (2005) states that motivation is a key aspect to adult learners. In fact, we already argued the role of motivation for adult students. To what we already mentioned, we can add that Knowles stated that motivation triggers adults in studying for many reasons, which he divided as external and internal. However, for our research, we need to highlight that Knowles stated the most important ones are internal. Even if for our study we could argue that Knowles' motivation factors could all be intended as internal, we need to acknowledge that regardless the label, the adult learner will feel the need to keep growing. In fact, we can also argue that if the structure of the English language courses succeeds students' expectations, this would lead to a better perception of the institution itself. In this way, we will expect positive feedback from our surveys.

The last aspect we will discuss is more physical rather than theoretical, the classroom. In his study about how to teach to adults, Spalding (2014: 160) underlines the difference between the class taken as a whole at school for kids and as for adults stating that "we must also transform the education system to make it normal for adults to keep learning in an organized fashion outside of school". While classrooms for childrens might be organised according to their age, Spading (2014) underlines that we cannot do the same for adults. When thinking about adults in a classroom, we need to underline few aspects. Between all Spalding (2014) mentioned, we can apply one of these aspects to our research; "web sites for learner collaboration" (Spalding 2014: 161). He points out how there are different approaches for adults, and their need of having various contexts outside the walls of the classrom. We will study further in this research that one of the institutions included the use of such web site, or to be more precise, web platform, to condcut students' activities outside the classroom context.

After having discussed who the adult learner is and what age group we are studying, we briefly described what the main aspects we need to consider for the learning processes. The next sections will highlight the role of skills and syllabus for higher education institutes. Furthermore, we will

also discuss what these aspects imply, and how we decided to include these in our survey to use students' feedback for understanding the structure of both LMU and Ca' Foscari. Being that students are included in the process of monitoring the quality of language courses, according to Maugeri and Serragiotto (2014), we need to analyse what we will study in chapter 4 and define these aspects. By doing this, we will have authentic material to conclude our research comparing the results from the two institutions with our data collection. Moreover, we will discuss the skills we chose to analyse in section 1.2. We will understand why we picked such aspects about the structure of English language courses and why we can rely on the upcoming data. However, we will not argue skills in all their aspects; we will only focus on those who are relevant for our research and can be applied to the age group we are studying. Furthermore, section 1.3 will introduce the role of the assignments in higher education, and how these will lead our studies to further aspects. By doing so, we will highlight these aspects and include them in our survey.

1.1 Teaching English to adults: important remarks

The first part of our research highlights how the cooperation from adults in learning processes is important. From this, we pointed out the age group we are studying in this research, and how we can rely on their feedback, since their age is optimal for learning. In this section, we will study the aspects we need to consider for our research. These aspects discussed are in fact those we will need when formulating the questions for the survey. We first need to understand what we are studying, and why, before proceeding with questioning students from each institution. Each question will provide us information and feedback from what we will study in the next three sections, 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. It cannot be stressed enough how the questions of the surveys are shaped accordingly to the literature we are analysing here. Being that each question will study aspects discussed in these sections, we need to carefully analyse these before moving on with the structure of Ca' Foscari and LMU, and also before analysing the data collection.

Before starting with the aspects of skills and syllabus, we will need to discuss some literature that studied the adult students in English learning contexts. For this, we will provide some features discussed by some experts that will allow us to study these advantages according not only to our research topic, but also to those aspects we will study through students' feedback.

> "Adults learning English bring to the task a mature personality, many years of educational training, a developed intelligence, a determination to get what they want, fairly clear aims, and above all strong motivation to make as rapid progress as possible. These are formidable qualifications which far outweigh any disadvantages, and make teaching to adults a challenging satisfying experience." (Broughton 1993: 187)

Broughton emphatize that motivation is a strong feature of adult learning. By combining this to what is stated by Lindeman (1935: 45), we argue that in terms of teaching, adult learners are motivated by authenitc materials that

will benefit for them in the outside context from the learning one. Therefore, we can argue that when adults are motivated by materials and by practicing on what they need for when their academic career comes to an end. In terms of syllabus, we can state that for students to find a syllabus interesting and keep their level of motivation rather high, the ideal syllabus needs to include topics that students find relevant for their reason of studying. For this resaon we decided to include questions about the syllabus and topics in our survey to investigate this important aspect of teaching to adults. On this note, we need to think about how this material can be provided. The most common approach is to adopt a textbook. Each textbook is different in terms of organisation and topics. Yet, if an institution decides to use one for their course, we expect that students in different classes will learn using the same basis. By relying to the structure on a textbook, teachers already have a planned scheme to work with. In fact, "a planned scheme of work using available textbooks […] is vital in individualised learning" (Broughton 1993: 189). As suggested here, we learn that having a textbook provides both students and teachers a clear planned scheme for their work. A textbook is a source of topics and tasks to practice with a certain logic behind it. It has been underlined by Celce-Murcia (2001: 415-420), a textbook brings various aspects on the table when teaching English as a second or foreing language. Textbooks "generally provide checklists built around numerous aspects of teaching and student-teacher interactions" (Daoud and Celce-Murcia 1979: 315). Moreover, she continues pointing out more apsects. Some aspects we find relevant for this research are that, from these, teachers should pick which tasks the students should perform in class and which tasks are suitable to be homework. However, we need to stress that a textbook for practicing students' skills is not enough. It is stressed as well that a textbook for learning English requires an interaction between the teacher and students. This means that the role of the teacher is important as well.

For the whole duration of the English language course, teachers are those is charge to plan lessons, assign tasks, correcting them and make sure students receive an adequate preparation for the final exam. That is why we

decided to include some aspects regarding the role of English teachers in the context of each insitution's structure. It is up to each insitution to come up with a syllabus for each course during the academic year. Teachers do only deliver the insitutional choice to students during classes, and that is why we will formulate questions about the structure of the English language courses, and not how teachers delivered in class. If we had to take this into acount as well, we could have had interferences in our research, according to the intraction between students and teachers. That is why no questions about this will be asked. Another aspect regarding teachers must be underlined. Teachers need to plan lessons in their entirety, meaning that they are in charge of choosing the tasks, what students need to practice on and monitor their development. We will study if each instituion provided this aspect to each class. It is stressed by Celce-Murcia (2001: 406) that a good lesson plan includes those tasks and coherence with the prepration needed. We will investigate this aspect by asking students if they were prepared adequately for the exam.

One of the further main aspects we are going to highlight is the adequacy of the class. Some classes might be crowded, some might be too empty. We cannot quantify what the proper size of each class should be. Yet, by analysing the structure at each university we might understand how many participants each instituion allows in one class. We also understand that being this organised internally, the class numbers are decided according to those included in Maugeri and Serragiotto scheme; director, educational coordinator, teachers, didactic management team and the head of didactic services. We need to mention that small classes are thought to work more efficently. It has been noted that rather than teaching in big classes, "small-group learning is frequently undertaken in adult education" (Jarvis 2010: 147). When it comes to group sizes, praticing in small groups seems to be the best way to teach to adults. We do not know for sure who decided the class size, neither do we know what participant numbers could be appropriate in this context. However, we will study students' perspective about this aspect by asking them if the class was adequate. Moreover, we will be able to study more, by setting an expectation of assignments and

practice in class, and see if this expectaction is reached from the data we collected.

To comment further on the syllabus, we will rely on the work of Richterich (1980), we wil briefly introduce how a syllabus should be shaped. He provides a round-shaped scheme, where the student is in the middle, and all around four main aspects are surrounding it: curriculum, objectives, resources and assessment. We already pointed out how important it is for adults to be prepared with practical tasks and authentic materials. This means that when a higher education institution shapes a syllabus for their students, they need to observe these points.

> "It will thus necessarily be vital to seek a compromise between the resources, objectives, methods of assessment and curricula thought of by the learner, and the resources, objectives, methods of assesment and curricula which the teaching establishments […] has more or less clearly defined for themselves" (Richterich 1980: 5)

According to Richterich (1980), we need to underline the important compromise between students to achieve their goals, and the instution to provide and succeed in such expectation with their possibilities. We will study the structure of both institutions from the students' point of view only. Therefore, we need to remember that students might not be aware of the reasons behind their institution made some choices related to the structure of the English course made by their institution. Moreover, students learn English for different reasons. That is why each institution should provide different curricula, so that each student can choose the one they find most interesting. It is not easy for a single institution to satisfy students' expectation. However, we will study how each institution try to meet students' expectation and if they believe they had.

The next aspect we are going to analyse and base our research on regards the skills. During the academic life, students expect to foster their English knowledge. By doing so, students are going to practice on the

English language, study about literature, liguistics etc. For this research, we will focus on their English language. We already analysed how adult learners need more practice rathar than theory. That is why we are going to study how their English lesson structure helps them foster these skills. After all, "a skill can only be learned in practice, and expert coaches can only help by giving practical […] advice as a result of observation" (Jarvis 2010: 149) In order to discuss these skills clearly, we can say that the most relevant for languages are writing skills, speaking skills, reading skills, listening skills and in terms of competences, grammar and lexis. Broughton (1993: 66) divided listening and reading skills as receptive skils, and speaking and writing skills as productive skills. Since we stated that adult students want to see results in their work soon, we decided to analyse the productive skills in this research. After analysing the two structure, we decided to include grammar and lexis as well, since the two institution we are studying differ from each other significantly.

For this section, we are not going to study each one of these aspects specifically. We will only highlight those aspects that are relevant for our research and underline those to adult learning. Furthermore, we will need to highlight those approaches we can ask students about their English langage course structure. We need students to think about these questions and provide us with realistic data according to their experience. That is why, we will study the role of the skills in the next section, and argue what output can be used from the teaching structures for us to discuss our research without having other aspects influencing students' perception for our questions.

1.2 The role of the skills

In the previous chapters we analysed age groups, adult learners need and what they need to achieve. To understand the role of the skills, we will start by saying that "the relationships among listening, speaking, reading and writing during development […] are complex relationships of mutual support" (Peregoy and Boyle 1997: 102). In this section, we are going to introduce the skills and the aspects we need to proceed with our research. We decided to focus on the two productive skills, writing and speaking, and to provide an analysis of the grammar and lexis aspects at the LMU and Ca' Foscari. After this, we will compare the results in chapter 4 including the reasons behind each question.

The first skills we are going to analyse is writing. To do so, we are going to discuss important aspects about this in the context we are studying here: adults in higher education. "The act of writing differs from that of talking in that it is less spontaneous and more permanent" (Broughton 1993: 116). Starting underlining that writing does not come spontaneously, Broughton underlines how fostering writing skills does not come by using language only. In fact, he describes several aspects to be noted when teaching how to write in English to adults. We will summarise some of these by saying that writing needs attention when it comes to accuracy, grammar, lexis and style. Each of these needs to be taught by teachers during the courses. Of course, to do so, a program must be shaped first; "such a program would list the main types of writing which it feels students should be able to master by the end of their education" (Broughton 1993: 117). It is then very important that the structures we are going to analyse provide this to students. In fact, we will study this by asking questions about students' satisfaction with their skills and if, according to their aims, they reached their goals. We will study the variety of text types from each institution in chapter 4. However, this is not all.

Combined to writing, we need to highlight that lexis is very relevant for students to succeed. That is why when it comes to the language, " most

lectures indicate that they (students) lack English vocabulary and are, thus, unable to express exact meanings, subtle differences, details, or emotions" (Zegers-Leberecht 2019: 44). By stating this, we are glad we included studies about lexis in both insitutions to analyse. Zegers-Lebrecht is not the only one pointing out the relevancy of vocabulary competences for writing skills. Broughton (1993: 119) points out that vocabulary shoud be fitted according to the context students are praticing. As far as the layout,

> "when we use written language, we obey certain conventions which are appropriate to the particular purpose we have in mind. […] A successful writing course mist select the conventions and styles which are most likely to be useful to students. […] We would expect a good writing course to help students to correct their mistakes." (Broughton 1993: 120)

From this, we learn that students need to be taught how to perform layouts properly. In addition to this, as much as Broughton stated, Balboni (2012: 128-129) argued similar aspects to consider about writing. He argued the importance of a rich vocabulary, the use of proper grammar structures, the correct communicative competences, fluency and sociocultural context. These last three can be summarsied by assuming teachers will provide these structures through the layout of the text type. The word layout will include this aspect for our research. But what we need to underline and will be stressed throughout the whole research is that students need to see their mistakes and have them corrected. It cannot be stressed enough how important this is.

Before underlining the importance of getting corrections, we need to highlight another aspect: the assignments. In order for students to succeed in their expectations, we learnt that they need to practice a lot. Such practice should not be done by attentindg class only. We expect students to work at home on their skills as well. However, they do not know if what they are producing respects the aspects mentioned before. That is why in the

previous statement of Broughton (1993: 120), he stated that a good writing course should help students correct their mistakes. Therefore, we will set an expectation of the number of assignments that should be to students during their academic year and be corrected by their teachers. It is thanks to the assigments handed in and having them corrected that students have the chance to improve their skills. We will obtain this information by asking students if they felt prepared for their final exam and the number of assignments. We will also argue if these meet our expectations in chapter 4.

To conclude the aspects of writing skills, we need to state that we will rely a lot on these last data from the survey. Being that we are studying the context of higher education, we know that at the end of their course, students are required to sit the exam. Here, their skills will be tested. However, in order to know the level of the exam and help students foster their skills, we expect teachers to ask students to hand in written assigments done on their own. For this, we will rely on a relevant text that outlines the important aspects of evaluating language learning.

> "La valutazione mira a rafforzare I comportamenti osservati negli studenti con le mete educative e gli obbietivi didattici. […] i test in itinere che si Prefiggono l'obiettivo di realizzare uno stretto collegamento tra il programma svolto e quanto finora conseguiti dallo studente. " (Serragiotto 2016: 43-44)

Serragiotto (2016: 43-44) highlighted an important aspect for our research. Evaluating students with what he calls *verifica* helps teachers and students to detect their level of development in the learning context. The term *verifica* is defined in the book as that task performed by students and then corrected by teachers. After being corrected, students can learn from their mistakes and see where there is room for improvement. The term *verifica* could probably be interpreted as simulation of the final exam and performed in class. Being that we are studying learning contexts in higher education for adults, in this research, we will refer to *verifica* as the assignment students of each instution will hand in to their teachers either being

performed at their home or in class. In fact, it is relevant to highlight that these tasks happen during the course.

> "L'idea di una verifica sempre programmata, simulata e modulata con chiarezza e trasparenza sugli obiettivi già fissati; una prova contestualizzata al percorso-esperienza di apprendimento intrapreso; un momento chiave organizzato mediante tecniche che conosce con lo scopo di comprendere con facilità le consegne e svolgere le attività; una strategia didattica comprensiva di nuovi canali di trasmissione e di condivisione dei contenuti che hanno rafforzato lo studio e l'applicazione dei contenuti in modo più immersivo. Coerentemente a tale logica, deduciamo come la verifica sia la somma di più momenti propedeutici ad affrontare l'evento valutativo. Lo studente così si ritrova a vivere e affrontare la prova senza incontrare la sorpresa di imbattersi in un sistema valutativo […] "(Serragiotto 2016: 25)

Once again, Serragiotto (2016: 25) highlighted the beneifts for students to have regular assigments during their course. Here we learnt that having assignments stimulates what learners need to perform for their learning goals. It is important that these assignments start evaluating from the very beginning, till the last point. One of its aims is to prepare students in understanding what they need both from the assignments and to perform at the final exam. This is also referred to as didactic strategy to embrace and reinforce the learning topics and aspects taught to students. Serragiotto also mentions at the end that this type of *verifica* is one of the most introductory moments for students to prepare them for the final exam. By doing so, students will feel they had been prepared adequately for the final exam, and will not risk not to perform at the exam at their best.

The second productive skill we are going to analyse is speaking. When we refer to speaking skills, we need to remember that however "good a student may be at listening and understanding, it needs not to follow that he will speak well" (Broughton 1993: 76). It is pointed out how being good in receptive skills, like listening does not imply that students will be equally good in a productive skill like speaking. In his work, Klippel (1984) underlined the role of speaking activities as vital

part for language learning. Chomsky distinguishes two different terms for this: language competence referring to the speaker's knowledge of the language system and the performance which means "actual use of the language in concrete situations" (Chomsky 1965: 4). Other aspects relevant to the speaking skills we will analyse are, for instance, the fluency, which differs from what we stated in writing, as for speaking it refers to "the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation." (Hedge 2000: 54). Another experts points out improtant features when it comes to speaking skills, and highlighted the best approach, which is teacher role centred.

> "to produce work for display to the teacher in order that evaluation and feedback could be supplied conflicted directly with the demand to perform adequately in the kind of natural circumstances for which teaching was presumably a preparation. Language display for evaluation tended to lead to a concern for accuracy, monitoring, reference rules, possibly explicit knowledge, problem solving and evidence of skill-getting. In contrast, language use requires fluency, expression rules, a reliance on implicit knowledge and automatic performance. It will […] require monitoring, and problem solving strategies, but these will not be the most prominent features, as they tend to be in the conventional model where the student produces, the teacher corrects, and the student tries again."
> (Brumfit 1984: 51)

For these aspects to be fostered adequately, we learn that teachers and learning contexts in class are very important. It is during the course that students learn and foster their speaking kills. That is because such skills cannot be performed indvidually at home and then for the teacher to correct in the moment. In fact, it has been argued that "the speech produced by the student should be tightly controlled […] by the teacher" (Broughton 1993: 76). As much as we stated for writing, also for speaking skills, the attention fo teachers is relevant. Since we already stated that

adult students need to see the improvement as quickly as possible, by monitoring students, they will foster their skills faster. The relevance of the teacher role to test students regularly is stressed when argued that students "must be prepared by [their] teacher for actual communication […] and the teaching must develop this competence in the learner" (Broughton 1993: 77).

Regarding speaking skills, we can conclude that to foster this skills, we need regular attention from the teacher. Applying this to our context, we need to study if the structure of each English language course at Ca' Foscari and LMU allows these conditions to happen. One of the main features we are going to investigate is the adequacy of the class. In crowded classes, teachers might not have the opportunity to monitor each student according to speaking skills needs and students' need. That is why we will learn this from students' perspective. For these reasons, we will study the class adequacy, students' preparation for their final exam, if they belive they have been monitored regularly enough and if they practiced enough to foster their skills. All these aspects will be study in chapter 4.

Following the productive skills, writing and speaking, we are going to analyse the role of grammar and lexis in higher education for adults. We will explain how these two skills are related into our research and the role they have with the speaking and writing aspects in the structure of the English language courses we will study from Ca' Foscari and LMU. We will start highlighting the main aspects of grammar teaching and will try to apply it to our study.

Grammar has been defined by many experts both in terms of skills and competences in language learning. Moreover, many theories have been introduced by those we learnt from in the previous parts. Since we are focusing on teaching to adults, we need to remember that for higher education context we are focusing on a specific age group. This means that we will focus on those aspects and theories relevant for our age group only. Furthermore, we need to underline that for our research in higher education, our subject for these studies already have grammar skills and preparation

for the university context; "here, reference to existing knowledge and motivating sets is of utmost importance, and the students must see purposiveness in explanations" (Brown 1972: 269). Therefore, we need to focus on the aspects and theories regarding the teaching of grammar skills to an age group that comes with experience and knowledge already. It is up to the structure of the language courses and consequently teacher's duty to foster these skills into an advanced level suitable and proper for the higher education context we are studying. Other experts define grammar as "the organizational framework for language and as such has been used as the organizational framework for language teaching" (Diaz-Rico e Weed 1995: 79). In their research, Hirai (et al. 2009: 99) points out the different implication of grammar features in language teaching. From this, we need to underline that a certain organisation and structure are needed. It is relevant to foster grammar skills in order to develop other skills, such as writing skills, since these are highly related. (cf Hirai, et all. 2009: 101).

Adult learners need grammar skills for many reasons. One of the perspectives we are going to study is that grammar offers them the opportunity to benefit from these skills in what their aim of studies is. In fact, "teaching of grammar offers the learner the means for potentially limitless linguistic creativity" (Thornbury 1999: 15). By saying this, we underline that students enroll to univeristy with different aims after their studies. That is why as argued from Thornbury (1995: 15) grammar offers the learner the creativity to adapt what they learnt and apply it into what they need. Moreover, grammar is described as vital for other skills to be fostered properly; "for someone to be able to speak and use language accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, all dimensions of form, meaning and use have to be learned" (Larsen-Freeman 2007: 155).

For this research, we will refer to grammar as a skill and not as knowledge. Larsen-Freeman (2003: 13) argued the role of grammar in communication. In her work, she coined the name and concept of *grammaring*. By doing so, she stated that we should think about grammar as a skill rather than an area of knowledge. This underlines the importance

of students developing an ability and be capable of using this for different purposes. Since the role of grammar is a key point when it comes to fostering other skills, we expect that this has a central role in the language courses we will analyse. For our research, we expect that such skill should be fostered in the class context. We also underline that we can highlight the importance of grammar being taught in class, saying that in the context of higher education "it is now fully accepted that an appropriate class time should be devoted to grammar" (Thompson 1996: 13). Another role of grammar needs to be pointed out. Grammar progression grows accordingly to the tasks and the structure of the courses (cf Heuer and Klippel 1987: 42).We will study this aspect in our survey by asking students of both institutions if their English language course structure provided a proper attention to grammar skills and if these were a central role in their education.

Last, when it comes to grammar skills, we need to mention two important aspects we will study in section 1.3; the training platforms and assignments. It is now clear that teachers and the class context are relevant for fostering skills. In fact, learners of language courses should also practice outside these contexts. Unfortunaly, it is not possible for teacher to monitor these activities. This being said, we can introduce another aspect of teaching foreign languages; the online platforms. In her work studying digital literacy, Banzato (2011: 74-76) underlines the implication of going beyond *print literacy,* i.e. printed paper. By arguing *digital literacy,* learners focus on different stimulus in the learning experience. She defines such approaches to be dynamic and interactive. According to our research and the institutions' structure, we will mentioned the role of the online platform Moodle. The use of these online platforms has been studied in the *e-learning* theories; "online teaching and activities only have value if they allow students to develop key skills, abilities and interests that we regard as the heart of university English" (Colbert , et al. 2007: 75). It has been underlined that this platform, available for universities, has been pointed out as very efficient for language courses where one "can assign students the task […] for spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and logic. This is especially useful in a language course, after your students have participated" (Rice

2007: 67). Here, it was highlighted how teachers can create tasks and make student interact with this platform. In fact, unlike common exercises provided with solutions in textbooks, teachers can add their own notes and provide explainations to students, close to the class context; "it's not too difficult to enhance these activities by adding annotations, recordings, pictures, and translations to help process the words and make them easier to remember" (Stanford 2009: 103). By doing this, learners experience a new level of *digital literacy*, which would benefit their learning processes. Morover, other experts point out this learning aspect relating it to a digital approach. In fact, referred to the age group we are studying, "virtual and digital ages have opened new possibilities as adults can engage in learning outside the constraints of time and place" (King 2010: 422). This highlights the new apporaches in the era we are living, since adults have further apporaches to their learning contexts. We are analysing this aspect under the grammar section, since this implementation of the Moodle platform has been introduced in one of the instituion's course structure. Regarding the role of the assignment in language teaching, we will dedicate a proper section in chapter 1.3. However, we will mention that "grammar and editing feedback and instruction, when thoughtfully and carefully executed,can help many or most students improve the accuracy of their texts" (Ferris and Hedgcock 1998: 202).

For our last discussion in this chapter, we will analyse aspects of teaching lexis skills, or vocabulary, regarding our research in terms of adult learners as a specific age group, and the higher education context. We will highlight aspects relevant to our research focusing on those we will study based on the two institutions, LMU and Ca' Foscari.

A first aspect we need to mention is that "vocabulary forms the central core of language learning. We need words to express our thoughs and ideas" (Shastri 2009: 97). In this work, lexis skills teaching is shaped and divided in different approaches. What we need to focus on, is the central role of the teaching activities. Shastri (2009: 99-102) provides exhaustive models for teaching vocabulary in class. It must be noted that not having

proper lexis knowledge causes issues in other skills such as writing, speaking etc. For example, when it comes to "reading issues directly connected to language, most lectures indicate that they lack English vocabulary and are, thus, unable to express exact meanings" (Zegers-Leberecht 2019: 44). Therefore, as much as we stated for grammar, proper lexis knowledge is vital to foster further skills and consequently of high importance in the higher education context we are studying.

An improtant aspect of lexis in a higher education context is contextualisation. This is defined as "an instructional technique in which grammar rules and vocabulary are couched in a meaningful context, such as a hands-on, theme-based activity" (Scarcella 2003: 175). From this, we learn that vocabulary and grammar are highly connected when it comes to express oneself, expecially in productive skills like writing and speaking. In her work, Celce-Murcia (2001) studied each skill; reading, listening, writing and speaking indivudally. Yet, unlike these skills, she argued grammar and vocabulary aspects in the same section together highlighting the correlataion between these two when it comes to teaching English. This is why we decided to include grammar and lexis teaching in the English language courses structures at LMU and Ca' Foscari.

As we stated for grammar skills, we will also include the studies on the platform Moodle for lexis skills. In her research, Gluchmanova (2016) used the Moodle platform for teaching English. Even if in this research the group of students and their studies was about engineering, she argued that the Moodle platform was used from students to "separate self-study without the help of a teacher; to develop the ability to learn through the integration [of the Moodle platform] outside of the classroom" (Gluchmanova 2016: 494). According to our literature and our target group, we need to see the Moodle platform as implementation of the learning experience at home. This being said, we understand the importance of practicing lexis skills. For this, we will study the importance of practicing in the following section 1.3 of this chapter.

In this chapter we selected the skills we will study in our research. We decided to focus on productive skills, writing and speaking. Moreover, given the importance of grammar and lexis to foster these productive skills, we decided to study these two as well. This makes a total of four skills we are studying in adult students in higher education. For each one of these skills, we mentioned important aspects pointed out by several experts. It is important to stress that we formulated the questions in the surveys, shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, accordingly to the studies in this section. However, some questions about skills and the aspects studied above might be formulated differently, since the two structures differ from one another. We will study the limits of the studies in section 4.1 and each question individually in section 4.2.

1.3 Assignments

In the previous sections we defined the main aspects of teaching to adults highlighting when it comes to higher education. We learnt what we need to know to provide a proper learning experience to the age group we are studying. Furthermore, we underlined the skills we are going to study, and already mentioned that we will base our research on students' perception of the English language courses at LMU and Ca' Foscari. We decided to base our research on this, since more experts pointed out that in order to study the structure of such courses, we need to rely on a direct source of information, in this case, students. This section will only focus on the role of assignments. It has been pointed out earlier that in order to provide an adequate preparation to adult learners in higher education, these need to practice outside the classroom context as well. It has been also mentioned that assignments have the function of the *verifica,* as explained by Serragiotto (2016), to monitor students' learning development during their studies. We will therefore refer to assignments as those activities asked to be handed in to teachers and given back to students corrected. To be clearer, we will refer to tasks as those activities performed in class with the supervision of the teacher.

As we try to highlight the importance and role of assignments for adult learners, we need to understand the role of assignments in the learning context and specify what these are about;

> "assignments are a common feature of most courses of teaching and learning and may involve, for instance, writing an essay, a case study, or a research project. […] If more practical assignments are produced, it is necessary to ensure that expert assistance is available for consultation[…] the assignments is a piece of written work" (Jarvis 2010: 170)

It comes to our attention that not only are assignments common in the teaching practice, but also that the role of an expert, in our case teachers, is vital to the correct use of these. Assigments are prepared at home by the student. This means that students have the chance to prepare and hand in a

written elaboration performed under no time pressure that would happen during an exam. Therefore, we expect that students performed what they have been asked at their best. From this, students might still be making mistakes and errors. For language assignments, it is importat to define errors as "grammatical deviation from the system of language " (Shastri 2009: 24), and mistakes as those who happen in our mother language (cf Shastri 2009: 24). Even if these two terms need to be distinguished from one another, we agree that when it comes to correcting them, both need to be corrected by the teacher. That is why for this research, when we mention the need for teacher corrections and advice, we will not distinguish these two terms. We can conclude this aspect saying that we will expect students to make mistakes in their work. After all, "errors are a natural and important part of the learning process itself" (Broughton 1993: 135).

Another aspect we will study from asking students question about assignments is the class adeqaucy. To be provided a proper preparation both in terms of skills and preparation for their final exams, students need an adequate class context to be in. For our age group, it has been made clear that "small-group learning is frequently undertaken in adult education" (Jarvis 2010: 147). By saying this, Jarvis (2010) underlines the importance of having a good proportion between students and the teacher in terms of numbers. Teachers need to have the time to focus on students' needs. Since these may differ for adult learners coming from different learning contexts and experiences, we argue that students should not be in crowded classes. Unfortunately, we cannot argue or state what a proper class size should be. While shaping classes there might be many factors that are needed to be considered by the insitution. This leads us to argue the role of the assignments for this research. If the class the students are attending is not crowded, we expect teachers have the chance to assign work to make at home and be able to correct it providing feedback. Consequently, making students questions about the number of assignments they have been asked to hand in will inderectly make us study the class size. This is also relevant when it comes to practice. The more students in class, the less activities can be done. In fact, this would also lead to an unproper prepration for adults

learners. As we stated before, adult learners improve their skills by practicing them.

Serragiotto (2016) underlined several aspects when it comes to the role of the assignments in the language context.

"Un processo di valutazione deve tenere in considerazione il contesto educativo e lavorativo in cui si situa come azione aggiornata degli obiettivi raggiunti dalla classe e dallo studente. Una tale prospettiva richiede di considerare il luogo di svolgimento della prova in termini di attori e procedure, attese e obiettivi; sequenze temporali in cui viene somministrata la prova, misurazione dei progressi, scelta delle scale di misurazione adottate. [la valutazione può dunque essere sia] uno strumento che può verificare le caratteristiche dell'apprendente [sia] uno strumento affidabile nella misurazione delle conoscenze, abilità e competenze conseguite dall'allievo" (Serragiotto 2016: 15-16).

Serragiotto (2016: 15-16) underlined different aspects and ways of monitoring students development during the learning process. He states that by evaluating students' outputs, we can measure their progress. We need to udnerline that Serragiotto (2016) argued the evaluating process to be applied in different ways, according to the learning context of both the teacher and the students. If we apply this to our research, we can argue that in the context we are studying, teachers can learn a lot from students' assignments.

In this section, we discussed the main benefit of assignments. For our research, we pointed out how these could be applied in the context we are studying. Furthermore, we mentioned how assignments can be used to monitor students and for teachers to learn where students have room for improvement. In the next sub-section, we will briefly dicuss some apporaches to correcting assignment, and what we can learn from this for our research.

1.3.1 Correcting students' assignments

In the previous section, we went through the main features we need to know when we study a specific age group of adult learners in higher education learning English. We discussed how assignments benefit both teachers and students and how these are important to foster their skills. In this section, we will stress the importance of having these assignments corrected by teachers.

Handing in assignments and not having them corrected would not allow students to learn from their mistakes. In fact, it would neither help teachers learn where their students lack in their studies. That is why feedback provides a good strategy to monitor students' development and understand where students need more progress.

> "The feedback on errors helps to plan strategies, design syllabus, prepare material and improve methods not only for remedial teaching but for general purposes too. Errors are traceable only in the productive skills of writing" (Shastri 2009: 24)

It has been stressed that feedback ensures various aspects of what students have learnt. In fact, Shastri (2009: 25) argued that errors reflect the intake of students; an entire chapter is spent on how teachers should understand and evaluate these mistakes. Shastri (2009) underlined the importance of any correction to be provided to students in different steps. The goal is for the students to be aware of the mistake and to learn from it. Another point raised is that mistakes should not always happen in the class context. That is why we rely on the study of the assignments; being the correction provided individually, each students has an individual feedback on their work.

Broughton (1993: 136-137) structured the definition of the error in three different stages; understanding what the error is, establishing where this came from and decided how serious this is. This is an important aspect

to be considered. Students need to know what will be evaluated for their final exam, as much as they want to improve their skills. Since we are studying students' perspective, we will not argue further about this. All we can say is that a clear outline regarding the relation between errors and learning should be available to students to understand what they are being tested, including the syllabus of their courses. That is why we decided to question students about their perception about their courses, and if their exams were testing what they have been practicing on. Last, we need to underline that is students do not state so, we can argue that the English language structure at their institution is not clear to them, or there is not a relation between what students practice in class and what will be tested in their academic career.

Since we stated that corrections are important for students' learning development, we need to underline that the correction of the assignments might not happen for a skill we are studying: speaking. Here, students can only perform task activities during the class time. Unless it is a monologue or a presentation, which requires teachers' supervision, students will not be monitored at home (cf. Broughton 1993: 84).. Unlike what we stated before, that the assignment is written and performed in an outside-context, when it comes to speaking, teachers cannot monitor what happens outside the class. Whilst having a written piece of their work might be enough to do this, we cannot argue the same for speaking. That is why for this research we will not refer to speaking performances as assignments, but rather as tasks. For the reasons mentioned above, we believe that teachers found the time to make students practice their speaking skills in class. An example is conversation classes; these "are very common in intermediate and advanced levels […] the best approach is to give as much attention and preparation time to conversation classes as to any other lesson" (Broughton 1993: 84). Here, we learnt that equal attention should be dedicated to the speaking tasks, since these can be evaluated properly during class only.

2. Università Ca 'Foscari di Venezia

This chapter will study the structure of the English language courses at Ca' Foscari. Due to the structure, we will focus on the Bachelor course "Lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio". Here, we will outline why we picked this course, and why we are studying this instead of others. Moreover, we will highlight which curricula this course offers to students. The following section will discuss the main features of this course studying the English language courses structure. Following this, we will give an overview about the final exam to underline what this institution tests their students on.

First, we will explain why we picked this course. Under the section of bachelor for foreign languages, we find three courses for language studies[1]. The first one is the one we picked; "Lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio" course. Then we find "Lingue, culture e società dell'Asia e dell'Africa mediterranea", which deals with languages of Asia and Mediterranean Africa and "Mediazione linguistica e culturale" which deals with translation mainly. Since we are analysing English studies, the first course is the one that provides more courses related to languages, literature, linguistics, didactics etc. Moreover, needing to compare the two institutions, we picked the "Lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio" course since this is not based on translation exclusively.

The first structure aspect we are going to outline is the foreign languages studied. When enrolling in Ca 'Foscari, students have to choose between two languages to study officially. Even though a third language might be studied by applying extra credits to the Bachelor program, Ca 'Foscari students have to choose between two main languages. This part is very relevant, since the second language chosen beside English will determine which English language class to attend. For instance, a Ca 'Foscari student studying English and German will be asked to attend a class

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[1] See https://www.unive.it/pag/8321/

with classmates who also study German language. The reasons behind this might be many; one for example, could be for logistic; classes and courses with German language will not overlap. However, we need to underline thar the more students chosen German, the bigger the English language class might become. Since numbers might change between years, we will not argue further.

The second aspect we are going to outline is the curriculum. When students decide to study the course "lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio", they need to choose betwain 3 curriculums; "letterario culturale", "politico internazione" and "linguistico-filologico-glottodidattico". The first curriculum is literature based. The second one provides more studies in history and international studies. The third one provides studies on linguistics, philology and didactics. Ca' Foscari students of this last curriculum have to choose between which one of these three (linguistics, philology and didactics). They are going to choose. By choosing one, they will be provided a further course on the third year. For instance, those who chose didactics will attend a course on didactics in their third academic year, and not of linguistics or philology. This aspect is very relevant to be pointed out, since Ca' Foscari tries to provide different options related to the career their students might have in mind. However, it must be noted that regardless the curriculum they choose, every student studying English, or other languages, will attend the same language class as everybody else. That is why when we distributed our survey, we were not interested in knowing the curriculum the participant was attending.

The third aspect we need to underline is that Ca' Foscari, as much as the LMU does, provides both English and American studies. Of course, by picking one, students of American studies will have to attend courses about the American literature, for instance. For our research, we are studying students of English studies, even if we are not studying the literature courses. That is why, the *modulo* parts and teachers differ, leading to a consequent and possible change of the structure of the language courses.

Italian university must shape the academic career according to Italian and European rules. It is important to define the term CFU. For each exam, students obtain a number of points, CFU indeed. CFU stands for *Credito Formativo Universitario* (Formative University Credit). By passing exams, students are closer to their final degree. For our study, we need to underline that the whole exam of English language attributes a total of 12 points to the student.

Another important aspect to mention is that Ca' Foscari do not only have one attempt to pass the exam. Ca' Foscari provides two attempts after one course is over, and then other two spread through the academic year. These attempts are under the exam time, called *sessione.* The three *sessioni* take place during the month of January, between May and June, and August-September. Therefore, being that the English language course lasts one year, students' first attempt takes place between May and June. However, given the academic choice for this exam, instead having two attempts for the first *sessione*, students can only sit languages exam once a *sessione*.

The last aspect we are going to mention is the entrance requirement. In order to enrol for English studies at Ca' Foscari, students need to present an upper intermediate certificate of level B2, which is obtained by sitting an exam privately. This level is common to the European Union, where the language competences have been divided into levels, according to the Trim (2002) crieria. This means that students need to prove they already have a certain level of English langugae before enrolling. However, if students do not have this certificate by the beginning of the year, Ca' Foscari offers students the opportunity to sit a B2 exam to prove their level and be allowed to go further with their studies. This exam must be sat by the end of the first academic semester. This means that before sitting the first English language exam, students must have proven their B2 level already.

The last aspect we are going to mention is not about the structure of the university itself. We will analyse the English language courses and their structure in the further structure. However, by studying the structures of the LMU and Ca' Foscari, an important aspect to be considered has emerged.

Both institutions provide a course about cultural studies. For the LMU, we will study this in section 3.2.4. Regarding Ca' Foscari, the course we are going to spend few words about is "Società e culture di lingua Inglese". Even if from the name one would assume to learn about the society and the culture of anglophone countries, we must say that the syllabus of this course is rather deceiving. In fact, the syllabus of this course is actually not much different than any literature course. When thinking about the words society and culture, even if literature certainly plays its part, we expected something different to this. By comparing the syllabus of Ca' Foscari's "Società e cultura di lingua inglese" with the LMU course cultural studies 1, we certainly reckon that there is a huge difference. That is why we decided to study Ca' Foscari students' expectation about this course in our surveys. We will provide the data and the analysis in chapter 4.

Now that we have pointed out how Ca' Foscari students pick their courses and the consequences, we will move to the next sections. The first one will discuss the structure of the English language courses in terms of classes, hours, syllabus and preparation. The second one will provide a description of the final annual exam. Since we pointed out the importance of skills and assignments, we decided to argue them on the final exam chapter. This will allow us to study how these are related for students' perception.

2.1 English language courses

This section will outline the structure of the English courses at Ca' Foscari, Venice. It is important to remember that what we examined in chapter 1 needs to be applied to the structures of both Ca' Foscari and LMU. To do so, we fist need to outline the structure of these two institutions, and only after proceeding to the data collection in chapter 4.

The first aspect we are going to discuss is how English language courses are not the only ones in the curriculum. Each year, Ca' Foscari students should attend the courses of English language starting with "Lingua Inglese 1" their first academic year and then following until "Lingua Inglese 3". By passing the exam, the student obtains 12 CFU (formative university credit), the Italian equivalent for the European credit transfer system. Each course has 12 CFUs, therefore, there is no room for confusion. However, students need to succeed in more than English language only. While the English language courses last an academic year, on the second half of their year (second semester), they will also have to attend a further course; the *modulo*. The *modulo* takes place once a week for a total of two academic hours (a total of 90 minutes). Each year, the syllabus of the *modulo* changes. The first year is based on phonology and phonetics. The second year has for now been divided between the curricula. Students of literature will attend a course based on the analysis of the text. Students of linguistics will attend a course based on the history of the English language. Students of politics will be divided based on their surname initials between the two curricula of literature and linguistics. However, only recently students of this last curriculum have a *modulo* course dedicated to them only. In order to pass the exam of Lingua Inglese, every student must pass both the part regarding the English language and the *modulo*. If this is not the case, students are meant to re-sit the part they have passed as well. However, since we are studying the structure of the English language courses, we will not investigate the *modulo* aspects. Yet, given the important role in passing the exam, we needed to mention it.

The English language classes normally take place every week for a total of three hours. By taking some as examples in the Ca' Foscari website[2], we learn that in one academic year, students are provided 150 hours of face-to-face lessons by an English native-speaker teacher. These teachers are called CEL: Collaboratore Esperto Lingusitico (Expert Linguistic Collaborator). For the Ca' Foscari structure, we will refer to them both as CEL and teachers. They are the teachers in charge of the English language courses. They will make students practice and make sure they receive the adequate preparation for the final exam, but not for the *modulo*. This include a preparation of 30 hours in one semester; classes take place once a week. This means that during the second semester, Ca' Foscari students will attend three English classes, two language and two *modulo*, for a total of four and a half hours.

The second aspect we are going to discuss is the syllabus. We already underlined that regardless the curricula students picked, the attendance for language courses is not based on this. This means that during one English language class we will find students of all the three curricula. This choice leads us to the syllabus topic. Based on the class participants coming from different curricula, we can argue that the syllabus of the English language course remains the same, regardless of the curricula.

During the English language course, CELs need to foster students' skills and prepare them for the exam. However, to ensure that every student receives equal preparation, Ca' Foscari asks students to attend classes with a textbook. Since these change over the years, we will not mention the titles. However, they present a similar structure. This textbook is divided into units. Each unit provides students new topics and is enriched with different tasks. This textbook is used to guide the teacher through the activities in the book and make sure every student practices the skills requested. However, teachers are still allowed to provide extra materials. Given this opportunity for teacher, and that they need to teach different aspects of their language in a one-academic-year course, we expect that they will make students

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[2] See: https://www.unive.it/data/606/

practice wherever they lack. The textbooks provided through the academic career of students might yet change. However, they all refer to an advanced level, since this is a higher education institution. Further in this research, we will study how the textbook and extra materials have been conducted by CELs. We will investigate if Ca' Foscari students were satisfied with their syllabus. Furthermore, we will also try to apply the syllabus aspect to the final exam and to their expectation by studying the curriculum they picked.

In terms of skills, we will now discuss those Ca' Foscari make students practice during the English language classes. Even though these are not explicitly mentioned in the courses, for this research, we decided to focus on the productive writing skills, speaking skills, grammar and lexis. We will study in section 2.2 how these are tested. Here, we need to underline an important aspect of one of these skills: speaking skills. We assume that speaking tasks are practiced adequately during the academic year's English language classroom. Yet, for the structure of Ca' Foscari, we need to point out that speaking is not tested, nor evaluated like the other skills. In each year's websites, we find that being tested in speaking skills is not mandatory. The structure of English language at Ca' Foscari does not provide a speaking part for the exam to be mandatory in the whole three years of academic studies for their Bachelor in "lingue, civiltà e scienze del linguaggio". However, sitting the speaking exam provides the Ca' Foscari student up to three points; these will be added to the final mark if the pass both the language part and the *modulo*. We will highlight this aspect in chapter 4; we will investigate students' opinion regarding the role that has been attributed to their English language courses, and, given this, if their CELs made them practiced regardless the secondary role of the speaking tasks.

The first skills we are going to outline is writing. For each academic year, and final exam, Ca' Foscari students are asked a writing skill task to perform. As stated before, it is up to CELs to make students practice. They can use materials created exclusively for the exam to make students practice the best as well. Moreover, since each student will write something different

in terms of topics and style, we cannot expect that teachers will make them practice during the class hours. Instead, students might be asked to write the writing task at home and hand it in to their teachers. As we analysed in chapter 1.3 and 1.3.1, we strongly believe that for this skill to be trained properly, teachers will also give the assignment back with all the pertinent corrections. Students must be able to perform differ types of texts, from essays to reviews. However, we noted that text types for the final exam tend to change according to the academic year English students are attending. Yet, since we are studying students' perception of the structure, we will investigate these aspects as well. We will ask them if they felt prepared, how many assignments they have been asked to hand in and if the variety of text types helped them achieve their goals.

The second skill we are going to study is speaking. We already underlined the second role it has in the final evaluation. For speaking skills to be practiced, we stated in chapter 1 that these need to be performed in class under the supervision of the teacher. We will investigate this aspect by asking students how many times they practiced. Moreover, given the second role of this skill at Ca' Foscari, we will try to understand if students agree on this or not. Speaking tasks should be performed in class. Given the number of hours of English language course at Ca' Foscari, we will investigate this aspect in the survey. However, from this, we need to point out a further aspect. Since we stated that the number of students in class may vary and it is not limited, like we will analyse for the LMU, the more students, the less monitoring the teacher can do. The structure of the English language courses does not include speaking to be evaluated equally to together skills, nor to be mandatory. This statement raises a big difference when we try to compare the two structures between Ca' Foscari and LMU. Here, we only needed to point out which are the features of the teaching of speaking skills at Ca' Foscari. Further assumptions and study will be provided in chapter 4.

The third skill we are going to study is grammar. For this skill, we might speak of grammar as a skill or as a topic. We will not make

distinctions about the terminology. The most relevant aspect to underline about grammar is that at Ca' Foscari each academic year students are required to practice on this skill. Moreover, grammar is always asked in the final exam. Grammar topics are taught from the textbook. Furthermore, we need to underline that teachers can provide extra materials. That is in case by monitor students, they believe they need extra practice on this. By outlining this on the structure of English language course, we will ask several questions to Ca' Foscari students. We are going to ask them if their grammar tasks were controlled and if they believe that their final exam tested them on what they have been prepared for during the courses. For the purpose of this research, we are not going to investigate the grammar topics any further. Being that all the textbooks are based on advanced level, we do not need to argue them.

The last aspect we are going to study for this research is lexis. For this skill, since we might speak of lexis as a skill or as a topic, we will not make distinctions about the terminology. First of all, we need to say that lexis is not directly tested for the final exam. However, lexis skills are going to be indirectly tested during writing skills. For this last part, being able to use a proper lexis is rather important. We stated in chapter 1.2 how these two skills are indeed related. Secondly, we need to say that units in the textbooks are divided by main topics. By stating this, we assume that each topic will be discussed accordingly in class. To do so, proper lexis skills need to be fostered. In this way, the final exam will test students' lexis competences by testing other skills. If students do not know how to correctly formulate one concept, they might not be able to do it properly in the exam leading to a worse grade or to a fail. As a matter of fact, as underlined before, "vocabulary forms the central core of language learning. We need words to express our thoughs and ideas" (Shastri 2009: 97). For this section, we will investigate by asking students if their expectation regarding lexis skills are met.

2.2 Final annual exam

The final annual exam takes place at the end of the second semester. As underlined before, this includes a part about the English language and the *modulo*. For this research, we are studying aspects of the English language structure. Therefore, we will not discuss the *modulo* part. We will outline how students can sit the exam, and what this asks them.

The final exam can be sat three times in one academic year. The first session is the one of May-June. The second one takes place between August and September. The last attempt for students to sit and pass the exam is in January. Students who have not passed by the last session will lose the bonus points obtained by the optional speaking part. This means that students are required to attend classes.

For the final exam, some skills might not be asked. For instance, back in 2015, there was no listening part for Lingua Inglese 1. However, since we are studying writing, grammar and lexis skills, we can state that these are always present in the final exam. As a matter of fact, Ca' Foscari students are tested on each one of these skills every academic year. It is very important for this research to stress that the exam will be the same for everybody. This is regardless of the CELs students had.

For the writing skill part, students are required to produce a text based on the type they are supposed to have practiced during the academic year. Due to the changes in the syllabus over the past years, it would not be neither correct nor reliable to state which text types are tested. However, we can state that for the exam of the second and third academic year, the text type has often been an essay. Regardless of the type of essay, we decided to investigate if, according to students, the text type asked for the exam has been repetitive or if they wished for more.

For the speaking part, we stated that this only has a secondary role. This part, unlike the whole final exam, is tested by the CEL of the class that the students attended. Given the secondary role, for this study we decided

to study how speaking skills are fostered, rather than the final exam. That is because some participants in our survey might have not sat the final exam; we wanted to avoid any unreliable data.

As far as grammar in the final exam, we need to underline a main aspect. Over the three academic years, students are not asked the same typology of exercises. On the contrary, they might vary during the time. For this reason, when compared to the other skills, we can argue that a special attention has been given to the grammar aspect. However, we will highlight this aspect in chapter 4. For this section, all we need to state is that grammar has an important role for the final exam. Being that it has always been tested for three academic years, we can say that the structure of the English language courses at Ca' Foscari really pay lot of attention to grammar.

Last, lexis skills. We already stated that these are indirectly tested. Lexis competences, and consequently contextualisation as stated in chapter 1.2, are fundamental for the writing skills part. Moreover, we need to add that they are also important for the listening comprehension part; students would not understand advanced lexis, unless they have an advanced vocabulary themselves. The same can be argued for their reading part during the final exam.

Now that we outlined the structure of the English courses at Ca' Foscari, we can conclude what follows. The program we discussed is credit system based. This means that by passing exams, students receive the credits they need. Moreover, we stated that the courses of Lingua Inglese are worth 12 CFUs. The reason behind this is because the final exams come in two parts. One part regards the *modulo.* The other part is the object of our study, the English language. For our research, we considered the productive skills speaking and writing, including lexis and grammar. We underlined how the structure of the language courses at Ca' Foscari is. It is important to remember that during classes, students foster more than one skill at a time. This means that the structure of this courses is not defined by skills, but rather by the languages students are studying. By saying this, we also need to include that class sizes may vary according to this criteria. After

having stressed this, we moved to the final part regarding the final annual exam. We explained that students have a total of three attempts. To succeed and obtain the 12 CFUs, students need to pass each part of the final exam. After having analysed this, we briefly explained how each skill we are studying is tested. Before moving to the next chapter, we can conclude this study about the Ca' Foscari structure saying that the shape is now clear to us. Each class makes students practice on different skills, a textbook provides the basic materials for class, and students need to fulfil each part of the exam in order to move to the next one of English language.

3. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich

This chapter will study the structure of the English language courses at the LMU. Due to the structure, we will focus on the English courses under the *Anglistik* section. Considering that the LMU offers to students the chance to choose American studies under the *Amerikanistik* section, we decided to study those under the first one only. Therefore, our comparative analysis in chapter 4 will be precise, since we will only compare English studies. Here, we will outline the courses we picked and will be compared to the institution Ca' Foscari. Being that in this structure each skill has a dedicated course and exam, we do not need to explain why we are studying these instead of others. Moreover, we will highlight which curricula this course offers to students. The following section will discuss the main features of this course studying the English language courses structure. Following this, we will divide in sub-sections each skill we are going to study under the 3.2 part.

Under the *Lehre Studium Foschung* website[3], we can see how there are different courses for the degree. Some of these are under Bachelor (also mentionable as BA), *Lehramt*, Masters etc. However, for this research, we are undergoing the two degrees in Bachelor and *Lehramt.* The LMU does not divide the courses in the academic years; the whole time is based on semester. For the bachelor course, there are a total of 6 semesters; divided in *WinterSemester* (WiSe) and *SommerSemester* (SoSe). For the *Lehramt* course, a total of 9 semesters. We need to underline the difference between these two courses. Whilst Bachelor is the classic curricula for English studies, *Lehramt* differs from this for the final purpose of students. In fact, *Lehramt* students chose this course to become teachers. For this curriculum, students must pick at least two subjects. If they chose English, they would have several English language courses with students of Bachelor. Beside the course writing skills 2, which differs in syllabus but not structure, the

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[3] See https://lsf.verwaltung.uni-muenchen.de/qisserver/rds?state=wtree&search=1&trex=step&root120201=1%7C43323 2%7C422750&P.vx=kurz

courses we are going to analyse in this research are the same for students of these courses. That is why we passed the survey to those who picked English as one of these for *Lehramt* and all English Bachelor students. Unlike the previous institution we analysed, the LMU provides a specific course for those whose aim is to become teacher. That is why the German system requires them to follow a dedicated university program which differs in every region. In Bavaria, students who want to become teachers will follow studies on psychology and pedagogy, according to the school level they want to teach, from the primary schools, *Grundschulen* till secondary schools, *Gymnasien*.

Another aspect of the shape of the LMU we are going to analyse is the requirement to enrol. We analysed for Ca' Foscari that students must provide a B2 level to enrol by the end of the first semester. At the LMU, students must pass an entry test at the faculty of *Anglistik*. From this and their final mark from high school, students will be admitted to the course if they reached the bare minimum. This guarantees to the institution that students enrolled to their first year or semester will at least start from a comparable level.

The further aspect we are going to outline for the structure of the LMU is important to understand how the English language courses are the credit systems. As much as we stated for Ca' Foscari, universities lecture and courses are based on a credit system. While Ca' Foscari named one credit as CFU, LMU uses the name ECTS, European Credit Transfer System. Each language course provides a total of three ECTS for the LMU student who passed it. However, it needs to be underlined that some of these courses are not marked in their career. Instead, regardless the mark they obtained, LMU students obtain a passed or failed feedback.

3.1 English curricula

In this section, we will briefly discuss the two curricula of the LMU. As we stated before, students can decide to enrol for a Bachelor program or a *Lehramt.* Not only is there a difference in terms of duration of the cycle of studies, but also in their syllabus. Here, we will try to summarise their structure and understand how they provide a different preparation even by having English as main subject. However, for the courses we are studying about the English language, they do not differ in terms of structure, nor level of language.

The Bachelor course[4] is set up for six semesters; it can be started in the winter and summer semesters. When starting a course in a summer semester, however, it should be noted that only a very limited number of minor subjects are available. "Modularization" is typical of the BA: Certain courses are combined into "modules". A distinction is made between "compulsory modules", that is, modules that everyone has to do, and "compulsory elective modules", that is, a group of modules from which a certain number of modules can be selected. For our research, we will only analyse the English language courses. By successfully attending courses, credit points are earned regardless of whether a specific event is graded or not. The final grade results from the graded courses. A total of 180 credit points (CP) or ECTS points must be earned for the bachelor's degree. The course ends with the successful completion of the prescribed number of modules; there is no additional final exam. As part of the final module, a bachelor's thesis is completed, which is accompanied by a colloquium. The processing time for the BA thesis is 13 weeks, the range 10,500 to 13,500 words (depending on the formatting about 35 to 45 pages).

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[4] See: https://www.anglistik.uni-muenchen.de/studiengaenge/bachelor/index.html

Before describing the *Lehramt* course[5], we need to underline that students cannot only study one subject to become teacher. By choosing to study English, they can combine a second subject between German, geography, French, history, computer science, Italian, Latin, mathematics, music, school psychology, religious studies, Russian, social studies, Spanish, sport or economics. The English language course deals scientifically with the English language, the literature and the culture of Great Britain, Ireland and also the English-speaking Commonwealth countries. The range of courses is composed of the various specialist sciences, English linguistics and English literature, the didactics of the English language and literature, language practice and regional studies or cultural studies. These include the relationship between language and cognition, how we store and retrieve words in the brain, how we produce sounds, how language is learned, how emotions and politeness influence language, and how understanding works.

Historical linguistics or diachronic linguistics deals with the development of the English language from its beginnings to its present state. Language historians are interested based on the question of how and under what influences the so-called Old English, which was spoken in the period between 450 and 1150, changed to Middle English between 1150 and 1500, how grammatical phenomena changed that have evolved and changed over the centuries, what role influences from other languages played. In historical linguistics, however, one also deals with medieval English literature, then one speaks of mediavistics. This is about texts that were created up to around 1500. These include e.g. also old chronicles, epics (Beowulf), knightly romances (just think of King Arthur and his round table) or other narrative forms such as Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Literature studies deals with English-language literary texts that have emerged since the 16th century. They analyse dramas, novels, stories,

[5] See: https://www.uni-muenchen.de/studium/studienangebot/studiengaenge/studienfaecher/englische/lehramt_neu/la_gymn_1/index.html

poems, essays, but also non-written art forms such as Films. Among other things, they ask how these texts are "built" for example about the language, the structure or the style of texts and asks what can be considered typical for a certain time or epoch or for a certain form or genre or an author or a group of authors. The detailed individual analysis of a text, an author or a genre thus also places them in their historical and literary context. Within English Studies, texts that originated in Great Britain and Ireland are analysed, as well as English-language literature from the former British colonies.

The didactics of the English language and literature deal in research and teaching with all aspects of teaching and learning the English language as well as English-speaking cultures and literatures. The requirements of the teacher training courses are at the centre of the courses. Prospective teachers learn the theoretical and empirical foundations of foreign language teaching in subject-specific didactic studies and gain insights into the practical design of effective language learning situations.

In addition to these key competencies and knowledge, the didactic study also provides insights into the development of English teaching, its goals and its educational policy context. The courses in the language practice department improve practical command of the English language, both in written and oral use.

The "country studies" provide factual knowledge about Great Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth countries and thus necessary background knowledge for all areas of English. The cultural studies deal with various forms, with and in which people organize themselves within their national and international cultural community. Here, for instance, asked about the role of media in contemporary society, but also about how certain rituals or cult forms develop, the importance of groups (ethnicity, class, gender) and possible conflicts between them or how people like others experience foreign and cultural "otherness".

3.2 English language courses

First of all, we need to underline that each skill has its dedicated course. These courses last for one semester Skills are divided into modules. Each module can contain from 1 to more skills courses, making the first one prerequisite for the following ones. We will not undergo how each one is for the others. We will only state that they are based on this order: core skill grammar and core skill lexis courses, writing skills 1 and speaking skills 1, and last writing skills 2 and speaking skills 2. Each class takes place once a week for a total of one hour and a half; this is during one academic semester only.

It is important to underline that the LMU require students to attend courses on reading and listening skills as well. However, we already pointed out that we were going to analyse productive skills. It must be noted that, when sitting the exam, LMU students do it with the teacher or lecturer they have spent the academic semester with. Moreover, unlike the structure at Ca' Foscari, a further main aspect differs. LMU students can sit the exam one time per semester only. They do not have three attempts like Ca' Foscari. If the exam is not evaluated sufficient, the LMU student must re-attend the class. This might not be with the same teacher. Moreover, for some exams, there is a limit. After not having it passed after the second attempt, the student might be expelled from their studies. However, this is not the case for the English language courses we are analysing. Therefore, we will not argue further. The last note we are mentioning, is about terminology. For courses like languages or lectures which do not include term papers as final exam, German students refer to them as *Klausur*. We decided to mention this, in order for them to know exactly to what we are referring to while asking questions in our survey. Now, we are going to analyse the courses individually.

3.2.1 Core skill Lexis and Grammar

The courses of core skill lexis and core skill grammar present the same structures.

The core skill grammar course involves a combination of self-study, online quizzes and face-to-face classes, aiming to improve students' grammatical accuracy at an advanced level. Students are also required to purchase the mandatory textbook, preferably before the beginning of the semester. The online quizzes are an important aspect to discuss in this section. These are provided on the online platform Moodle. As we stated in chapter 1, these offers further exercises to students outside the classroom context. However, in terms of structures, we need to underline few aspects. The exercises on the Moodle platform are not optional. These are mandatory for students in order to sit the exam. If students do not do all the tests, regardless the result, they will not be allowed to sit the exam. This approach will be studied in chapter 4. Yet, we can now argue that this aspect of the structure allows teachers to monitor students in a very different way rather than just in class. Moreover, during classes, teachers can provide extra materials to students. This is because students will be asked to self-study the grammar topic of the week, and during class they will practice under the teacher supervision. The textbook used for this course is: Oxford English Grammar Course Advanced from Swan and Walter (2011). For the core skill grammar courses, the maximum number of students allowed per class is of twenty-seven participants. We also acknowledge that this number has been decided according to the student enrolled for the semester and this may vary from year to year.

The core skill grammar course aims to improve students' grammatical accuracy at an advanced level in the English language. The course involves a package of self-study, online quizzes and face-to-face activation sessions. Students are also required to purchase the relative textbook, preferably before the beginning of the semester. Furthermore, online quizzes are an important aspect to discuss in this section. As much

as we discussed for the core skill grammar course, these are provided on the online platform Moodle. As we stated in chapter 1, these offers further exercises to students outside the classroom context. However, in terms of structures, we need to underline the same aspects we did for core skill grammar. The exercises on the Moodle platform are not optional. These are mandatory for students in order to sit the exam. If students do not do all the tests, regardless the result, they will not be allowed to sit the exam. This approach will be studied in chapter 4. Yet, we can now argue that this aspect of the structure allows teachers to monitor students in a very different way rather than just in class. Moreover, during classes, teachers can provide extra materials to students. This is because students will be asked to self-study the grammar topic of the week, and during class they will practice with the supervision of the teacher. The textbook used for this course is: English Vocabulary in Use Advanced from McCarty and O'Dell (2016) For the core skill lexis courses, the maximum number of students allowed per class is twenty-seven participants. We also acknowledge that this number has been decided according to the student enrolled for the semester and this may vary from year to year.

3.2.2 Writing Skills

In this section, we will outline how the two courses, writing skills 1 and writing skills 2 are shaped. It needs to be underlined that while the first course has the same syllabus for every LMU student, the second one differs according to the curriculum of the student. That is because *Lehramt* students will practice on text types that might happen for their state exams to become teachers.

The first course we are going to analyse is writing skills 1. This course aims to improve students' writing skills. It will focus on all aspects of a text, including basic units of writing such as sentences and paragraphs, and on the process of writing cohesive and coherent essays. The syllabus will cover argumentative essays, comparing and contrasting, and description. As stated for each English language course at the LMU, students obtain 3 ECTS for passing this exam. Unlike the courses of section 3.2.1, there are no textbooks. Teachers will provide the materials student need through the course. This means that teachers can decide, after monitoring students, what are the aspects they lack and where there is room for improvement. It is important to mention that students will practice on one type of text: essay. Therefore, we will study different aspects from this course, such as the level of appreciation of the essay form and the class adequacy. For the writing skills 1 courses, the maximum number of students allowed per class is seventeen participants. We also acknowledge that this number has been decided according to the student enrolled for the semester and this may vary from year to year.

The second course we are going to analyse is writing skills 2. This course aims to improve students' writing skills. As underlined before, this syllabus can vary according to the curriculum of the student. Since we are studying the structure only, we will mention the syllabus of these courses. Some of the writing skills 2 courses aim students to produce an English magazine. This course is aimed at students who want to take part in a real-life project producing an English-language magazine. LMU students will

be expected to learn how to research, draft, edit, write and proofread articles for publication, such as news articles, opinion pieces, interviews and reviews. Students will be also given the opportunity to design, layout, promote and advertise the magazine. However, there are other types of syllabus. Some of them want students to improve general writing skills in a range of common genres, for example: summaries, letters, emails and essays. The last example we are going to mention is different. It wants students to develop general writing skills by studying and practising the different genres that may appear in the *Textproduktion* exams (this would be the state exam we mentioned before). These include different essay types, comments, summaries, letters, and emails. Writing tasks will be given regularly, and there is a written exam at the end of the course. This last aspect is very important to highlight, since we discussed the importance and the role of assignments in chapter 1. As much as stated for each English language course at the LMU, students obtain 3 ECTS for passing this exam. Unlike the courses of section 3.2.1, there are no textbooks. Teachers will provide the materials the students need to go through the course. This means that teachers can decide, after monitoring students, what are the aspects they lack and where there is room for improvement. It is important to mention that students will practice on different text types. Therefore, we will study different aspects from this course, such as the level of appreciation of the essay form and the class adequacy. For the writing skills 2 courses, the maximum number of students allowed per class is twenty participants. We also acknowledge that this number has been decided according to the student enrolled for the semester and this may vary from year to year.

3.2.3 Speaking Skills

In this section, we will outline how the two courses, speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2 are shaped. It needs to be underlined that while the first course has the same syllabus for every LMU student, the second one is different. However, this is not according to the curriculum of the student, but rather up to them to choose the one they think they would benefit the most.

The speaking skills 1 course has a clear syllabus. This course aims to develop participants' broad communicative skills, as well as their ability to get involved in discussions, raise issues of importance, and give effective presentations. Students will be provided with the basic skills and relevant language needed. They will be able to communicate in various situations in English but also to deal with questions and discuss around the subject. The focus throughout the course will be on speaking and self-expression. As much as stated for each English language course at the LMU, students obtain 3 ECTS for passing this exam. Unlike the courses of section 3.2.1, there are no textbooks. Teachers will provide the materials student need through the course. This means that teachers can see and, after monitoring students, decide what are the aspects of speaking skills students need to improve. The final exam is marked. However, students will obtain a passed or failed feedback. We will study different aspects from this course, such as the level of appreciation of the essay form and the class adequacy. For the speaking skills 1 courses, the maximum number of students allowed per class is thirteen participants. We also acknowledge that this number has been decided according to the student enrolled for the semester and this may vary from year to year.

Unlike the first one, the speaking skills 2 courses have different syllabi. As stated before, LMU students can decide which class to attend. We are going to mention the syllabi of these courses. The first one, is for the speaking skills 2 course regarding business. The aim of the course is to develop understanding and speaking skills in typical business situations.

LMU students will learn how to express themselves fluently and spontaneously in a wide range of business and social contexts. The speaking skills 2 business course will look at realistic business situations to focus on relevant vocabulary and grammar. The main topics covered will be the language of interviews, meetings, negotiations, telephoning and presentations. Another syllabus we might want to mention is the one named discussion. The aim is to develop a number of oral discussion skills at an advanced level through interesting, current discussion topics and current affairs. Moreover, students should then be able to discuss on a higher level and use rhetorical devices different to those used in normal conversation. The last syllabus we are going to mention is the one named classroom. This course aims to improve the student's communicative competence in using spoken English specific to classroom situations. Its focus is on building the student's knowledge, skills and confidence in this particular area. The course is therefore especially useful for students training to become teachers. As much as stated for each English language course at the LMU, students obtain 3 ECTS for passing this exam. Unlike the courses of section 3.2.1, there are no textbooks. Teachers will provide the materials students need through the course. This means that teachers can see and, after monitoring students, decide what are the aspects of speaking skills students need to improve. The final exam is marked, unlike speaking skills 1 course. We will study different aspects from this course, such as the level of appreciation of the topics and the class adequacy. For the speaking skills 2 courses, the maximum number of students allowed per class is between fifteen and twenty participants. We also acknowledge that this number has been decided according to the student enrolled for the semester and this may vary from year to year.

3.2.4 Cultural Studies 1

For our research aim, we are not going to analyse this course in detail. We want to focus on the syllabus and later on understand how this course differs from a similar name with the one offered at Ca' Foscari, "società e culture di lingua inglese".

The course aims to provide a broad and general insight into the workings of some of the key institutions and political and social systems of the United Kingdom and the USA. Topics include, amongst others, politics, education, the people, the country etc. For this course, students are required to buy two books. The first textbook is based on British civilisation. It undergoes different aspects of the British culture, as mentioned in the syllabus. The second textbook is based on American civilisation. It undergoes different aspects of the American culture, as mentioned in the syllabus. For their final exam, LMU students are expected to study all the chapters assigned by their teachers. Their final exam will be based on the content studied. Since we learnt that at Ca' Foscari this course is about English literature, we wanted to learn from Ca' Foscari students if they would have rather appreciated the LMU syllabus for the course cultural studies 1. In chapter 4, we will analyse the data provided by Ca' Foscari students about this. Moreover, since we are discussing the syllabus only, we did not find it relevant to ask LMU students any questions about this course cultural studies 1.

To understand best the cultural studies 1 syllabus, we can mention the aims of the two textbooks LMU students are required to study for their exam. The first one underlines the tile of the book, British civilisations, stating that

> "The term British civilisation describes a developed society, which occupies a specific physical and constitutional space (the United Kingdom) [...] this book examines central structural features of British society, such as the political and governmental system, international relations, the law, the economy, social services, the media, education, religion, the country, the people, the arts, sport and leisure. This illustrates

> a history of cultural, institutional, geographical and human diversity, which still influences debates about identity and social change. The chapters include opinion polls and surveys which indicates the attitudes of British people to the conditions in which they live and operate today" (Oakland 2016: xvii)

While this first textbook provides several aspects of todays' United Kingdom, LMU students attending the course cultural studies 1 need to study a second book about American civilisation. This book undergoes the same aspects underlined from the previous textbook.

> "The Book combines descriptive and analytical approaches within a historical context and examines recent debate and developments in the USA. The format of the book is indeed to encourage students and teachers to decide their own study needs, to assess personal responses to American Society and to engage in critical discussion" (Mauk and Oakland 2018: xx).

Now that we outlined the structure of the English courses at LMU, we can conclude what follows. The program we discussed is credit system based. This means that by passing exams, students receive the credits they need. Moreover, we stated that the courses of English language are worth 3 ECTS each. For our research, we considered the productive skills speaking and writing, including lexis and grammar. We underlined how the structure of the language courses at LMU is. It is important to remember that students foster one skill at time for one course. This means that the structure of this program is defined by skill classes. By saying this, we also need to include that class sizes may vary according to the number of students enrolled for the semester. However, some limits are put on them. After having stressed this, we moved to the final part regarding their exams. After having analysed this, we briefly explained how each skill we are studying is tested. Before moving to the next chapter, we can conclude this study about the

LMU structure saying that the shape is now clear to us. Each class makes students practice on one single skill; either the teacher or a textbook provides the basic materials for class and students need to pass the exam in order to move to the next one of their module.

4. Data collection

In the previous chapters 1, 2 and 3, we have gone through the requirements for teaching English to adults and at universities, and the two universities' systems that are the object of our research. This fourth chapter will study and analyse the data we have collected. This part will start explaining the methods and the tools used to collect the data from students of both Munich and Venice universities. Here, will also outline the structure of the survey that was passed to the students to collect the answers we need for the purpose of this research. We will start outlining the survey for the students of the German university. The chapter 4.1 will guide us through the limits related to this study. The following chapter 4.2 will lead us to the detailed explanations and analysis of the questions of both surveys dividing them in two smaller sections. The chapter 4.3 will provide a proper analysis of the data supported by charts. The last chapter, 4.4 will compare the results between the two institutions.

The survey module for the students of the LMU has been divided in four main sections: writing skills, speaking skills, lexis, and grammar skills. The first two in question, writing and speaking skills, have a total of nine questions for writing and six for speaking.

As seen in chapter 3.2.2, writing skills courses at the LMU is divided in different modules, either it the name is followed by a number like those we just analysed i.e. one and two, or an 'advanced' or the like. For this research, we are taking into consideration the modules number one and number two. For each one of these, four questions have been asked to students regarding their opinion of being prepared adequately to the final exam, the quantity of written texts they were asked during the semester, their personal aim and purpose for the course and whether the materials provided by the teacher were adequate or not. After having answered the first four questions, the same four questions have been asked regarding their attendance for writing skills two, meaning a total of eight questions. At the end of the first section, a ninth enter was asked to LMU students that

consisted in providing their point of view regarding which one of the two modules they found the most interesting and, if possible, why. This is a very relevant question for our research: since the LMU offers two different syllabuses for the writing modules, many students can foster their writing skills based on the course's syllabus, which happens to be different from the other. The writing skills one course consists of an essay, whereas writing skills two needs the students to practice in other text forms such as article of journal, critical review to name a few based on their curriculum we explained in section 3.2.2. A further and much more detailed analysis of the chosen questions will be provided in the following sub-chapter 4.2.

Following the writing section, the survey asks LMU students about their opinion regarding the two courses of speaking skills. Unlike the previous section, the first five questions refer to both speaking skills one and speaking skills two courses. The sixth question asks them which one they found more interesting since speaking skills two does not differ from those of a different curriculum, i.e. *Lehramt* students. The first four questions ask students a feedback given from a number 1 to 5 where 1 is to be considered either as 'no' or as the lowest score, and 5 is either as 'yes' or as the highest score based on their perception on the course. As speaking activities are one of the most controversial topics for today's students and teacher's perception, the LMU participants were asked if speaking classes should mandatory or optional when it comes to their degree. Therefore, LMU students were given the chance to share their brief opinion providing us with a clearer point of view and to allow us to study their personal feedback.

In the fourth, and last section, LMU students are asked to answer a total of six questions, three each for the courses of grammar and lexis. Since these two courses both have the same structure, which is a reference book, a Moodle page with mandatory weekly quizzes a multiple-choice exam, it was not necessary to formulate different questions for each one in any particular other way. The reason for this is that we are studying the courses' structure in this research.

The population that participated in this survey is from the range we discussed in the first chapter, enrolled students of each university including all genders, above the age of 19. The population was selected through acquaintances and from online Facebook groups where only suitable participants, which have fulfilled the previous requirements to answer the survey, could access the survey. In addition to this, for the LMU survey, further help was provided from teachers of the institution who shared the survey with their students. Since the aim of this research is to have a clear feedback from each university's structure, there were no compulsory questions. However, in the last section for Ca' Foscari's survey regarding lexis and the 'Società e culture di lingua inglese' course, the first three questions about lexis were mandatory and the one for 'Società e culture di lingua inglese' was optional. This last question was reserved to those who attended the course or sat the exam. Despite the headline and although it was made clear in the survey that just students who attended the course or, again, sat the exam., few students answered that they did not attend the course. This will not influence our analysis because these entries will not be considered.

Moving forward to the study of Ca' Foscari, the survey has been divided into four sections like the LMU survey. However, in the Ca' Foscari's survey, writing, speaking, grammar and lexis are not labelled, since this institution does not split them in modules, but are activities to be present in each academic year and final exam. Every section studies the student's feedback their preparation for the exam and, therefore, whether their preparation was adequate or not.

First, regarding writing, six questions have been asked concerning student's perception and preparation on both skill and final exam. After the questions regarding their overall experience, this section of the survey investigates the variety of the written texts they were asked to prepare and perform during the exam. These are then to be compared to the LMU ones since their courses offer a different syllabus per module. Therefore, in order to study what mentioned above, students were asked if they wished for other

forms of texts they would have liked to practice on, and since they were provided an open-answer question, we were able to compare and collect the result that we discus in the following sub-sections.

The second section of Ca' Foscari's survey begins asking general questions about student's perception regarding speaking activities. In addition to this, we are interested in knowing from them if the number of students in their class was adequate to practice, since we know the LMU allows a very small limited number of participants for each class. At Ca' Foscari the oral exam has been optional and not technically marked but rather kept as a bonus for the final mark. Students were asked if they have been prepared adequately for this task from a scale of one to five and if their speaking skills were put under practice during the CEL hours. Lastly, students were asked questions regarding the frequency and mandatory aspects of speaking at Ca' Foscari.

The last two sections, grammar and lexis simply investigate the effectiveness on these two skills based on student's feedback and if they wished for anything different. It must be noted that students were asked one general question in the lexis section about the exam 'Società e culture di lingua inglese' regarding their expectation on the syllabus whether they were expecting this to be a course on English literature or something different. Here, they were given three options; the first choice was about the actual syllabus, literature, and the second one was on the syllabus of what the LMU teaches as Cultural Studies 1. Furthermore, they had a third option where they were given the chance to write their own opinion. In these entries, we are considering if the answer 'literature' has a significant number of entries or not, and if students wished for a different syllabus instead of the current one.

The next following sections will outline the limits of the analysis and the two surveys. The chapter 4.2 will go in details with the question of the survey that have been distributed to students of both Ca' Foscari and LMU. Each question will be analysed singularly and according to our research. We will provide an estimate of the expectations we have for the

results. Following this, we will collect the data from the surveys and discuss the results in section 4.3. In this last-mentioned section, there are going to be visual representations of the data collected. This will help us highlight the aspects that are relevant for our research. However, means and percentages will still be discussed and compared to what our expectations for the questions were in chapter 4.2. This chapter will be at last closed by the section 4.4. This section will compare the results from the two institutions and discuss in what they differ. Moreover, we will discuss those aspects according to the entries of students of each institution. We need this section to highlight what differs from these two universities and from students' perception where these structures do not meet their expectations.

4.1 Limits of the study

The aim of this research, as underlined in the previous chapters, is to define what are the main structures behind these two universities, Ca' Foscari and LMU, by describing how the English language courses are distributed throughout the academic path of the student. In support to this, we will be helped by the two surveys that have been distributed to the students, in order to have a direct and clear feedback from their efficiency.

In this study, we are basing our analysis and data from students only on some aspects of their experience. They have been asked questions on productive outcomes, such as writing, speaking, grammar and lexis. Even though we know that there are other skills that could have been take into consideration, i.e. reading and listening, the choice made is to focus on those skills where students themselves can see the improvement the best, or where it lacks. The surveys have been divided into sections, not only to make clearer to students what the questions were about, but also for us to study the institutions' structure the best.

We have to expect that, although we shaped both surveys on a similar structure, these cannot ask students of a different institution the same question, but these had to be adapted correspondingly to each institution's structure differing in some aspects from one another to obtain the clearest feedback without any influence on the other study. Some of these aspects are indeed regarding the final exam. Since the LMU has semester-based courses individually distributed throughout the academic years, one student can focus on just one skill per course, on a basis of two or three classes to attend per semester. Unlike Ca' Foscari, the LMU student's perception of the final exam differs from the other institution, where the LMU student feedback regarding the exam are strictly direct only to that, whereas the Ca' Foscari students opinion on the exam cannot be argued on just one skill, since their exam is year-based, and includes all the skills practiced in one academic year. Moreover, in order to fill in the survey, students at Ca' Foscari only were required to have attended one academic year or be in their

first one. This would not affect our research, since we are studying the structure of the courses, and not the variety or quality.

Another aspect must be taken into consideration regarding the LMU survey. This is the variety of courses offered. After having discussed the structure of the English courses of the LMU, we know for a fact that their studies and courses are spread based on the skills through their years. This being noted, we need to expect that out of 100 entries, we cannot take for granted that we will find 100 entries in every question. Some of the students might have not attended some courses on the survey and we might find some discrepancy on the number of entries regarding the questions. However, since we will see in the following sub-chapters that the LMU survey's entries are all converted to similar feedback, both quantitative and qualitative, we are able to take these results to discuss our research.

The last aspect we want to stress is about the population. For this research, we have only asked students' feedback. We did not ask teachers or other institutions' members to provide us their opinion. We need to underline that this research is strictly student-feedback based. Had we taken into consideration other members of the teaching system, we would have had to shape different surveys, different questions, and outline different theories. That is why, this research and its data is based on students' perception only.

The next following sections will provide a detailed analysis of the two surveys. By doing so, we will understand how the survey's questions have been thought and formulated to students, and what each one of these is relevant to our research. The 4.2.1 chapter will go in details with the question of the survey that have been distributed to students of the LMU. Following this, the chapter 4.2.2 will study the questions that have been distributed to students of Ca' Foscari.

4.2 Understanding the questions

In the previous chapters 2 and 3, we observed how Ca' Foscari and LMU universities structured their English language courses during student's academic career. In the chapter 4 and subchapter 4.1 we learnt how we based our surveys according to the two institutions, LMU and Ca' Foscari, to collect student's feedback from each university. In this sub-section we will study each question on both surveys individually. Each question had been thought for a specific purpose and aspect of this research. We will point out which are the aspects we are investing from each question, and what feedback we expect from those. However, it needs to be underlined that we might find other aspects from student's feedback that could lead to secondary aspects after the structure of the courses at the institutions we are analysing. Despite this, for the interest of our research, we will stick to the aspects about the structure of teaching English in higher education and will not got into detail about the others.

In the next subchapters 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, we will analyse the surveys that ware given to LMU and Ca' Foscari students. As we learnt from chapter 4 and 4.1, the surveys are divided into four main sections; each one according to the courses that we are going to analyse and are object of our research. We will understand what the survey wants to study from student's feedback and what are the answers we expect according to them. Furthermore, since we have both quantitative and qualitative feedback, we will provide means and percentages for each question that will be supported by charts in the section 4.3.

4.2.1 The survey on the LMU

In the first part of the survey, LMU students are asked four questions about regarding the course of writing skills 1. The first question asks students if they were prepared adequately for their final exam based on the number of hours spent during the academic semester. In brackets, we will see the word *Klausur* written and it was important to be written next to the word 'exam' since at the LMU there is a fair difference in the word's exam and *Klausur*. In fact, *Klausur* is used for all the *Übungen* (practice courses) like writing skills. Whereas the word 'exam' is intended as for seminars, and theoretical courses. It has been written on the survey not to confuse the LMU students about the course and avoid any ambiguity. Being that LMU students who answered have attended the courses and sat the exam, we expect a good percentage of students answering positively to this question. Moreover, LMU students must attend these courses during the semester, and attendance is always checked from the teacher. This means that we can rely on student's feedback, since they must have attended the course in its integrity. In addition to this, since the courses focus on one skill at a time, we expect that LMU students have been provided a good preparation for their *Klausur*, including a good amount of written texts to make them practice even deeper. We also need to underline that during this writing skills 1 course, students practiced this skill for the whole academic semester. Furthermore, they have been provided regular feedback and materials, such as grammar, text organisation, etc. by their mother-tongue teacher. In this question, we are studying if they think they are satisfied with their preparation according to the number of hours spent on the course. In fact, our second questions ask them to provide an approximate number of the amount of texts they wrote during the semester. This allows us to study and assume whether teachers had time for correcting their assignments on a regular basis. This aspect is not to be given for granted, since it would provide us an indirect feedback of the adequacy of the number of students in the class. Had the teacher had an adequate number of students, as mentioned before, we assume that during one academic semester students

have been asked for at least three assignments from their teacher. We would analyse in the section 4.3 if the data collected from LMU students satisfies our hypothesis.

Moving forward to the third question, the survey studies the LMU syllabus of the course writing skills 1. As we learnt from the second chapter, the LMU English students must attend writing skills 1, and all the classes need students to write an essay. As much as essays are important in academic writing, we will see in the further analysis that students find other text types relevant for their career too. That is why we expect to find controversial feedback from this question. Students might find the essay (a text type) helpful or useless to reach their personal aim. We refer to 'personal aim' as students' reason to study English. It is very relevant to remember that students at the LMU are asked to provide written materials for their seminars in the form of presentations, handouts, and *Hausarbeiten* in English as well. Therefore, we can expect that, despite their personal aim, some LMU students considered this written skills requirement for seminars mentioned above quite important and relevant. Given that we said we would find a controversial amount of answers, we can now say that from a scale from 1 to 5, we expect an average of at least 3.00 to prove our research goal.

The fourth question studies a different aspect of the writing skills 1 course at the LMU; the materials provided during the course. As we learnt in chapter 3, students do not have a textbook of any kind for this course. However, teachers provide LMU students materials in the form of handouts, pdf or digital regarding text organisation, grammar, syntax, and everything that makes student's writing skills improve, according to the final exam. In this way, LMU students practice every week both during class hours and at home on their own. This chance of providing students materials made by teachers, allows each educator to adapt those notions that students need for the final exam. As a result, each teacher provides materials that have been personalised for their course and participants. In this way, students can study and practice from authentic materials created exclusively for their skill to reach the needed level. During the academic semester, teachers can

monitor where students lack and where they need to improve their writing skills. In fact, as mentioned above, the materials provided will focus on making LMU students practice in those aspects where they lack the most, according to what the teacher monitors during the course. For this question, we are expecting positive feedback from LMU students. Having the chance to focus on one skill, for an entire semester, all supported with a mother-tongue teacher that provides materials every lesson, should collect enough positive feedback for students.

We need to remember that the course of writing skills 1 offers the same syllabus for all LMU students, and since it is mandatory, some students might not be interested in the syllabus or in its usefulness. That is why, the next four questions, regarding the course writing skills 2, have been formulated like the writing skills 1 ones we just analysed. It is important to mention that the syllabus of the writing skills 2 course differs according to LMU student's curriculum. For instance, students of the bachelor program have a different syllabus of those who choose *Lehramt*. For the purpose of this research, this means that we should see a much more appreciated feedback mean for writing skills 2 when compared to writing skills 1.

The next four question will study LMU student's feedback on the course writing skills 2. As we learnt from chapter 3, this course makes LMU students practice on different varieties of texts. This course is also mandatory like writing skills 1 and has a final exam (*Klausur*) at the end of the semester. They will sit the exam with the mother-tongue teacher who conducted the class during the semester. Similar to the writing skills 1 course, in writing skills 2 the teacher can provide students materials like handouts, pdf etc to practice during the semester. Therefore, an official textbook is not required. For the final exam, students are required to write two different kind of texts: a long one, and a short one. Unlike writing skills 1, writing skills 2 has different text forms to offer to participants based on their curriculum. As a matter of fact, LMU students might find the writing skills 2 syllabus more interesting or more beneficial for their purposes of

studying English at the university. We will analyse what we expect from the four questions about the course writing skills 2 to LMU students based on their institution's teaching system according to our research.

In the first question, we ask LMU students if they have been prepared adequately for the final exam of writing skills 2. As we studied for writing skills 1, we are expecting the same good percentage of students to be satisfied with it. That is because, as much as writing skills 1, the number of hours spent weekly for writing skills 1 is the same of writing skills 2. Since students have been practicing in writing different kinds of text, the number of hours they practiced on writing during the semester should be yet enough for them to be satisfied with the structure of this course. Being that LMU students had had to choose from yes, no, and not enough, we expect a high percentage from all the reasons above of at least 70%.

In the second question regarding the course writing skills 2, we asked LMU students how many assignments they wrote during one semester. They could give an approximate number according to how many they remember writing during this course. Here we estimate students to enter an average between 3 and 4 assignments. Timewise it would be an average of one written assignment for home around every 3 weeks. In this way, we can assume that a teacher spends an average of three lessons preparing students for new assignments, and after at least two lessons, students are asked to hand in their home assignment. It would also be interesting to ask how much time the teacher needs to give the assignments back to students. This would provide an interesting perspective about the capacity of students allowed in LMU classes. In addition to this, we could ask how LMU student's assignments are evaluated during the semester in contrast with their final mark on the *Klausur*. This question could detect if LMU students perform differently during assignments at home and during the final exam. However, since we are exploring the LMU English courses' structure, the survey did not ask LMU students to provide this information.

The third question investigates in student's personal aim for studying English at the LMU university, and if the syllabus of the course

writing skills 2 helped them to reach it. This time, we expect a different result in comparison to what we expected from writing skills 1. Since writing skills 2 courses have a dedicated syllabus for LMU students of different curriculum, students are practicing on different type of texts. That is why students of *Lehramt* will practice on a different text type which will differ from those for the Bachelor students. This variety of text should be found very interesting for LMU students, because it should speak for their interest on their curriculum. Therefore, this should make LMU student's satisfaction very high since the syllabus inclines to their personal aim. Given these facts, we expect that the average of LMU students for reaching their personal aim after this course would be over the average mean. LMU students were asked to provide a number between 1 and 5 where 1 stands for 'no' (as in not satisfied) and 5 stands for 'yes' (as in very satisfied). The mean we are expecting should be more than 3.00 to prove the efficiency of the LMU structure of English courses.

The last question on the writing skills 2 at the LMU asks student if they were satisfied with the materials, PDFs, handouts etc. provided by the teacher during the academic semester. As we stated in the question regarding writing skills 1, there is no textbook for writing skills 2 either; teachers provide student's materials, which have been created by themselves. Therefore, every material given to students will help fostering their writing skills the best way possible helping them class. For instance, understanding the different text types, practicing on focused grammar topics and improve in what they lack. By monitoring the LMU students with a weekly class, teachers can see in what students are doing well, and where there is room for improvement. Teachers learn where their students have difficulties and where they need help. They can create dedicated materials and make students practice on what they think they will benefit the most. Being that these materials are created for the only purpose of succeeding in this course and in these specific text types, we expect students to find their supplies useful for the entire course. In terms of data collection, LMU students could enter one out of the three choices, yes, no, and not enough. The pie chart will be provided according to the percentages and we expect

at least 60% of LMU to answer yes. This means that the majority of LMU students would find their materials helpful. By reaching this percentage, we can prove our thesis. On the other hand, some of them might think that the materials were not useful, or not enough. According to the percentage mentioned above, we could expect that 20% said no, and the rest 20% said not enough. However, it needs to be underlined that even though 20% of LMU students answered, 'not enough', this tells us that they were not completely satisfied with the materials to say yes, yet not so displeased to say no.

The ninth question is more of a qualitative question, rather than quantitative unlike those we previous studied. This last question for the writing skills courses at the LMU asks student to compare those two writing skills courses, 1 and 2, and in form of an open question, tell us which one they found more interesting and why. This is a very crucial question to focus on for this research. Since we are also comparing the variety of texts offered from the LMU and Ca' Foscari, according to student's point of view and personal aim, they will tell us which syllabus, between writing skills 1 and 2 they found more interesting according to their aim. In this way, we can study and deduce whether LMU students find a variety of academic texts more helpful rather the classic academic essay. Since students might have different ideas of career in their mind after their degree, we expect that most students will find that the syllabus of writing skills 2 was more useful to them than the writing skills 1. As a matter of fact, after having considered all the aspects mentioned above, we expect that 70% of LMU students expressed their favouritism towards writing skills 2. The answer to this question was not a closed one because we wanted LMU students to be motivated in their answer. Allowing us to study their opinion in detail, we will pick few of the most interesting answers and argue them to support our research as in why they found a course more interesting rather than the other one. However, since different aspects will emerge from this question, we will study only those ones regarding the LMU structure of English language courses.

The second section of the survey studies LMU student's feedback regarding the classes of speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2. These courses are mandatory for every English student at the LMU to foster their speaking skills on different topics. Speaking skills 1 helps students improving their speaking skills on giving presentations. As recalled in the previous chapter 3, LMU seminars always require students to choose a topic of the seminar and present it to the whole class. Although presentations are mandatory for seminars, they do not play any role in the final evaluation. However, presentations help students to get into the seminar with an active participation. That is why speaking skills 1 classes make students practice on how to give a presentation, focused on academic's style. Even though the topic of the speaking skills 1 exam is chosen by the LMU student and only after agreed by the teacher, speaking skills 1 does not evaluate how good the chosen topic was, but rather how language, fluency, preparation, and pronunciation are performed by the student. For this course, there is no textbook; the teacher provides the outline of the course and the materials every class. Furthermore, teachers ask LMU students to simulate an exam task in front of the class. This allows students to focus on what they need to practice and improve both from feedback of the teacher and of the other participants in the course. This syllabus is mandatory for every LMU English student and must be passed successfully before being allowed to attend the course speaking skills 2. While speaking skills 1 only teaches students how to give presentations, speaking skills 2 focuses on different topics; it can either focus on discussion, classroom, or business, according to the student's curriculum. However, unlike writing skills 2, it is not mandatory for each LMU student's curriculum to pick the class that was designed for them, but rather what they believe is the one they would benefit from the most.

This section of the survey has a total of six questions. Since we are studying the structure at the LMU and the speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2 courses present the same structure, the first five questions of the survey are based on both speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2 classes without distinguish them in any particular way. That is why, even if an LMU

student only attended speaking skills 1, they had enough knowledge of the course to be able to answer the first five questions. Only the sixth question asks students to compare these two courses, picking up the one they found the most interesting. In fact, we will expect to have less entries on this question, since some students might have not attended speaking skills 2 yet.

The first question asks LMU students if the number of students in their class during the academic semester was adequate to practice their speaking skills. Since the LMU only allows a limited number of students, between 15 and 20, per speaking skill class, we expect that students did not find the classes crowded. In fact, we believe that they were able to practice their skills enough and be satisfied with this aspect of the teaching system of their institution. LMU students were asked to provide a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is for 'no' or 'negative', and 5 is for 'yes' or 'positive'. Even though it might be a bit hazardous, given the facts mentioned above, we expect a very good mean of satisfaction from student's perception. We estimate that a good number of entries will be around 3, therefore, we can prove our thesis with an average of 3.5 or more according to student's point of view.

The second question about the speaking skills courses at the LMU asks students if their teacher had the chance to listen to them regularly or, at least, often enough. For LMU students to be satisfied with it, the institution probably needs to have a restricted number of participants to the course during the semester. Therefore, if we had a positive feedback from the question before, we could expect a positive feedback from this one too. By comparing these two results, we can assume what follows: if this question has a lower mean compared to the first one, than we can assume that the teacher did not listen to them enough, although the conditions during the course were favourable. On the contrary, if this question has a higher mean compared to the first one, than we can assume that the teacher had the chance to listen to them enough, since the conditions during the course were favourable.

The third question is only based on LMU student's perception of the speaking skills courses. They were asked if they felt prepared adequately for the exam. In this case, many factors play an important role, such as their previous preparation, their cooperation during the semester, the approach of the teacher, the materials etc. However, since we are studying the structure of the LMU English courses, it is not as simple as the other feedback to be applied to our research. Instead, we will consider the answers from this question as an overall grade of satisfaction and effectiveness of both syllabus and teaching methods of the course. Being that we are studying a higher education system, we still expect students to be a bit more satisfied than the average mean of 3.00. Therefore, every mean higher than 3.50 will prove our thesis research.

The fourth question about the speaking skills courses at the LMU asks students how many times the teacher made them practice for the exam. This is a crucial question for the aim of this research. All the conditions mentioned in the previous questions, i.e. the number of students in one class, the chance of the teacher to listen to students etc, are very important for student's perception of effectiveness. In addition to these, for students to face confidently the final exam, a good preparation for the exam format must be done during the semester. As much as it is important for students to foster their skills, university students will be graded on their performance during the exam. That is why, students are favourable to practice during the semester to feel confident in their new skills. Here we expect that, during an academic semester at the LMU, students have been asked to practice exclusively for the exam at least two times. Of course, the more the better. For this question students could write the number of times the teacher made them practice for the exam, leading us to an expectation of a mean of 2.5 or higher. Any mean of 2.5 or higher will prove that the teacher had the time not only to foster student's speaking skills, according to their grade of satisfaction, but also to make them practice looking forward to their final exam. This would make students feel that not only did they improve for the final exam, but also for their speaking skills overall.

The last two questions regarding speaking skills courses at the LMU ask students if they think that speaking classes should be mandatory, and, for those who attended both of them, which one between speaking skills 1 and 2 they found more relevant. In the subchapter 4.2 we will study the results, expecting students of the LMU answering at least 70% of mandatory. Since they must give presentations during seminars and speaking skills courses are mandatory in their institution, we can confidently say that the majority will not answer that speaking skills classes should be optional. Instead, even if it is not what they need, they should find speaking skills 1 course helpful for their lectures and seminars. Asking them which one they found more interesting, will be needed in the comparative analysis once we argue the Ca' Foscari system.

The last two sections of the LMU survey study the courses of core skill grammar and core skill lexis. The structure of these courses is the same. They both consist in a multiple-choice test made of 100 questions and the same number of hours during the semester. They both have a main textbook and a weekly Moodle test to do to be able to access the exam. Since the two courses have the same structure but a different topic, the survey asks the same three questions twice for each course.

The first question asks students if having to do online tests on Moodle was a good approach to practice and kept exercised. Every student must fulfil all the online tests on Moodle, regardless the result, in order to sit the exam. Every week the test format is like the actual exam; not only does this mean that students get to practice on the skills they acquired that week, but also on authentic materials for the exam. This is a very good strategy to keep students trained and make them practice constantly on the topics of both grammar and lexis. Therefore, we expect that at least 70% of students found this approach very helpful. However, although students had the chance to click on given answers; yes, no, and not enough, the survey gave them the chance to type an open answer. Since we will compare the study on the LMU with the one of Ca' Foscari, where the Moodle tests do not exist, we want to investigate on LMU student's feedback for this

question. That is, we can deduce if a Moodle test is helpful for students, according to their opinion.

The second question for both grammar and lexis courses at the LMU asked students whether they wished for these courses to be just one semester long, or they wished for more. Like the previous question, students had the chance to click on given answers; more lectures, just one is fine or type an open answer. As much as concluded in the previous question, this aspect is different from how the system of Ca' Foscari. This last institution provides grammar and lexis topics to their students spread out during all the academic years. Therefore, we wanted to study the answers of LMU students who did not choose one of the answers provided by the survey alone.

The last question for both grammar and lexis courses at the LMU asked students whether enough grammar/lexis topics were covered for their level of English grammar/lexis competences. Being that students were only given 3 possible answers; yes, no, not enough, we expect that at least 60% of them answered positively to this question. We need to remember that further grammar and lexis topics are also covered during speaking and writing skills classes, but their opinion was asked exclusively on core skill grammar and core skill lexis. Since we are studying the system of the LMU and Ca' Foscari, this is a very important remark to be stressed when we will analyse the data.

4.2.2 The survey on Ca' Foscari

In the first part of the survey, Ca' Foscari students are asked six questions regarding writing activities during their academic year. This includes the preparation provided by the teachers, the assignments they were asked to provide and the variety of texts they practiced on. We will study each question in detail and provide an estimate of the results we expect from section 4.3.

The first question asks Ca' Foscari students the preparation they believe that based on their experience they have been prepared adequately for writing tasks. Since teachers do not focus on one skill during each class, we can assume that at least every two weeks they go through the syllabus and make students practice on this skill. As much as every skill needs to be practiced, writing skills are fundamental in student's basic skills and we expect that a certain attention is paid to them. This means that during a three-hour class, teachers do have the time for making students practice these important skills. Furthermore, the final exam takes place at the end of the academic year, leaving Ca' Foscari students a good amount of time to practice on them. In this question, we expect Ca' Foscari to be satisfied with their preparation. This means that, at least 50% of them thinks that they have been prepared adequately for the final exam.

In the second question, we ask Ca' Foscari students how many assignments they have been asked to hand in to their teachers during the academic year. It is important to underline that students found this section only asking question regarding writing tasks. In fact, the survey stresses that only completed assignments focused on the final exam were asked to be written as answer. Furthermore, even though the survey was formulated in Italian, we put the word 'writing' in English so that they could not misinterpret what the question was about. However, some Ca' Foscari students missed what the question was asking and provided unrealistic entries. For the survey to conduct the feedback without any discrepancy, we choose not to take into consideration those entries which tasks were more

than 10. This is a very crucial question for this research; this allows us to argue indirectly if the number of Ca' Foscari students in class was adequate for them to hand in regular assignments. In an overcrowded class, teachers would not find the time to collect assignments on a regular basis. For these reasons, we expect that students answered with an average of 6 to 7 assignments a year finding a mean of 6.5 in the chart.

The third question of the writing section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students asks them if they felt they were prepared adequately for the final exam. Unlike the first question, this one investigates their own opinion of the structure of the courses. Even though they might have answered positively to the first question, they might think that the time to them dedicated was not enough for them to foster their writing skills or to succeed in the exam. With this question we want to highlight if they believe that their institution's system does provide what they expect. As a matter of fact, a student might think that they have been practiced enough for the final exam, yet that they would have needed more preparation about this skill rather than other ones. Ca' Foscari students were asked to enter one of the given answers; yes, no, not enough. By doing so, we will be able to detect their satisfaction and individual perception of the time distributed through the academic year for this skill. Being the time for writing skills up to the teachers, we cannot clearly set an expectation for this answer. However, we would consider the system efficient if we could reach at least a 50% of entries with yes.

The fourth question about English courses on the focus on writing at Ca' Foscari investigates a new aspect; the variety of texts. As much as we believe that essays are an important text type, we wanted to study if students were satisfied with the variety of texts they have been asked to practice on. When studying English at a higher education institution, we can argue that there are different reasons leading students to this choice. In fact, while some would like to be teachers, some others might want to become journalists, or dedicate their career into international politics. This question is only needed to grade Ca' Foscari students' level of satisfaction when it

comes to the variety of texts offered to them. Given the different reasons of enrolling into university, and the variety Ca' Foscari offers to the English courses syllabus, we cannot expect a positive feedback from this question. Ca' Foscari students were asked to provide their level of satisfaction with a number from 1 to 5, where 1 means low, and 5 means high. We expect than a neutral level of satisfaction should be around 3 meaning that anything lower will be considered unsatisfactory, and anything higher will be considered satisfactory. The results will be argued in the chapter 4.3 grading their satisfaction according to the mean and the entries.

The fifth question helps us understand better what we analysed in the previous one. This question asks Ca' Foscari students if they had wished they had practiced on different text types. In form of an open question, students could enter the type of texts they wished. Being the variety of texts an important aspect of English courses, we might expect the entries close to the level of satisfaction just mentioned in the fourth question. However, if students entered a different text type, and these entries are far different than essay, we could argue that they wished for more variety. This would also imply that the previous question would not be strongly arguable for this research. This is only because of the formulation of the questions. Being an open answered one, Ca' Foscari can type what they think openly. This could lead us to a better conclusion of the variety of texts Ca' Foscari students think they should be practice on.

The last question about writing skills still focuses on the variety of these texts. Ca' Foscari students could choose between given options of text types that are chosen for the course of writing skills 2 at the LMU. The aim behind this question is to compare the syllabus of the course of writing skills 2 at the LMU and the one offered by Ca' Foscari throughout the whole academic career of their students. They were in fact provided four main text types that the writing skills 2 course offers to the LMU students, and the choice of 'no' in case Ca' Foscari students were satisfied with it. We will take into consideration all the entries as percentages. For Ca' Foscari

students to be satisfied with the variety of text types their institution offers, we would need to have a percentage of 'no' entries of at least 50%.

The second section of the survey passed to Ca' Foscari students investigates student's perspective and feedback about the structure of speaking activities both during classes and regarding the final exam. As a matter of fact, the textbook used during classes has speaking activities included in it, it is up to teachers to make students practice. Over the past years, speaking has never been a mandatory task for the final exam. This being considered, we cannot expect that Ca' Foscari students were asked to practice on speaking activities regularly. However, in the last few years, Ca' Foscari English teaching system introduced the opportunity for their students to sit a speaking part for the final exam. Yet, this skill is not graded like writing, reading or others. In fact, teachers can assign up to 3 points to the student, which will be added to their final exam mark, only if reaching the bare minimum of 18/30. The speaking evaluation happens at the end of the academic year. Thus, we expect students to have had plenty of time to foster this skill and to be prepared for their evaluation.

The first question regarding speaking activities at Ca' Foscari will focus on the feedback of students about the adequacy of the class. We asked students if the number of participants during their class was adequate for them to practice speaking activities, according to their own perception. Being that the attendance of classes is not mandatory to sit the final exam, we might expect less entries than the total of entries we collected. However, since it is specified that to fill the survey Ca' Foscari students are required to have attended at least one year of English language courses. From this question, we expect an average mean of 3.00 meaning that students have a neutral opinion. Being that classes at Ca' Foscari are not divided by number of students, we can expect than some of the feedback come from students that found their classes overcrowded. Students were asked to provide a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is for 'low' or 'negative', and 5 is for 'high' or 'positive'. We would consider any result less than 2.5 as not satisfied, or higher than 3.5 as satisfied.

The second question investigates the speaking activities at Ca' Foscari on the same aspect, but from a different perspective. In this question, we want a feedback from Ca' Foscari students regarding if their teacher had the chance to listened to them regularly. Since the textbook includes speaking activities in every module, we expect that teachers make their students practice on them too. However, given the role of the speaking task for the final exam and the number of students in each class, we might expect that teachers did not listened to them as much as Ca' Foscari wished for. In fact, from this question, we expect an average answer slightly less than 3.00. Therefore, having a mean less than 2.8 will prove our thesis research.

In the third question, Ca' Foscari students are asked a further perspective about the speaking tasks at their institution. In this case, the survey asked if they had been prepared adequately for the speaking part that will affect their final exam mark. As analysed before, being that speaking does not play such an important role for the final exam, we expect that teachers did not pay enough amount of time to prepare students for this task. We assume that they had rather dedicated more time to other tasks which are evaluated on the final exam at the end of the academic year. For this question, we cannot expect a high level of satisfaction from this aspect of speaking. Therefore, we might assume that the average mean will be around 2.5 and considering readapting our hypothesis only if the mean goes up by 0.3 for a total of 2.8 mean.

The fourth question asks Ca' Foscari students to quantify approximately how many speaking activities they have been asked to practice in class. Not only does this gives us a feedback about the amount of time teachers dedicated to these activities, but also the importance that this skill has been given. In fact, if teachers made students practice on speaking, we can assume that they made Ca' Foscari students practice on it, regardless if for the exam or not. This means that students foster their skills but did not get a proper preparation for the speaking exam. Nonetheless, a high number of speaking tasks during class versus a low mean for the

speaking exam preparation make us conclude that the preparation Ca' Foscari students had been provided was not enough according to their perception. To collect more opinions possible, Ca' Foscari students had the chance to enter a short sentence (qualitative feedback) or number (quantitative feedback). In this way, we will analyse some of the feedback in form of sentences regarding the structure of the English language courses at Ca' Foscari regarding the speaking aspects. Furthermore, we will try to provide a mean for the numbers provided by students. However, as far for this question, we cannot estimate any final mean due to the given answers being both qualitative and quantitative. That is why, we will argue a proper discussion when we will collect all the feedback.

The fifth question of the speaking section for Ca' Foscari students investigate the effectiveness of the speaking activities during the English language classes. For this question, we need to underline few aspects that play a major role, the textbook and student's engagement. As far as analysed, teachers move from unit to unit with different topics, starting from the first one at the beginning of the academic year, till the last one by the end of it. In fact, every unit in the book provides different tasks such as reading, speaking, grammar etc. We therefore expect that for each unit Ca' Foscari students have been asked to practice their speaking skills regardless the importance given for the final exam. Consequently, we expect that these speaking activities have helped them improve their speaking skills. We might assume that at least three small speaking activities during a three-hour class would be asked to Ca' Foscari students to practice on. The second aspect we need to discuss before analysing the data is Ca' Foscari student's engagement. Although this aspect can be included in every fragment of our research, we want to believe that students are always engaged in the class they attended. However, for speaking tasks, we need to point out that students might not feel comfortable or cooperative. Consequently, if Ca' Foscari students do not participate actively during the speaking activities, the effectiveness of the speaking tasks decreases. This aspect could influence our results on the negative side. Nonetheless, considering that the

textbook provides speaking tasks, we might expect at least a neutral result from this question with a mean of 3.00.

The sixth question of the survey for Ca' Foscari students regarding the speaking aspects of English language courses at their institution wants them to provide a feedback regarding the regularity of speaking activities in class. The question starts taking for granted that their speaking skills improved throughout their English language courses, regardless the year they are attending. That is why, according to the year Ca' Foscari students are attending, the difficulty of each task increases. Being the speaking part for the final exam not mandatory, we do not expect that teachers made enough speaking activities as Ca' Foscari students wished for. However, being their presence in the units of the textbook, we still expect a sufficient number of tasks that made Ca' Foscari students practice. That is why, we want them to provide us a feedback about speaking tasks regularity during classes. The survey did not ask a multiple choice to enter, but rather a short sentence. It is up to Ca' Foscari students to provide either numbers, therefore quantitative answers, or words, qualitative answer. By doing so, we are able to collect their brief opinion and analyse it in section 4.3 with all the results. We will pick few arguable answers that are this research goal. Furthermore, we will try to classify the feedback in with a 'yes', 'no' and 'indifferent' enter, in order to provide all these opinions in form of a chart.

The eighth question wants to provide a further graphical representation and implementation of the mentioned above opinions, by asking Ca' Foscari students a closed-enter question. The question asks Ca' Foscari students if they believe that speaking should be mandatory in their institution. The three options given to students are 'mandatory', 'optional', 'indifferent/not relevant'. In this way, we will be able to provide a pie chart which would best represent this feedback graphically. Assuming that Ca' Foscari students answered positively to the previous question, we expect that Ca' Foscari students find speaking tasks taught at their institution should be mandatory. That said, we do expect at least 75% of entries for 'mandatory' in the pie chart to strongly prove our thesis research.

The third section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students investigates student's perspective and feedback about the structure of grammar activities both during classes and regarding the final exam. Grammar lessons are spread throughout the academic year and are taught from teachers during the English language course *lettorato*. It is important to point out that Ca' Foscari students practice on the textbook during the whole year. This book has a dedicated grammar topic each unit. It explains a new topic followed by exercises. In addition to this, teachers can provide extra materials for Ca' Foscari students to make them practice on these topics. This choice is up to each teacher and it is not mandatory for them to provide more than what is provided in the book. However, if students find some topics more difficult or the exercises are not enough, we will expect that teachers would be open to spend more time on these aspects. On top of this, grammar is an important task of the final exam. That is why we expect that teachers and Ca' Foscari students spent quite a good amount of time on grammar topics. Consequently, Ca' Foscari students' feedback should be very positive on these aspects. As a result, the Ca' Foscari survey investigates all these aspects in five questions that have been passed on the institution's students.

The first question of the grammar section for Ca' Foscari students ask them if timewise, grammar has been practiced throughout the whole year equally, sporadically, just close to the exam finals or it has not been covered enough. The most important aspect to remember for this question is that the English language courses at Ca' Foscari have a textbook. As we analysed in chapter 2, this textbook is divided in different units. Each unit has grammar topics that need to be covered to fulfil the preparation the book wants to provide. However, it is up to the teachers how to teach these topics, either following the order of the book, or by implementing it with extra materials. Yet, by following the textbook structure, every topic must be covered for good regularly during the academic year. For these reasons we expect that Ca' Foscari students have been given regular grammar lessons and tasks during the academic year. However, we need to take into consideration another aspect. If the teacher thinks that the class understands grammar topics fast, we will expect that grammar tasks have been present

through the year sporadically. We therefore expect that at least 60% of them answered that grammar has been practiced regularly. For an overall feedback to be considered positive, we then expect that 80% of Ca' Foscari students answered that grammar has been present through the academic year both sporadically and regularly.

The second question of the grammar tasks at Ca' Foscari asks students their opinion if the grammar topics taught during the academic year have been important for their overall improvement in the English language. While the textbook provides grammar topics in each unit, we already underlined that it is up to each teacher to shape the class structure as they prefer. This said, we need to remember that grammar is part of the final exam. Therefore, we assume that teachers do spend a lot of time introducing the grammar topics useful for the final exam and consequently improving Ca' Foscari students grammar skills. This leads us to this question, where we expect that a good percentage of Ca' Foscari students find that they benefitted from the English course structure at Ca' Foscari. Students have been given a three-enter option; yes, no, just partially. We expect that given the above-mentioned aspects; we can assume that the positive feedback is at least 70% for yes.

The third question of the grammar section for Ca' Foscari students ask them if throughout the whole year, their grammar tasks have been checked regularly or not. The three answers possible for this question were yes, no, and not enough. The feedback of this question will allow us to deduce two main aspects; the time invested in grammar activities and students' perspective on it. For the first aspect, we already went through the time spent for grammar at English courses at Ca' Foscari with the first question. However, while the first question studied the grammar taught through the year, we do not know if enough or the same time has been dedicated to the correction of grammar tasks. We are going to take into account the results as follows: if the first question has a positive feedback and so does this third question, we will assume that teachers do spend enough time teaching grammar and also enough time dedicated to

correcting students tasks to make sure they understood the lesson. If the first question has a positive feedback and this third question does not, we will assume that teachers do spend enough time teaching grammar and yet not enough time is dedicated for correcting students tasks to make sure they understood the lesson. If the first question has a negative feedback and this third one does not, we will assume that teachers do not spend enough time teaching grammar, but they do spend enough time to make sure Ca' Foscari students understood the lesson. Should both entries be negative, we could argue that grammar tasks are left behind other skills. To prove the efficiency of the English language courses at Ca' Foscari we would expect that 70% of students answered yes to this third question.

The fourth question of the grammar section for Ca' Foscari students ask them if they think that the final exam tests the grammar tasks they have been prepared through the academic year. The answer possible for this question was a number from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for a low score, and 5 for the highest one. In the final exam students must perform different skills and its difficulty increases with the year they are at. Being that grammar topics are given from the books, we expect that the final exams will test those topics. However, we need to know from Ca' Foscari students if they believe that this is correct. Since teachers do know what the final exam is like, we strongly expect that they made students practice on these topics. Furthermore, if there should be any different topic tested, we believe that teacher made Ca' Foscari students practice on these in order to succeed in the grammar part of the final exam. Since the syllabus is the same for every student, we strongly believe that, to prove our research goal, we will find a mean above 4.0 for this question.

The last question for the grammar part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students ask them if they had external materials from their teacher and if they were adequate. Students have been given the option to answer yes, no, or they have not been given any materials. This aspect will allow us to implement the previous question; did teachers only focus on the grammar topics of the book, or did they provide adequate materials to make them

practice? If we consider that Ca' Foscari students have been given more materials to practice their grammar, we do believe that these materials must have been useful to improve their skills and succeed in the exam. Being that the textbook already provides grammar units with exercises, we might as well assume that some teachers did not provide extra grammar materials for their students. We will not investigate if these materials have been useful to them or not since this would only be arguable for a qualitative feedback from students and not help us with the structure of the English language course at Ca' Foscari.

The next section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students investigates the structure of English language courses focusing on the aspect of lexis. As much as the other skills, lexis is present through the whole academic year and in the textbook units as well. For the final exam there is no task that includes lexis from the unit Ca' Foscari students learned from. Lexis activities during the academic year are meant to improve student's vocabulary. This will benefit them for the writing, reading, and listening part of the exam. However, when compared to the LMU structure, we do not find a proper section dedicated to lexis both during the course and in the final exam at Ca' Foscari. The textbook is divided into different units and each unit has a different topic. Henceforth, students can learn from each unit that provides new words and terminology according to the topic. In order to investigate this aspect, the survey asks three question to Ca' Foscari students. Since we are only interested in the structure of the course, we will not study what topics have been chosen, but rather if they benefit from them or not. Furthermore, they will be asked their opinion and expectations according to lexis aspects at their institution. In addition to this, the survey asks a fourth question regarding the course of 'Società e culture di lingua Inglese'. This question wants to study if Ca' Foscari students were satisfied with the syllabus of this course. This is because we will compare the syllabus of this course with the one of the LMU and see which one Ca' Foscari students would have preferred.

The first question of the lexis part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students asks them if they believe enough tasks and time have been dedicated to the lexis aspect through the academic year. They have been given three possible entries; yes, no, not enough. We want Ca' Foscari students to provide us their opinion on this aspect based on the amount of time spent for lexis. Since the textbook provides lexis topics in each unit, we expect that teachers made students practice on those. Like speaking skills, lexis is not present in the final exam in form of a proper part, but rather indirectly tested through other tasks. Therefore, we do not expect that the same importance to other tasks has been given to lexis during the English language courses in the academic year. That is why, we estimate that only 50% of students will find that enough tasks and time have been provided through the year.

The second question of the lexis part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students asks them if they believe that lexis is an important aspect for their area of studies. They have been given three possible entries; yes, no, not relevant enough. This question is very crucial for this research. Not only would a positive feedback make us argue that absent tasks in the final exam like lexis are very relevant for students, but also would hint that students would like more activities. However, this last will be argued in the next following question. If Ca' Foscari students do believe that lexis is really important for their area of studies and not enough activities are present in the courses, we will argue that the English course structure at Ca' Foscari is not providing students the preparation they wished for their career. However, we could only argue this if the entries of the survey are at least more than 60%.

The third question of the lexis part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students asks them if, according to their expectation, they would have rather had more lexis activities or not. They have been given five possible entries; more activities, not relevant, not expecting more, less, or nothing. These different opinions would allow us to investigate Ca' Foscari students perspective about the amount of time spent for lexis courses. Consequently,

we will understand if Ca' Foscari students wished for more lexis activities with a direct feedback. Being that students were provided five different entries; we will be able to study the most chosen ones to argue what student's expectations are. We estimate that Ca' Foscari students wished for more lexis activities. We can prove our research goal with a percentage of 50% of entries of students wished for more activities.

The last question of this survey asks Ca' Foscari students if the syllabus of 'Società e culture di lingua Inglese' is what Ca' Foscari offers, or any different. In fact, they had been given the option of what the syllabus of Ca' Foscari is, literature, what the syllabus of the LMU course 'Cultural Studies 1', and a third option where they could enter what they wished it could be. We do not want to go into details with other aspects of this course. The only reason we are studying this, is because the LMU has inserted the cultural course under the English language courses, and Ca' Foscari syllabus is a literature course.

4.3 Interpreting the data

From the previous sections of chapter 4 we learnt how we based our research and how we collected the data. We have obtained 100 surveys from students at each institution. The collection happened between March 2020 and May 2020, using the Google online-survey form. These can be read in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 at the end of our research. Furthermore, we analysed what the limits of this study are, and how they concern our research. From the previous section we learnt how we structured the surveys for both LMU and Ca' Foscari students. By analysing each question, we discussed what we wanted to investigate and how each question would provide with the feedback. Moreover, from the previous knowledge and chapters, we set expectations on what each question should reach, in terms of mean or percentages, to prove the efficiency of each structure.

This next section will be divided in two sub-sections. The first one will collect the results from the survey on the LMU. We will discuss each question individually, according to the previous sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 above. Furthermore, we will provide a chart for each question. The charts we are going to use are three.

The pie chart will represent data that has been collected from multiple choice questions. By doing so, we expect a percentage for each entry growing accordingly to the number of entries. On the top of each pie chart we will see the number of entries of the given question with the number in brackets.

The bar chart will provide visual representation for all those questions where students were asked to enter either a number or their level of satisfaction with the question. For this last, since we gave the chance to put 1 for low (or no) as in the lowest score, we gave them the chance to enter up to 5 where 5 is the highest number (or yes). However, the bars will not represent the number of entries, but the percentage calculated from the

entries. The survey form was already providing charts, yet we decided to provide these charts on our own to make them represented at their best without copying anything. To ensure closeness to what those from the survey were, we decided to represent the bars as percentages as well. Consequently, we will provide the number of entries for each number and bar in the discussion right under the chart.

The scatter plot will provide those entries that are related according to two variables. Each bubble will grow according to the relation of the two variables and will move to the right the more entries the bubble has received. The hight of the bubbles is irrelevant for the representation. We decided to place them in hight in order not to overlap between each other when the number of entries were close. By doing so, we will be able to highlight each relation the best.

Each chart has been provided a number and an alphabetical letter on the bottom right. This will facilitate our comparative discussion in chapter 4.4.

4.3.1 The results of the LMU survey

As we mentioned before, we will start commenting the feedback of each question. For the LMU survey, we will start with the writing skills 1 course assigning the number 1 for the course, and a letter in alphabetic order for each question. This will allow us to compare the results in the next chapter referring to the number of the chart only

The first question studied the student's feedback regarding their preparation for the final exam. This result is based on their own perception after the course. We need to underline that not every participant in the survey took part into this course yet. That is why, we have 80 records out of the 100 of the whole survey. Since for this feedback the entries were already provided by us in the form of yes, no, and not enough, the chart is a provided in form of a pie chart.

Preparation for the final exam

■ Yes (56) ■ No (6) ■ Quite satisfied (17)

21%

8%

71%
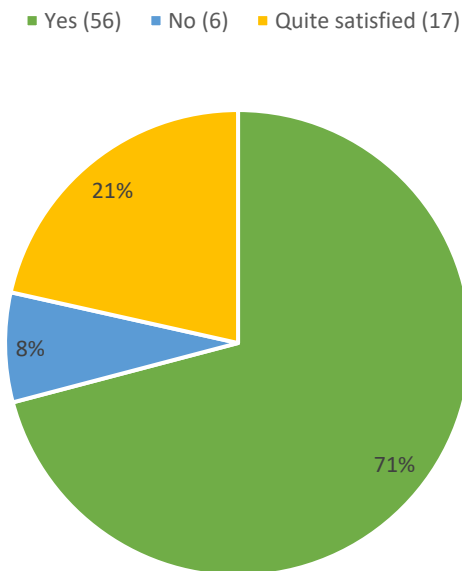
[1a]

The number of entries for yes are 71/80, whereas the entries for no are 3/80 and the entries for not enough are 6/80. As we can clearly see from the chart, the majority of LMU students strongly believe that they have been receiving an adequate preparation for the final exam. This leads us to the

conclusion that students found the number of participants in the course adequate. Moreover, we can argue that they received a good preparation for their final exam. According to what we stated in the section 4.2.1 we can also say that making LMU students practice on one single skill for a whose semester course has benefitted them enough to lead them into an 88.8% of positive feedback for yes in this question.

The second question of the survey at LMU asked students how many essays they were assigned during the semester. From the previous chapter we learnt that students attend the writing skills 1 course for the whole academic semester. While they focus on the writing of essays, they are asked to provide written tasks to their teacher regularly. This question wants to investigate the amount of written texts LMU students are assigned during the semester. Since for this question students had to provide the number of assignments, we will represent the entries in form of a bar graph to see how the different entries differ from each other.

Assignments for writing skills 1
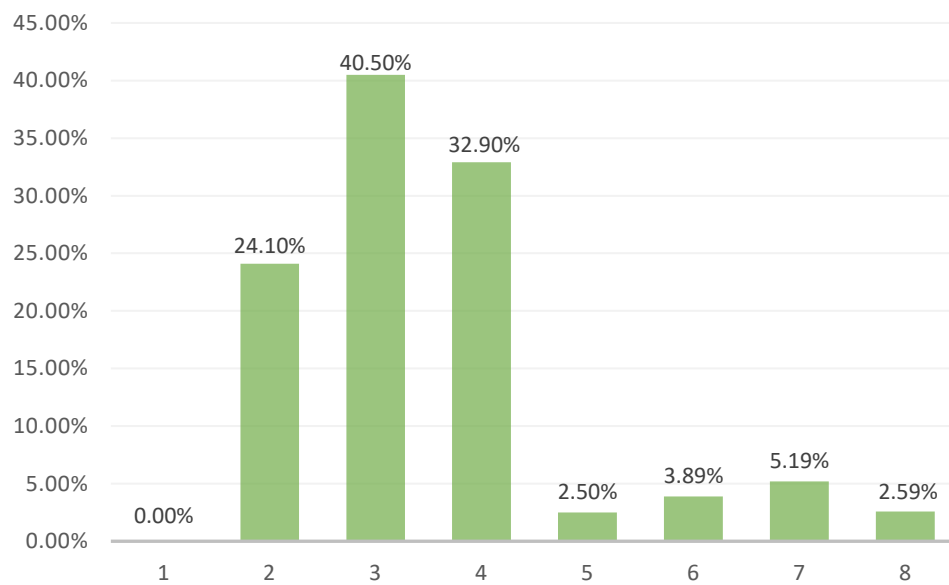
[1b]

The highest number is 3 assignments for the academic semester with a total of 23 entries. Following this, with just one enter less is 5 assignments for the academic semester with a total of 22 entries. The lowest ones are 12 and 0. However, since it is very unlikely that teachers did not ask students to write a single essay for a whole semester, we will exclude the entries for 0. By doing so, we are also excluding the single enter of 12 assignments. This would mean that a teacher assigned a written essay every lesson. As we studied from chapter 3, this is quite impossible, both due to the fact that the last class scheduled is actually the final exam date, and also because LMU students did not get enough lessons and preparation to provide a finished assignment. We will just conclude that this person was confused by the question. This means that out of 80 entries, we are taking into consideration 77. Calculating the mean of these entries, we must divide 77 by the total of 315. The mean for this question is of 4.09 assignments written during the academic semester for the course of writing skills 1 at the LMU. For this second question, we analysed in the chapter 4.2.1 that we would have needed a mean of at least 3 assignments during the course before the final exam. Having a mean of 4.09 leads us to the conclusion that the structure of the writing skills 1 course at the LMU works efficiently. By saying this, we conclude that teachers have enough time during the semester to assign and correct a fair number of written texts. Furthermore, we can also assume that the number of students in the class was adequate for making all the participants practice on a regular basis. This number of entries proved that the structure of the English course writing skills works very well when it comes to follow the students in class and make them practice enough for their exam.

The third question of the survey at LMU asked students if the writing skills 1 syllabus helped them reaching their personal aim. We studied that the syllabus of writing skills 1 is the same for every curriculum at the LMU independently on what they choose. We learned that the final exam consists in the writing of an essay. However, LMU students might prefer some other text types to practice on. In fact, this is the reason why we stated that we could have find controversial opinions for this question. Nonetheless, LMU

students would only benefit by practicing on essay, since they need these skills to perform in other courses, i.e. seminars. Given all these reasons, we did not ask LMU students to provide a short answer, but rather to express their level of satisfaction entering a number from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for 'low', and 5 for 'high'. We will see how this grade has been expressed using a bar chart.

Grade of satisfacion for writing skills 1

[1c]
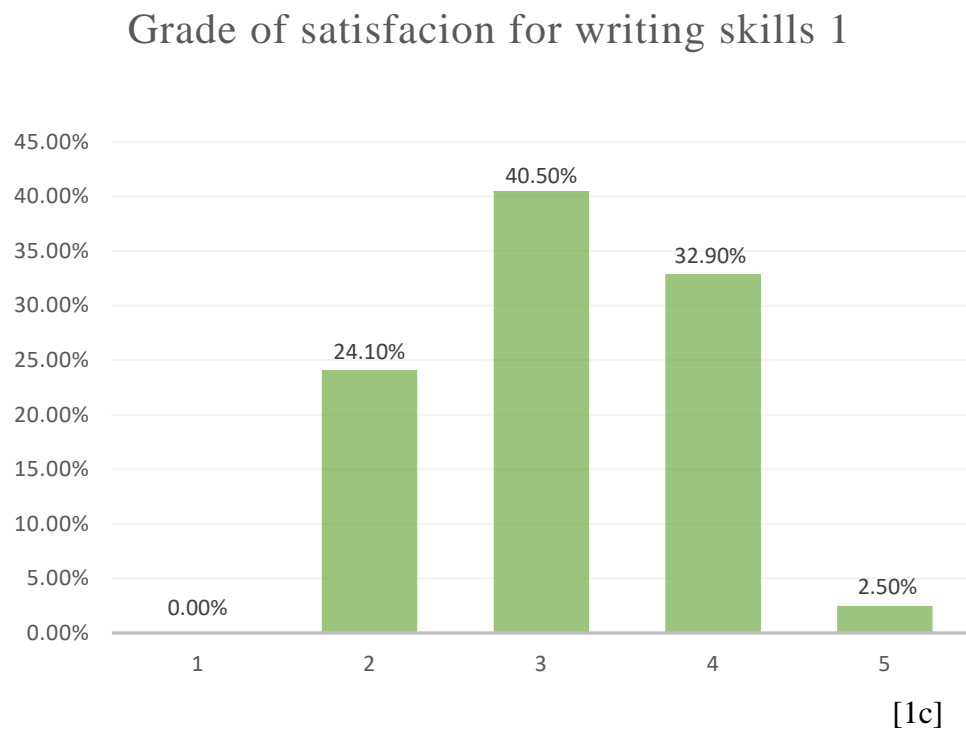
From this bar chart we can see how the majority of LMU students diverge on the average score, 3.0 which makes us assume that they do believe that the essay is an important written text type. However, we do only find two entries for the highest score 5. The mean for these entries is of 3.14/5. We can argue that LMU students think that there might be more relevant text types for their personal aim. Being that this is a controversial question and we did not allow them to express their point of view, we will not assume further than this. In fact, we will make further assumptions once we will see the chart [1g] for the writing skills 2, where the syllabus differs

for each curriculum. We will only add that students might think the essay is a needed text type when it comes to their academic career where they are asked to perform several skills acquired throughout this course.

The fourth question of writing skills 1 investigates the quality of the materials provided through this course at the LMU from their students. We already mentioned that this course does not provide a textbook for their students. However, teachers have the freedom to provide authentic materials created exclusively for their students. This would only benefit LMU students in many ways. One of these we mentioned is that teachers can monitor where students lack the most and focus on these aspects to make their writing skills improving. Since for this feedback the entries were already provided by us in the form of yes, no, and quite satisfied, the chart is a provided in form of a pie chart.

Satisfaction with teacher's materials

■ Yes (56)   ■ No (6)   ■ Quite satisfied (17)

21%

8%

71%
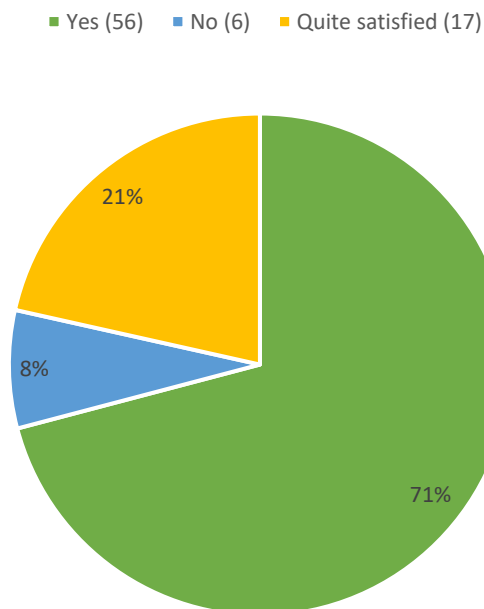
[1d]

Considering that 56 entries out of 79 are for yes, in percentage 70.9%, we can argue that LMU students strongly believe that having

materials provided by their teacher would only benefit them. Even if we only have a small number of entries for no, a total of 6 which in percentage is 7.6%, we can compare this tiny number with those quite satisfied with them; 17 entries, in percentage 21.50%. This means that even if not completely satisfied, at least these LMU students find them useful for some aspects. We did not investigate further since we are only focusing on the structure of English courses at LMU and Ca' Foscari.

Following the results of the writing skills 1 course, we will analyse the results of the study at the LMU for the course writing skills 2. These four questions are formulated exactly like the ones for writing skills 1. These two courses differ in their syllabus. Each student of different curriculum will attend the writing skills 2 course that has been assigned to their one. Therefore, LMU students studying for teaching will have to practice on different texts than those of the Bachelor curriculum. Being that beside the syllabus, these courses are shaped identically, we decided to formulate the same four questions, and leave a comparative enter for those who attended both courses at the end.

The first question for the course of writing skills 2, asks LMU students if they feel prepared adequately for the final exam. Being this course identically structured like writing skills 1, we do expect a high percentage of positive feedback. Not only LMU students have practiced on one skill on a weekly basis for one semester, but also the limited number of participants allowed them to practice in an adequate context without being left behind. Since for this feedback the entries were already provided by us in the form of yes, no, and not enough, the chart is a provided as a pie chart.

Preparation for the final exam

■ Yes (55) ■ No (3) ■ Not enough (9)

13%

5%

82%
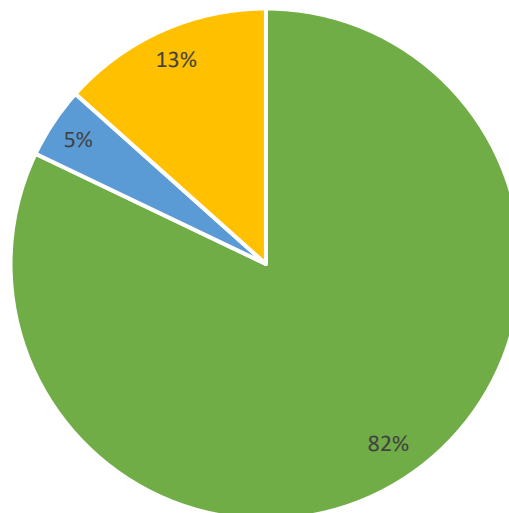
[1e]

For the writing skills 1 we had 71% of entries for yes. For writing skills 2, we have 82% of entries for yes. This leads us to the conclusion that the structure of both writing skills courses makes LMU students feel like they have been prepared adequately for the final exam. We can conclude that LMU students think that the number of hours spent for the single course focusing on one skill is adequate. They had the chance to practice and to learn from authentic materials provided by their teachers. We set an expectation of at least 70% for this question, and we received an 82% of positive feedback. We can conclude that the LMU English language courses of writing skills are efficient when it comes to student preparation for their final exam.

The following question of the survey at LMU asked students how many essays they were assigned during the semester fort the writing skills 2 course. From the previous chapter we learnt that students attend the writing skills 2 course for the whole academic semester and accordingly to their curriculum. We set an expectation of between 3 and 4 assignments in the 4.2.1 chapter. Therefore, any result higher than 3.50 will prove our

research goal. Since for this question students had to provide the number of assignments, we will represent the entries in form of a bar graph to see how the different entries differ from each other.

Assignments for writing skills 2
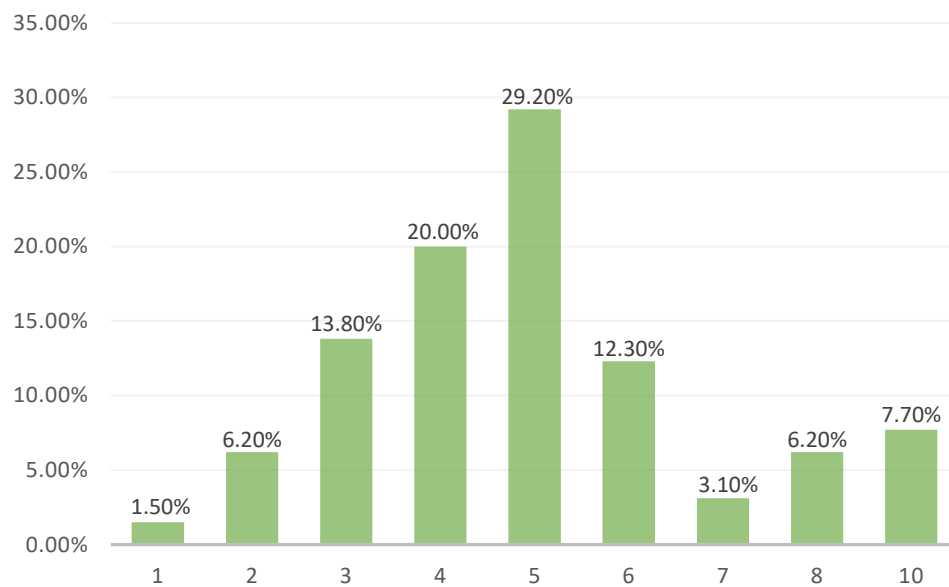
[1f]

On the bottom of the graphic we can see the number of assignments LMU students claimed they wrote during the academic semester. We had a total number of entries of 65 and each bar represents the percentage according to the number. For 1 assignment, we got a one enter, for 2 assignments, we got 4 entries, for 3 assignments, we got 9 entries, for 4 assignments, we got 13 entries, for 5 assignments, we got 19 entries, for 6 assignments, we got 8 entries. The next low assignments numbers, 7,8 and 10, we respectively got 2, 4 and 5 entries. The average amount of assignments for the course of writing skills 2 is 5.03 according to these result from LMU students. We estimated that anything above 3.50 would have proven the efficiency of the LMU; the results exceed our expectation for this question. We can therefore assume that it does not take too long for

teachers to give the assignments back to students as we were interested in studying in chapter 4.2.1 after all.

The third question of the survey regarding writing skills 2 at the LMU asks students if the syllabus of this course helped them reaching their personal aim. We set an expectation above the one of writing skills 1, since LMU students choose their curriculum according to their personal aim, and the writing skills 2 syllabus is shaped according to curricula. We also assumed that LMU students would have found this syllabus more interesting than the writing skills 2 one. For this question, LMU students had to express their level of satisfaction entering a number from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for 'low', and 5 for 'high'. We will see how this grade has been expressed using a bar chart.

Grade of satisfaction for writing skills 2
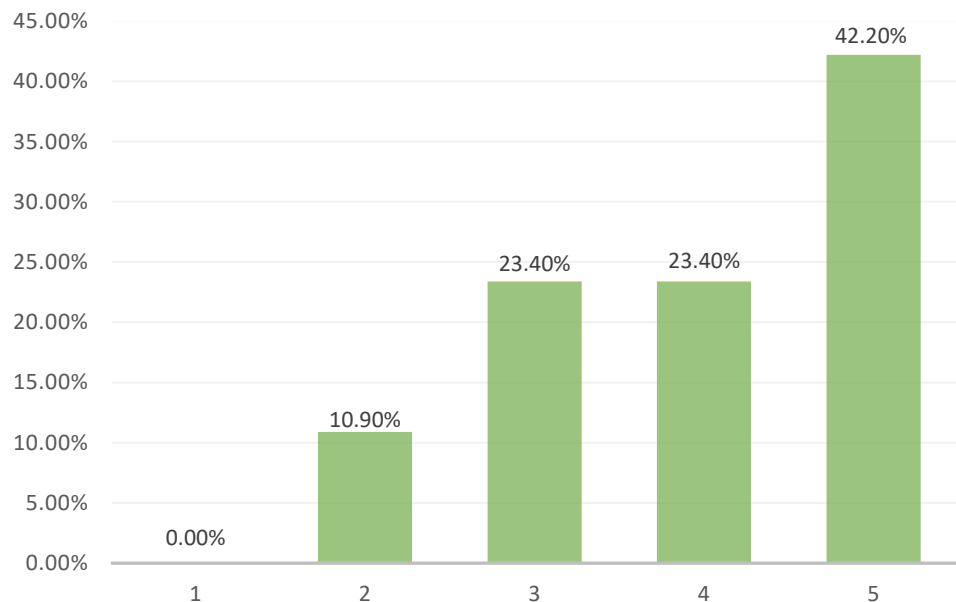
[1g]

With a mean of 3.97 for the LMU course writing skills, we can once again state that the results exceed our expectations. We had a total of 64 entries confirming that, according to LMU students, the syllabus of writing

skills 2 helps fostering student's personal aim. Having the syllabus divided on different curricula sure helped LMU student' satisfaction. Moreover, when compared to the mandatory syllabus for writing skills 1, with a mean of 3.14, we can conclude that when it comes to the syllabus, LMU students are much more satisfied with a dedicated syllabus for their academic career.

For the last question regarding the English course writing skills 2 at the LMU only, we asked students if they were satisfied with the materials provided by teachers during the academic semester. We already mentioned that, like writing skills 1, this course does not provide a textbook. However, teachers have the freedom to provide authentic materials created appositely for their students. This would only benefit LMU students in many ways. One of these we mentioned is that teachers can monitory where students lack the most and focus on these aspects to make their writing skills improving. Since for this feedback the entries were already provided by us in the form of yes, no, and quite satisfied, the chart is a provided in form of a pie chart.

Satisfaction with teacher's materials

■ Yes (55)   ■ No (4)   ■ Not enough (6)

9%

6%

85%
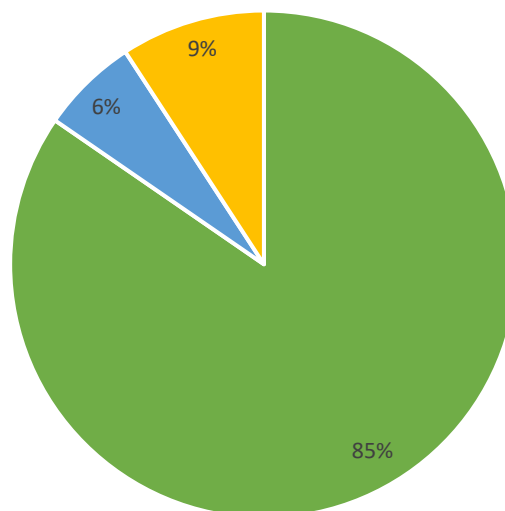
[1h]

The number of entries for yes, 55 out of 65, makes us assume that LMU students are highly satisfied with materials provided by their teachers, even without having a textbook. Even if we only have a small number of entries for no, a total of 4 which in percentage is 6.2%, we can add this small number with those quite satisfied with them; 6 entries, in percentage 9.2%. This means that even if not completely satisfied, at least these LMU students find them useful for some aspects. Even if we assume that these 6 entries were no, we will have 10 negative entries and 55 positive. We can only argue that the level of satisfaction for LMU students is very high when it comes to the materials provided by their teachers. In comparison with the writing skills 1 course, we have an 84.6% of positive feedback against 70.9% of writing skills 1. We can argue that this small difference is due to the fact that LMU students find the writing skills 2 course more relevant for their career.

The last question for the writing skills section of the survey at LMU asks students which one, between writing skills 1 and writing skills 2 they found more interesting and why. As mentioned before, this is a very crucial question; not because the two structure differ, but because the relevant topic is the syllabus of these two courses. Moreover, this aspect will be interesting to compare with the structures and the syllabus offered by Ca' Foscari in Venice. When we formulated the question, we set an expectation of 70% in favour of writing skills 2. Since we allowed LMU students to enter a short answer, we decided to split them in four main categories. WS1 (writing skills 1), WS2 (writing skills 2), both or neither (for those who found them either both interesting or none), and not applicable (for entries different from the first 3). Even though the question clearly asked to pick one of these courses only if attended both, some LMU students stated that they still had not attended writing skills 2 or were in Erasmus+. We had to go through the results and allocate them in one of the four categories. The following pie chart will provide us a graphic representation of all four categories and 65 entries.

Writing skills 1 or Writing skills 2

■ WS1 (14)　■ WS2 (44)　■ Both or Neither (3)　■ Not applicable (4)

6%

5%

21%

68%
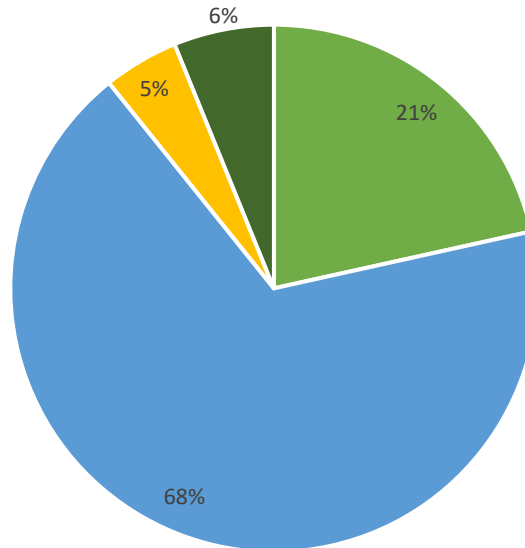
[1i]

This pie chart makes clear how much LMU students preferred the writing skills 2 syllabus rather than the one of the writing skills 1. We can see that only 3 entries, therefore 4.61%, could not decide which one they preferred. The not applicable answers were not taken into consideration, yet we decided to include them in the pie chart to give an overview of all the entries. The next pie chart will only show the results for writing skills 1 (14 entries) and writing skills 2 (44) to make clearer to the eye the big difference between the preference of LMU students for these two courses.

Writing skills 1 or Writing skills 2

■ WS1 (14) ■ WS2 (44)

24%

76%
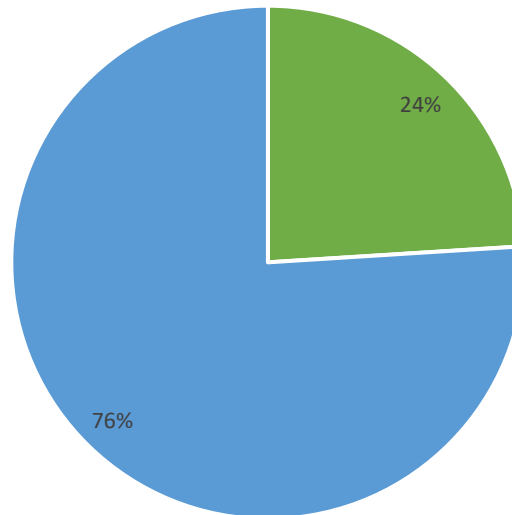
[1j]

Out of all the 58 entries, 44 LMU students have expressed their preference towards the writing skills 2 course. Even when taking into account all the other entries we can see how LMU students find the writing skills 2 course more interesting. In fact, as we argued in chapter 4.2.1, we can conclude that LMU students find a dedicated syllabus for their curriculum more stimulating to practice their writing skills. Some of the entries in favour of writing skills 2 stated as follows:

- WS2 as the work I had put in paid off a lot more than in WS1.
- WS2 because it covered a broader field of writing
- Ws2 because it was not an essay
- WS 2 the material provided was more useful
- WS2, I had the option to choose creative writing which was a LOT more interesting than WS1.
- WS2 because the topics differed from each other and there was a bigger range of things we had to write

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These few entries make more relevant how the variety of texts is found more interesting to LMU students, according to their personal aim. However, in favour of writing skills 1, we will pick some of the entries who choose this course:

- WS 1, because the lecturer was much more dedicated.
- WS1 because it actually helped me with paragraph writing which is useful for term papers.
- WS1 I find Essays more interesting
- Ws1. Ws2 lecturer did not prepare properly
- WS1, basics of structured writing helped me advance in my studies

As we can see from these entries, two of them stated that the essay prepares them better for their studies and term papers. One stated that they found the essay more interesting, and the rest was not satisfied with the writing skills 2 teacher. Overall, we can argue, once again, that the variety of texts makes a fair difference for students, since the essay seems to be an overrated text type. However, a semester spent for learning essays is useful to an English student's career.

The second section of the survey at LMU investigates students' perception of the courses speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2. Speaking skills 1 helps students improving their speaking skills on giving presentations. As recalled in the previous chapter 3, LMU seminars always require students to choose a topic of the seminar and present it to the whole class. We need to remember that teachers evaluate the level of how language, fluency, preparation, and pronunciation are performed by the student at the final exam for both courses. In fact, structurally speaking, these two courses do not have a textbook; the teacher provides materials during the academic semester. For these two courses, LMU students are required to practice in class, like it was the final exam. This allow students to focus on what they need to practice and improve both from feedback of

the teacher and of the other participants in the course. Both speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2 are mandatory for every LMU English student. Speaking skills 1 must be passed successfully before being allowed to attend the course speaking skills 2. This last focuses on different topics; it can either focus on discussion, classroom, or business, according to the student's curriculum. However, unlike writing skills 2, it is not mandatory for each LMU student's curriculum to pick the class that was designed for them, but rather what they believe is the one they would benefit the most. This section of the survey has a total of six questions. Since we are studying the structure at the LMU and the speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2 courses present the same structure, the first five questions of the survey are based on both speaking skills 1 and speaking skills 2 classes without distinguish them in any particular way. However, there is going to be a further question which will ask LMU students to choose which one of the courses they found more interesting.

The first question asks LMU students if the number of students in their class during the academic semester was adequate to practice their speaking skills. A small number of students is allowed in one course, normally between 15 and 20. That is why, we expect that students did not find the classes crowdy. We believe that they were able to practice their skills enough and be satisfied with this aspect of the teaching system of their institution. LMU students were asked to provide a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is for 'no' or 'negative', and 5 is for 'yes' or 'positive'. The next bar chart will provide us a representation of the 85 entries.

Class adequacy speaking skills

[2a]
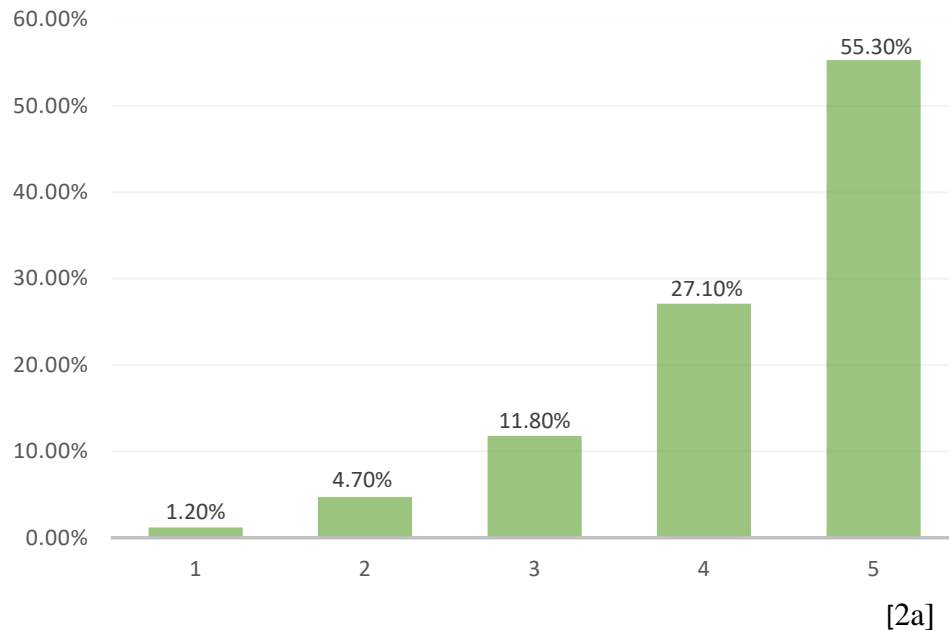
The mean for this question is 4.30. There have been 1 enter for 1, 4 entries for 2, 10 entries for 3, 23 entries for 4 and 47 entries for 5. This is clearly a very strong positive feedback for the adequacy of the class. A small number of students per class allowed LMU students to practice enough for being very satisfied with their speaking skills class. We set an expectation of 3.50 to prove the efficiency of the English language course speaking skills at the LMU. We can conclude that, having a mean of 4.30, the efficiency of these courses is proved when it comes to class adequacy.

The second question about the speaking skills courses at the LMU asks students if their teacher had the chance to listen to them regularly or, at least, often enough. Since we had a positive feedback from the question before, we can expect a positive feedback from this one too. For this question, LMU students were asked to provide a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is for 'no' or 'negative', and 5 is for 'yes' or 'positive'. The next bar chart will provide us a representation of the 85 entries.

Teacher's listening regularity speaking skills

[2b]
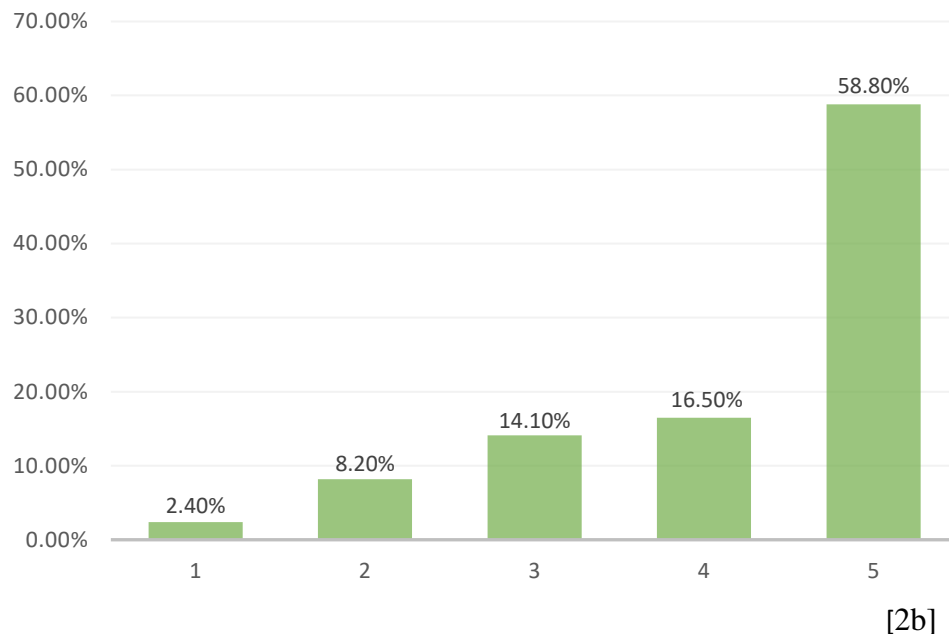
It is clear that teachers do have the chance to listen to LMU students regularly enough during the academic semester. The mean for this question is 4.23 out of 5. As much as the previous question, we can state that, thanks to the limited number of participants, LMU students find the attention given by teachers satisfying enough to provide 50 entries for number 5. The rest of the entries are 14 for 4, 12 for 3, 7 for 2 and 2 for 1. Now that the first and second feedback for these questions are both positive, we can argue that the structure of the course is very efficient.

The third question asks LMU students if they felt prepared adequately for the final exam. For this question, there are many aspects to consider, previous skills, cooperation during the semester, the approach of the teacher, the materials etc. However, since we are studying the structure of the LMU English courses, we will consider the answers from this question as an overall grade of satisfaction and effectiveness of both syllabus and teaching methods of the course. For this question, LMU students were asked to provide a number from 1 to 5, where 1 is for 'no' or

'negative', and 5 is for 'yes' or 'positive'. The next bar chart will provide us a representation of the 85 entries.

Preparation for the exam speaking skills
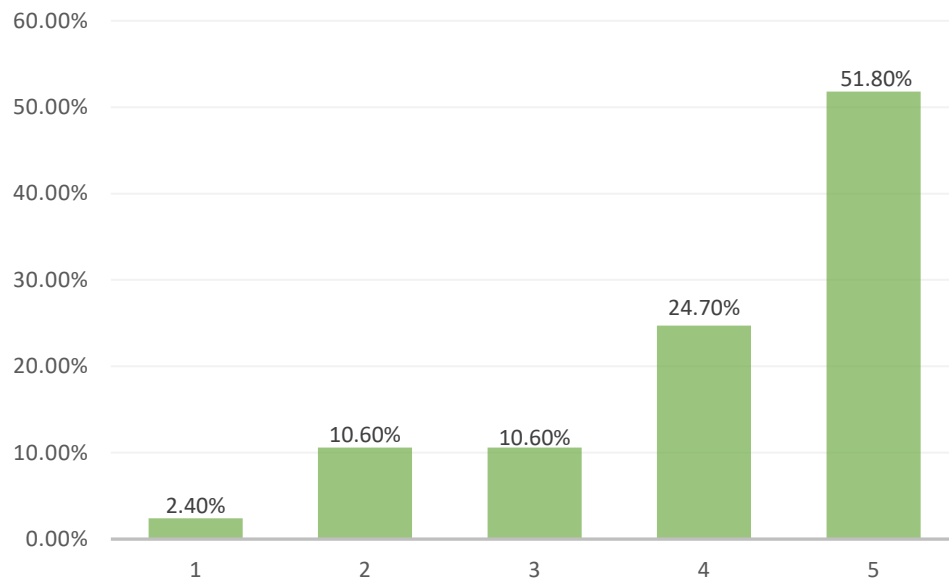
[2c]

For these 85 entries we had a high amount of entries for 5 of 44. Following 5, we have 21 entries for 4, 9 entries for both 3 and 2 and 1 enter for 1. The mean is 4.15 out of 5 for this question. We needed a mean higher than 3.50 to prove our research goal. We can argue that the choice of having small amounts of students for each class help foster speaking skills and makes LMU students feel prepared adequately for their final exam.

The fourth question about the speaking skills courses at the LMU asks students how many times the teacher made them practice for the exam. We need to take into consideration all the conditions mentioned in the previous questions, i.e. the number of students in one class, the chance of the teacher to listen to students etc. These are very important aspects for student's perception of effectiveness of the speaking skills courses. As much as it is important for students to foster their skills, university students

will be graded on their performance during the exam. That is why, LMU students practice for the exam during the semester making them feel confident in their new skills. During an academic semester at the LMU, students have been asked to practice exclusively for the exam at least two times; the more the better. For this question students could write the number of times the teacher made them practice for the exam. We collected the LMU students' feedback and provided a bar chart.

Practicing speaking skills
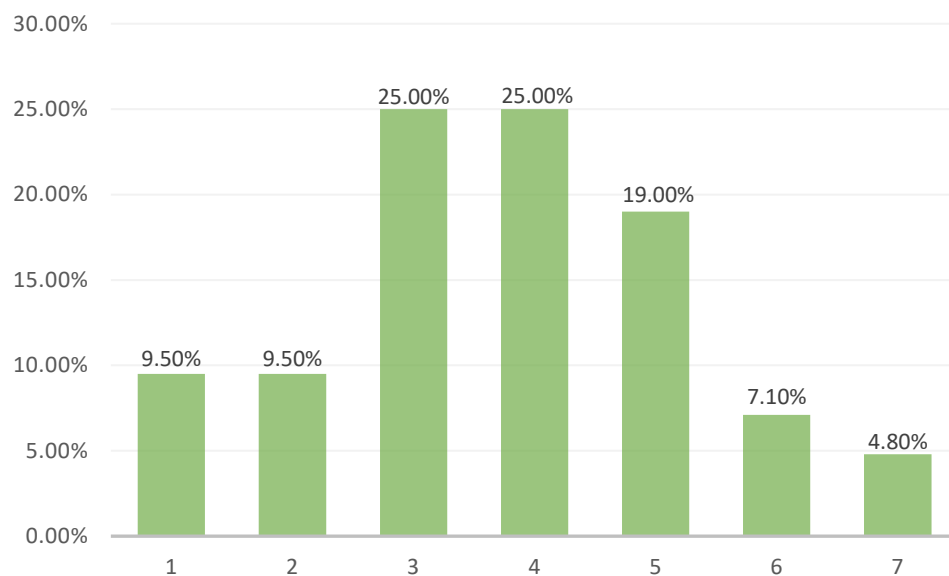
[2d]

The 84 entries are so spread: 8 entries for 1 time, 8 entries for 2 times, 21 entries for both 3 and 4, 16 entries for 5 times, 6 entries for 6 times and 4 entries for 7 times. The mean is of 3.75 times practicing for the exam during the whole academic semester. We had an expectation of a mean of 2.5 or higher. Having a mean of 3.75 proves that teacher had the time not only to foster student's speaking skills, but also to make them practice looking forward to their final exam. The structure of the teaching system of speaking skills can be considered excellent, according to these results. LMU

students have the chance to practice at least 3 times during the semester for their final exam. This makes us argue that they do not feel too much pressure for the final exam, or that they feel unprepared. In fact, according to the chart of their preparation [2c], their high level of satisfaction is probably due to the amount of times they have been practicing for their final exam at the LMU.

The last two questions regarding speaking skills courses at the LMU ask students if they think that speaking classes should be mandatory, and, for those who attended both of them, which one between speaking skills 1 and 2 they found more relevant. We stated before that we expect LMU students answering at least 70% mandatory. Since they must give presentations during seminars and speaking skills courses are mandatory in their institution, we can confidently say that the majority will not answer that speaking skills classes should be optional. The last question asks LMU students which one they found more interesting. The following pie chart will provide us a graphic representation of the 80 entries.

Speaking skills mandatory or optional

■ Mandatory (74) ■ Oprional (6)

8%

92%
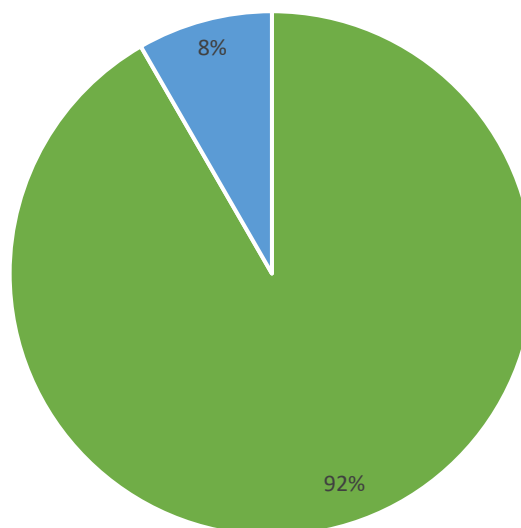
[2e]

The next pie chart provides a graphical representation of all the 72 entries. We had to exclude the 73rd because it stated that the LMU student only took the speaking skills 1 class so far. The graphic clearly states that out of all the participants, only 4 LMU students did not find the courses relevant. We can assume that these 4 are 4 out of the 6 who answered that the speaking skills courses should be optional in the previous question. The results will be needed in the comparative analysis once we argue the Ca' Foscari system.

Speaking skills 1 or Speaking skills 2

- Speaking Skills 1 (17) ■ Speaking Skills 2 (43) ■ Both (8) ■ Neither (4)
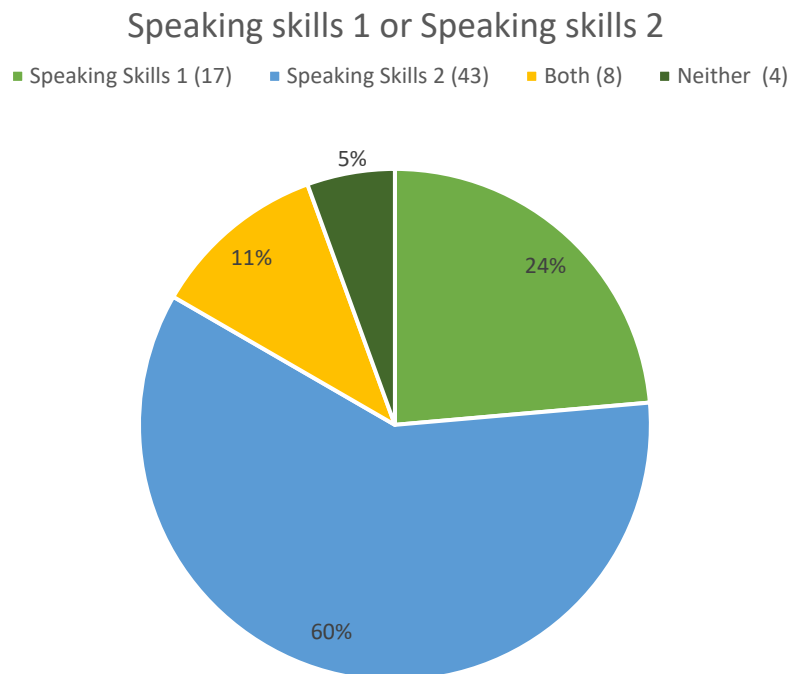
[2f]

Even if the percentage in favour of speaking skills 2 is 59.72%, we can argue that it differs a lot when compared to the speaking skills 1, which is 23.61%. While the first course has 43 entries, the second one only has 17. This makes us conclude that LMU students believe that having the chance to choose the speaking skills 2 syllabus is more useful to them. In fact, as we analysed before, LMU students have the chance to choose the speaking skills 2 course they prefer. It could make them practice

on different topics, such as discussion, classroom, or business, just to name a few.

The last two sections of the LMU survey study the courses of core skill grammar and core skill lexis. The structure of these courses is the same. They both have a main textbook and a weekly Moodle test to do to be able to access the exam. Since the two courses have the same structure but a different topic, the survey asks the same three questions twice for each course. We are going to analyse the same question for both sections of grammar and lexis. We will also provide relevant entries if present to support LMU student's opinion. The first question to be analysed will be about the course core skill grammar and the second one core skill lexis.

The first question asks students if having to do online tests on Moodle was a good approach to practice and kept exercised. Every student must fulfil all the online tests on Moodle, regardless the result, to be allowed to sit the exam. We have stated that this is a very good strategy to keep students trained and make them practice constantly on the topics of both grammar and lexis. We have set an expectation of 70% positive feedback. Although students had the chance to click on given answers; yes, no, and not enough, the survey gave them the chance to type an open answer. We decided to split the results in 3 main categories: yes, no, not enough. Furthermore, we will take some of the most relevant entries to discuss from LMU students. We will start arguing the first pie chart from core skill grammar, and then the entries. Following this, we will show the pie chart for core skill lexis and then the entries.

Moodle test core skill grammar

■ Yes (77) ■ No (4) ■ Not Enoguh (4)
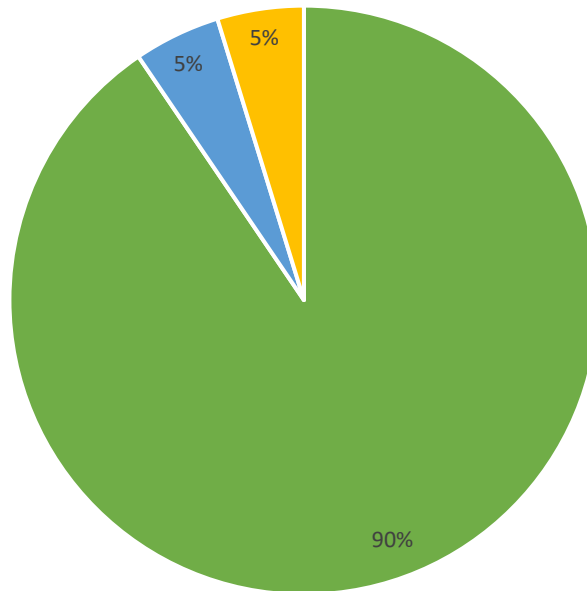
[3a]

For this question, we had a total of 87 entries. 2 entries have been discarded since these LMU students did not attend the course yet but answered, nonetheless. With a strong 90% of entries for yes, we can definitely argue that a weekly quiz on the grammar topic of the week is considered to be a good approach to keep LMU students exercised. Since it is mandatory to sit the exam, LMU students already have an outline of how the 100 questions of the final exam are going to be. Moreover, practicing on the Moodle platform give students a rhythm and regularity when it comes to practice for the exam. We had set an expectation of 70% positive feedback for this question and the survey succeeded in proving the efficiency of this English course at the LMU for this aspect. Only three entries can be taken into consideration for this question, and are the following:

- Yes, should not be mandatory for the final exam though
- They should have been a choice and not obligatory.
- I do not think so. They were often much more difficult than the actual exam.

If we take into consideration the last one, the LMU student stated that the Moodle exercises were much more difficult than the actual exam. However, we studied that it is always a good way to students exercised by making them perform more difficult tasks.

The next pie chart will provide the representation for the 85 entries for the Moodle exercises for the course core skill lexis.

Moodle test core skill lexis

■ Yes (75)   ■ No (3)   ■ Not Enoguh (7)

8%

4%

88%
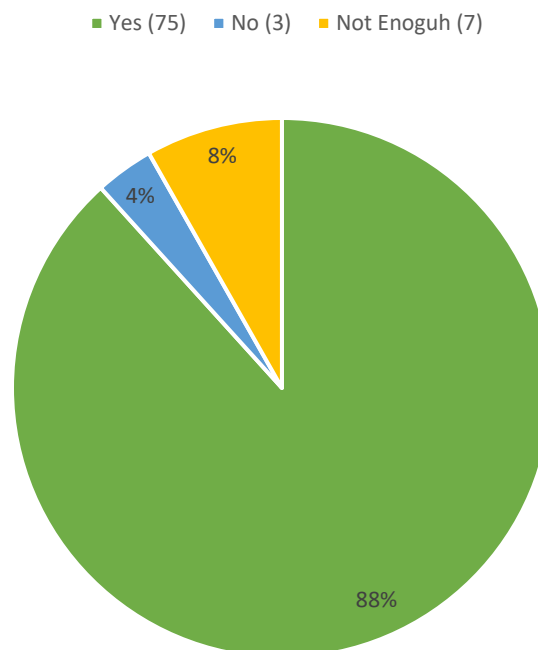
[4a]

With a total of 85 entries, we can state that also for the core skill lexis LMU students do believe that the Moodle test is a very good approach to practice and keep exercised. With a strong 88% of entries for yes, we can

argue that, as much for core skill grammar, a weekly quiz on the lexis topic of the week is considered to be a good approach to keep LMU students exercised. Since it is mandatory to sit the exam, LMU students already have an outline of how the 100 questions of the final exam are going to be. We had set an expectation of 70% positive feedback for this question and the survey succeeded in proving the efficiency of this English course at the LMU for this aspect. Since we did not give the chance to LMU students to express their opinion, we do not have opinions to consider. However, we can say that the results speak for themselves.

The second question for both grammar and lexis courses at the LMU asked students whether they wished for these courses to be just one semester long, or they wished for more. Here, LMU students had the chance to click on given answers; more lectures, just one is fine or type an open answer. This aspect will be further discussed in the following chapter since it is different from how the system of Ca' Foscari distributes these topics. Henceforth, we wanted to study the answers of LMU students who did not choose one of the answers provided by the survey alone. We will now provide a pie chart for core skill grammar with the given entries alone, and then discuss those who stated an LMU student opinion.

More lectures or just one - core skill grammar

■ More lectures (29)   ■ Just one (54)

35%

65%
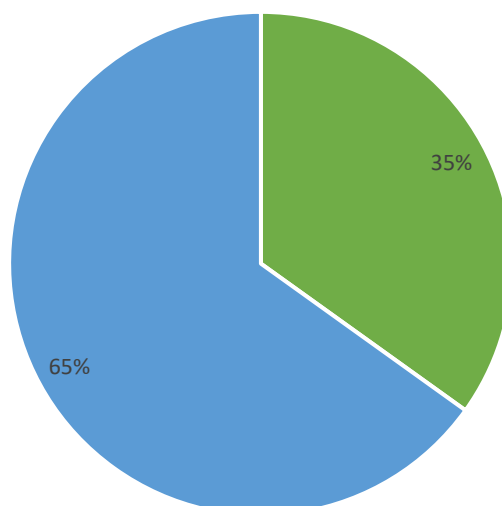
[3b]

After having left aside the 4 entries with LMU students' opinion, we have other 83 entries for the main 2 choices. 54 LMU students stated that they believe only one course is necessary for their career. We can argue by saying that a very well-structured course which lasts one academic semester is enough for LMU students for their entire course of studies. In addition to this, we need to remember that other grammar topics are either repeated or introduced during courses like writing skills. Although there might be some other aspects to take into consideration, like their previous grammar knowledge, 65% of LMU students do believe in the efficiency of their core skill grammar course at LMU even if for just one semester. The following four entries, stated interesting opinion from LMU students:

- I think they are unnecessary.
- I was personally fine with one, but I know people who had more problems than me and wished for more

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- maybe adding one more course compromising grammar and lexis in semester 4/5/6 to revise
- Technically the assumption is that students speak English at a "high level" already.

The first LMU student probably had a good preparation already, and that is why they believed the course was not necessary. The second LMU students found the need to give us a further explanation, rather than clicking on the given ones. They were only speaking for other students, but we will not argue further since it is not relevant for our research aim. The third one wished for more lectures around the end of the academic career. The fourth one only reminds us that a high level of English is already needed when enrolling at the LMU.

The next pie chart provided collects the entries for core skill lexis with the given entries alone. We will discuss those who stated a proper opinion after having analysed the data we have collected from these given entries.

More lectures or just one - core skill lexis

38%

62%
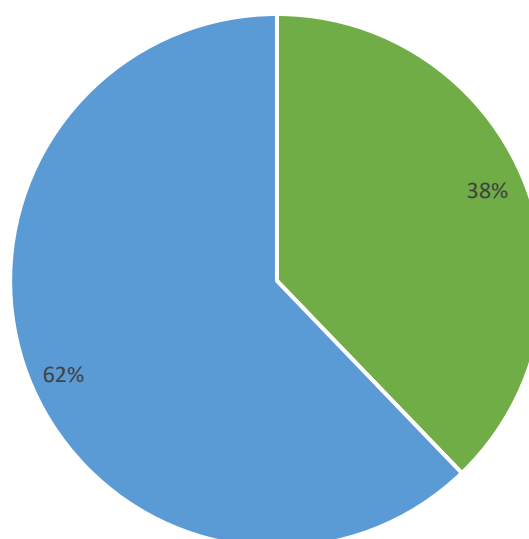
[4b]

After having left aside the 4 entries with LMU students' opinion, we have other 82 entries for the main 2 choices. 51 LMU students stated that they believe only one course is necessary for their career. We can argue by saying that a very well-structured course which lasts one academic semester is enough for LMU students for their entire course of studies. In addition to this, we need to remember that students will learn further lexis in every English class they attend, including seminars of literature, linguistics and similar. Although there might be some other aspects to take into consideration, like their previous lexis knowledge, 62% of LMU students do believe in the efficiency of their core skill lexis course at LMU even if for just one semester. The following four entries, stated interesting opinion from LMU students:

- One is absolutely enough - Lexis is such an unnecessary course
- I think it should be interwoven into courses like reading/writing/ speaking skills, as just studying plain lexis is extremely dull.
- I think voluntary courses about different topics in different semesters would be great!
- Maybe more specific lectures dealing with business English for example.

These four LMU student's opinion are to be considered independently. It is clear that the first one had enough lexis knowledge to find the course and consequently an advanced English vocabulary in use lexis unnecessary. The following two entries wished for different topics and to include lexis in other courses with more of relation to them. As far for the fourth one, they were interested in topics closed to their personal opinion and what they like.

The last question for both grammar and lexis courses at the LMU asked students whether enough topics were covered for their level of English competences. Being that students were only given 3 possible answers; yes, no, not enough, we have set an expectation of 60% in favour of the topic variety. We need to remember that further grammar and lexis topics are also covered during speaking and writing skills classes, but their opinion was asked exclusively on core skill grammar and core skill lexis. The next pie chart provides the entries for the course core skill grammar.

Topics - core skill grammar

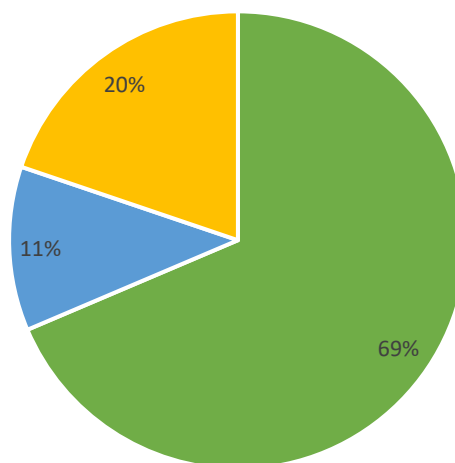■ Yes (71) ■ No (8) ■ Not Enoguh (8)

9%

9%

82%
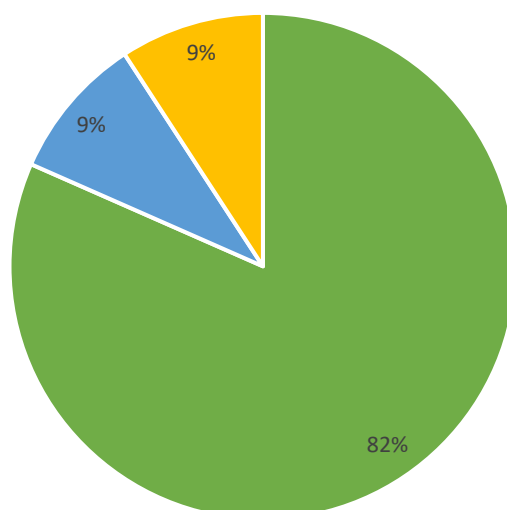
[3c]

Out of 87 entries, we can see that 71 LMU students answered yes to this question, providing us a percentage of 82%. The rest 16 entries divided equally between no, and not enough. It is clear even here that LMU students did find the variety of topics covered for their level of English satisfied their expectations. This feedback is very important for our research because it shows that LMU students are satisfied with the structure of their English course core skill grammar at their institution. The next pie chart provides the entries for the course core skill lexis.

Topics - core skill lexis

■ Yes (59)   ■ No (10)   ■ Not Enoguh (17)

20%

11%

69%

[4c]

Out of 86 entries, we can see that 59 LMU students answered yes to this question, providing us a percentage of 69%. The rest 27 entries divided 10 for no and 17 for not enough. We can say LMU students did find the variety of topics covered for their level of English satisfied their expectations. When compared with the results of core skill grammar, we can say that LMU students are slightly less satisfied with core skill lexis topics, yet the percentage is still positive. This feedback is very important for our research because it shows that LMU students are satisfied with the structure of their English course core skill lexis at their institution.

4.3.2 The results of the Ca' Foscari survey

As we analysed before, the first part of the Ca' Foscari survey asks students six questions regarding writing activities during their academic year. This includes the preparation provided by the teachers, the assignments they were asked to provide and the variety of texts they practiced on.

The first question asks Ca' Foscari students the preparation they believe that based on their experience they have been prepared adequately for writing tasks. We mentioned that at Ca' Foscari, teachers do not focus on one skill during each class. We assumed that at least every two weeks they go through the syllabus and make students practice on this skill. Writing skills are fundamental in student's basic skills and we expect that a good attention is paid to them. We also assumed that during a three-hour class, teachers have the time for making students on their writing skills. Furthermore, we need to remember that the final exam takes place at the end of the academic year, leaving Ca' Foscari students a good amount of time to practice them. In this question, we expect Ca' Foscari to be satisfied with their preparation with at least 50% of them entry yes. Since we gave Ca' Foscari students the option of a multiple-choice entering between yes, no, and not enough, we will represent all the results in the form of a pie chart.

Preparation for the final exam

■ Yes (31)　　■ No (35)　　■ Not Enoguh (34)

31%

35%

34%
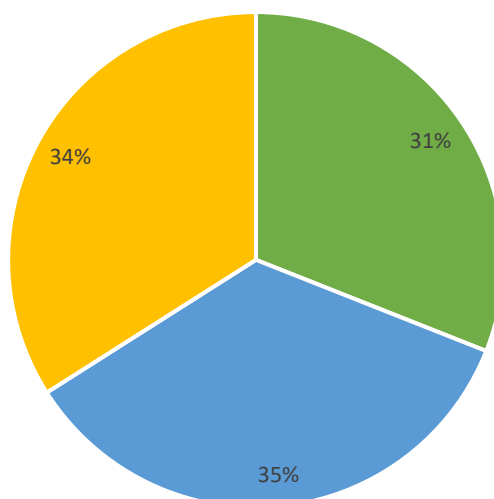
[5a]

We had a total of 100 entries for this question. 31 Ca' Foscari students stated they felt prepared adequately for the final exam. 35 Ca' Foscari students stated they did not feel prepared for the final exam, while the rest chose to say not enough. If we try to relate the low level of satisfaction for the writing skills at Ca' Foscari to the structure of the lessons, we can argue that teachers did not make enough time for the students to practice. We will wait to provide a deep explanation after having argued the following two questions related to the English courses at Ca' Foscari.

In the second question, we ask Ca' Foscari students how many written assignments they have been asked to hand in to their teachers during the academic year. Furthermore, the question of the survey stresses that only assignments related to the final exam were asked to be entered in the answer. Moreover, even after the survey was formulated in Italian, we put the word 'writing' in English so that Ca' Foscari students could not misinterpret what the question was about. However, some Ca' Foscari students missed what the question was asking and provided unrealistic entries. We assume that teachers assigned written texts to be handed in, if the number of students in class was not too much for them to correct them on a regular basis. In an overcrowded class, teachers would not find the time to collect assignments on a regular basis. For the survey to conduct the feedback without any discrepancy, we have not taken into consideration the unrealistic entries; we will not consider those of more than 10. However, we need to underline an important aspect of date exclusion. We have a huge difference in the mean if we do not include the 12 entries for 10. Henceforth, we will provide two mean: one including the number 10 and one not including it. For these reasons, in the chapter 4.2 we expected that Ca' Foscari students answered with an average of 6 to 7 assignments for the academic year finding a mean of 6.5. Since the Ca' Foscari students were asked to enter a number, we will represent the collected data in the form of a bar chart.

Writing skill assignments Ca' Foscari
(1 to 9)

[5b]
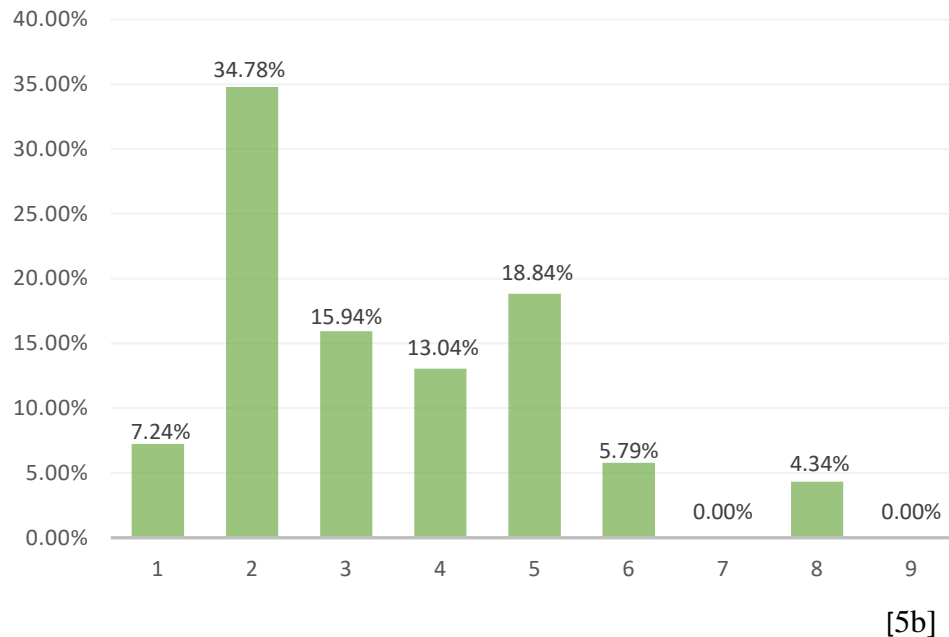
This first bar chart considers 69 feedback from Ca' Foscari students whose entries are between 1 and 9. We can see that the tendency is between 2 and 5 assignments for the academic year. The mean for these entries is 3.40 for the academic year (1.70 for an academic semester). We can argue that this result does not meet our expectation we set in the previous part. 3 or 4 assignments for a whole academic year is not a lot at all. In fact, considering the results of the previous question, this might be one of the main reasons why only 31% of Ca' Foscari students' entries were for feeling prepared adequately for the exam. A further reason for this low number of assignments might be that Ca' Foscari students' classes were crowded, and teachers did not have enough time to collect assignments or even assign any under the circumstances. To try to investigate further, we have provided here under a further bar chart including the 12 more entries of Ca' Foscari students for 10 assignments in the academic year.

Writing skill assignments Ca' Foscari
(1 to 10)

[5c]
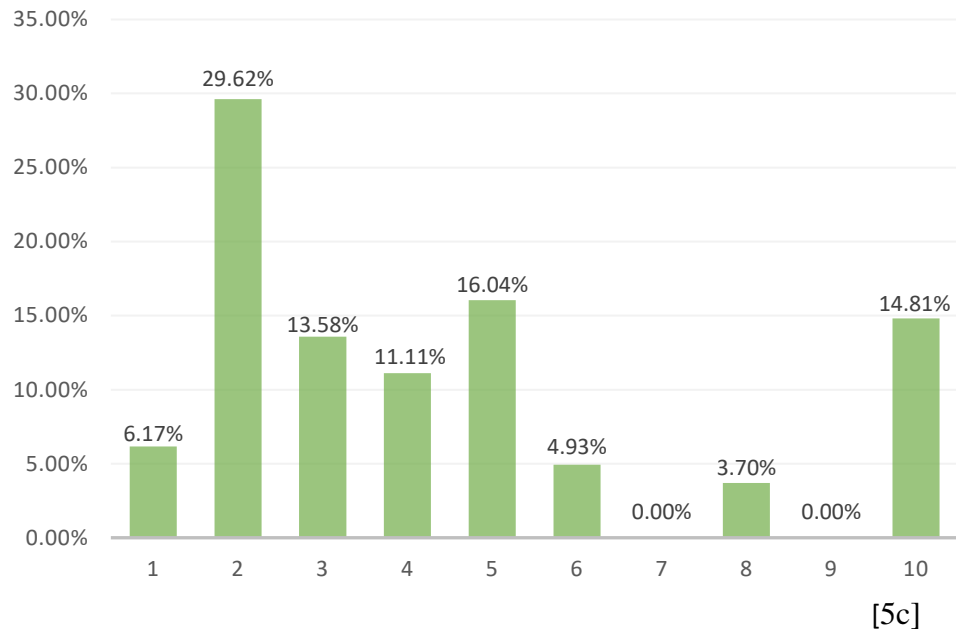
We can see that adding the 12 entries for number 10, the charts change only slightly. The mean is now 4.38 assignments in one academic year (2.19 for an academic semester). We can argue that this result does not meet our expectation we set in the previous part, yet, it is a bit closer to the mean we were expecting of between 6 to 7 assignments in one academic year. Providing students 4 or 5 assignments for a whole academic year might be more than the previous chart. However, having 4 assignments corrected through the whole academic year might be the reason Ca' Foscari students' satisfaction with their preparation was low. If we think that 2 assignments were written in the first semester and other 2 in the second one, Ca' Foscari students might not feel like their skills were properly fostered neither for their final exam, nor for their general knowledge. We will do further investigations with the following question and will try to conclude what the reasons for not getting even close to our expectations are.

The third question of the writing section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students asks them if they felt they were prepared adequately to the final exam. Unlike the first question, this one investigates their own opinion of the structure of the courses. In fact, they have been asked if the preparation they received was adequate from an objective point of view. Even though they might have answered positively to the first question, they might think that the time dedicated to them was not enough for them to garner their writing skills or to get enough preparation for the exam. In other terms, a Ca' Foscari student might think that they have practiced enough for the final exam, yet that they would have needed more preparation about this skill rather than other ones. Being the time for writing skills up to the teachers, we cannot clearly set an expectation for this answer. Students were asked to enter one of the given answers; yes, no, not enough. By doing so, we will be able to represent their satisfaction in the following pie chart. However, we would consider the system efficient if we could reach at least a 50% of entries with yes.

Preparation for the final exam

■ Yes (27)   ■ No (38)   ■ Not Enoguh (35)
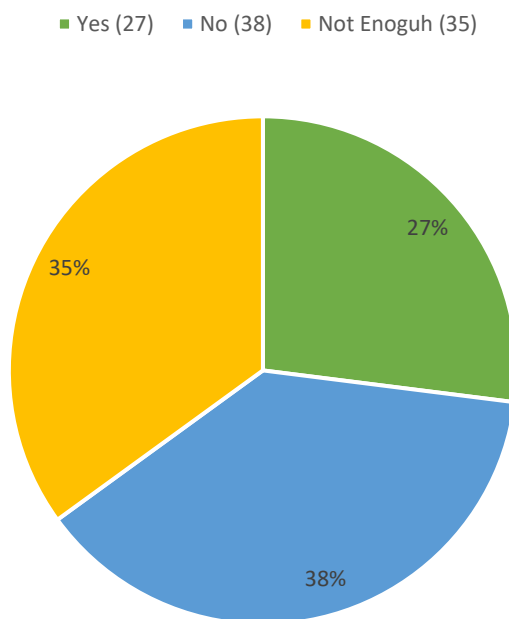
[5d]

Out of 100 entries, we got only 27 Ca 'Foscari students answering yes. This means that we have a 27% of positive feedback, while 38% of them answered no and 35% answered not enough. The positive entries are not close to what we expected. Considering the results of the previous questions, we can argue that Ca' Foscari students believe that the structure of the English lessons does not work as much as they wished. This might be due to the number of assignments during the academic year, since we had a low mean. Beside this, we can assume that further causes might be the numerous skills they have to practice during the academic year and the number of students in their classes. Since the final exam takes place after the academic year of English lessons, some of the intake might not have been practiced over the weeks before the exam. Furthermore, we need to remember that the final exam does not only consist in the English language parts (reading, listening, writing, grammar), but also on the *modulo*. Therefore, we assume that Ca' Foscari students cannot receive an adequate preparation for the final exam in each skill equally. We will do further assumptions after the results for speaking skills and grammar. Regarding the number of students in each class, we cannot tell which one is the appropriate amount. However, we will discuss and compare these results with those from the LMU in the chapter 4.4 of this section.

The fourth question of the survey studies a further aspect; the variety of texts. We stated that essays are an important text type. In addition to these, we wanted to ascertain if students were satisfied with the variety of texts they have been asked to practice on. This question is only needed to grade Ca' Foscari students' level of satisfaction when it comes to the variety of texts offered to them. Given the syllabus offered at this institution, we cannot expect a positive feedback from this question. Ca' Foscari students were asked to provide their level of satisfaction with a number from 1 to 5, where 1 means low, and 5 means high. We expect that a neutral level of satisfaction should be around 3 meaning that anything lower will be considered unsatisfactory. Therefore, anything higher than 3.00 will be considered satisfactory. To represent the 100 entries for this question, we will provide a bar chart.
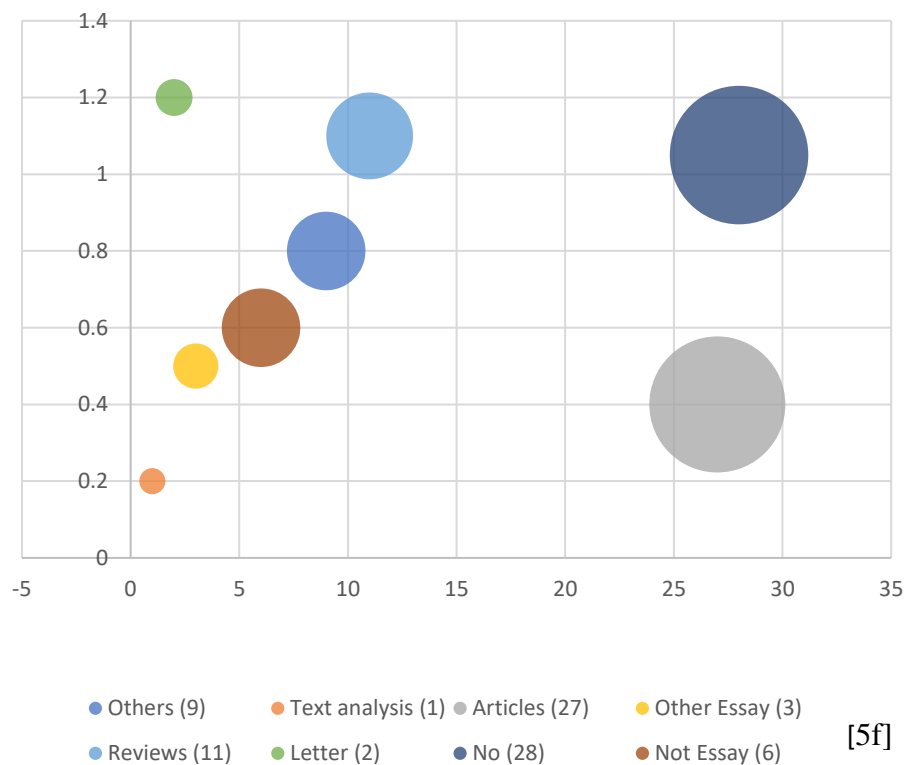
Variety of texts
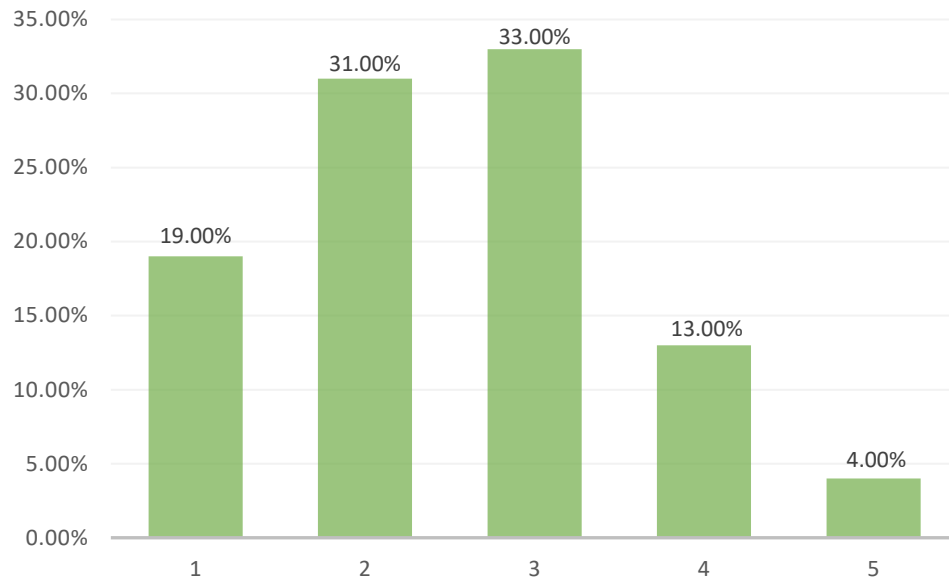
[5e]

The tendency of the entries is between 1 and 3. In fact, the mean for all these entries is 2.52 out of 5. We can argue that when it comes to the variety of texts at Ca' Foscari students are slightly incline not to be satisfied with. We had 19 entries for 1, 31 entries for 2, 33 entries for 3, 13 entries for 4 and 4 entries for 5. Overall, we did not have many entries for 4 and 5, which are the highest representative numbers for the level of satisfaction. On the contrary, the majority of entries are around 2 and 3. Since 3 is the average number between 1 for low and 5 for high, the mean of 2.52 tells us that students are slightly under the average of satisfaction we assigned to 3. We might argue that this is due to the low variety of texts offered. However, we will explore these aspects in the next following two questions, since they will ask students what they wished for.

The fifth question helps us understand better what we analysed in the previous one. This question asks Ca' Foscari students if they had wished they had practiced on different text types. In form of an open question, students could enter the type of texts they wished. Being the variety of texts

an important aspect of English courses, we might expect the entries close to the level of satisfaction just mentioned in the fourth question. However, if students entered a different text type, and these entries are far different than essay, we could argue that they wished for more variety. Being an open answered one, Ca' Foscari can type what they think openly. This could lead us to a better conclusion of the variety of texts Ca' Foscari students think they should be practice on. Since we want to analyse both the number of texts and the entries for each type, we will provide a scatter plot chart.

Variety of texts – Students' entries

Others (9)   Text analysis (1)   Articles (27)   Other Essay (3)
Reviews (11)   Letter (2)   No (28)   Not Essay (6)

[5f]

With this scatter plot, we can see all the text types represented according to the entries. On the bottom, we can see each text type with the colour assigned and the number of entries in brackets. On the top, we see each bubble with the colour; the size of the bubble increases according to

the number of entries, and they shift to the right the bigger they get. Thanks to this representation, we can underline how the majority of Ca' Foscari students entered either no or articles. Considering the whole, the entries for no, meaning Ca 'Foscari's syllabus, are only 28. This means that out of 62 entries, 45.10% of Ca' Foscari students claimed to be satisfied with the syllabus of their institution. We had to filter and collect the answers that could be categorised for a chart. Since students could enter what they would wish for, they did not have any already-given entries. We believe that due to the question being opened, they could not think of further examples. That is why, in the next question we gave them the option to choose text types offered from the course writing skills 2 at the LMU.

The last question about writing skills still focuses on the variety of these texts. Ca' Foscari students could choose between given options of text types that are object of the course of writing skills 2 at the LMU. The options were provided based on the main text types that the writing skills 2 course offers to the LMU students, and the choice of 'no' in case Ca' Foscari students were satisfied with the variety at their institution. We will take into consideration all the entries as percentages. For Ca' Foscari students to be satisfied with the variety of text types their institution offers, we would need to have a percentage of 'no' entries of at least 50%. The following pie chart will provide a visual representation of all the entries.

Variety of texts

- No (12)
- Journal Article (24)
- Scientific Article (21)
- Literary Article (13)
- Critical review (30)

12%

24%

21%

13%

30%
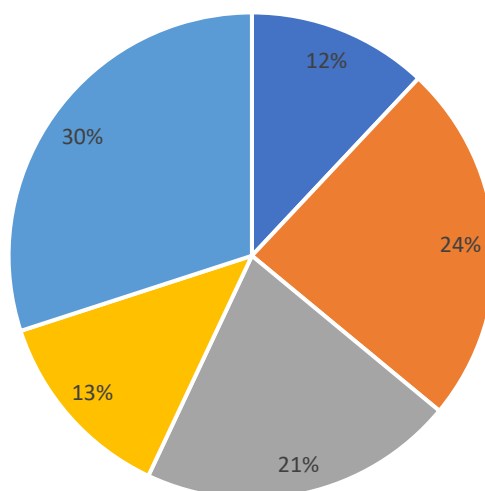
[5g]

As we can learn from this chart, only 12 Ca' Foscari students out of 100 answered 'no'. This makes us assume that 88% of them wished for other text types to learn and practice. In fact, the question asked them first if they thought they were asked very similar text type for the final exam, and if this was the case, to enter one of the different text types they wished for. Beside the literary article, we have all the other entries spread between 20% and 30%. This means that Ca' Foscari students did not have a strong preference toward one text type. On the contrary, variety seems to be a key point when it comes to the syllabus of the writing aspect of English language courses at Ca' Foscari.

We can conclude saying that the variety of text types seems to be a controversial aspect at Ca' Foscari's English language courses. At first, we went through the general satisfaction feedback at Ca' Foscari, where students claimed neither to feel prepared for the final exam nor the time and structure were adequate. Their level of satisfaction was in fact graded under the average. Following on the variety, a small percentage of Ca' Foscari

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students claimed to be satisfied with the variety of texts offered to practice on. We can conclude this section saying that the most relevant aspect of this survey highlighted the desire for Ca' Foscari students, according to their opinion, to learn different text types.

The second section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students' studies students' feedback regarding the structure of speaking activities both during classes and regarding the final exam. We need to remember that the textbook includes speaking activities in each unit. It is up to teachers to make students practice on these. Over the past years, speaking has never been a mandatory task for the final exam. That is why we cannot expect that Ca' Foscari students were asked to practice on speaking activities neither on high priority nor for the final exam. However, in the last few years, Ca' Foscari English teaching system introduced the opportunity for their students to include a speaking part for the final exam. However, this skill is not marked like writing, reading or others. In fact, teachers can assign up to 3 points to the student, which will be added to their final exam mark, only if they first reach the bare minimum grade of 18/30. The speaking evaluation happens at the end of the academic year. Thus, we expect students to have had plenty of time to foster this skill and to be prepared for their evaluation.

The first question regarding this will focus on the adequacy of the class. We asked students if the number of participants during their class was adequate for them to practice speaking activities. Being that the attendance of classes is not mandatory to sit the final exam, we might expect less entries than the total of entries we collected. Ca' Foscari students were asked to provide their level of satisfaction with a number from 1 to 5, where 1 means low, and 5 means high. From this question, we set an expectation of a mean of 3.00 meaning that students have a neutral opinion. Being that classes at Ca' Foscari are not divided by number of students, we would consider any result less than 2.5 as not satisfied, or higher than 3.5 as satisfied. The results have been collected and represented in form of a bar chart.

Class adequacy

[6a]
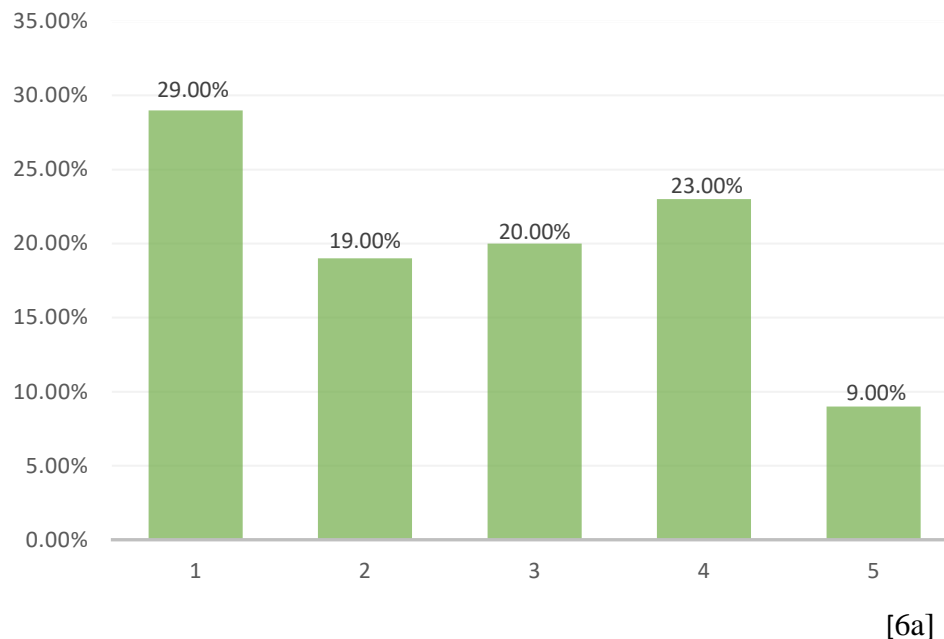
The mean from the 100 entries is 2.24 out of 5. We had 29 entries for 1, 19 entries for 2, 20 entries for 3, 23 entries for 23 and 9 entries for 5 making a total of 100. The mean is slightly less than we expected or considered to be the minimum for being satisfied with the adequacy of the classes. However, we can notice that the results might suggest that students find themselves in different contexts. For some, their class was crowded, while others thought it was acceptable. We can argue that this aspect is quite controversial. We will be able to argue further in the next question, where students were asked if their teacher had the chance to listen to them regularly or properly enough.

The second question investigates on the same aspect analysed above. This time from a different perspective. In this question, we asked Ca' Foscari students if their teacher had the chance to listen to them regularly. Since the textbook includes speaking activities in every module, we expect that teachers make their students practice on them too. However, given the role of the speaking task for the final exam and the controversial number of students in each class, we might expect that teachers did not listen to them

as much as Ca' Foscari students wished for. In order to express their satisfaction in numbers, students had the chance to entry a number from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for 'low' and 5 for 'high'. All the results are represented in the form of bar chart.

Teacher's attention to speaking tasks

[6b]
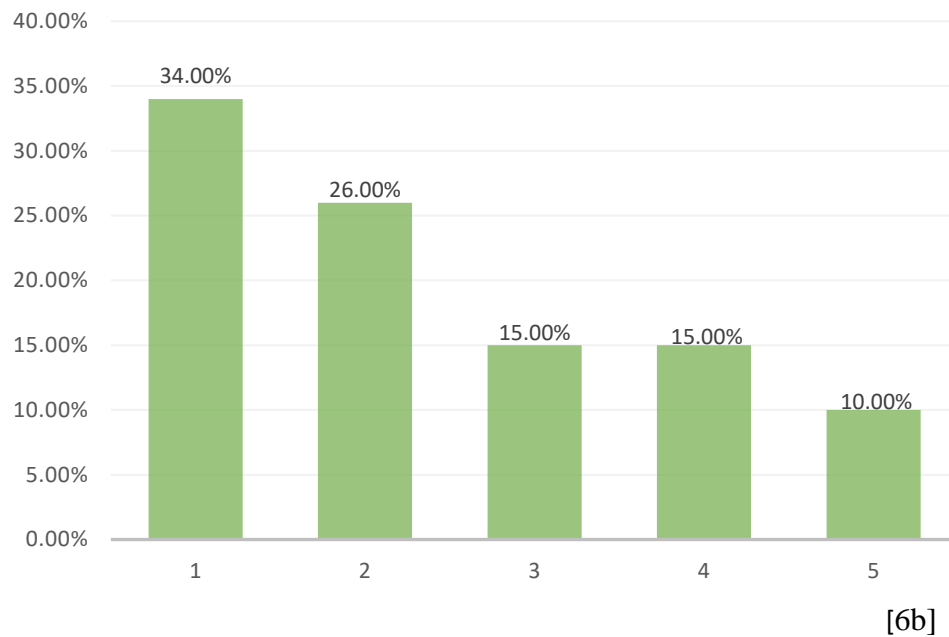
Out of 100 entries, we have a mean of 2.41 out of 5. We can argue that also here, the tendency is more on the low entries. Only 10 out of 100 Ca' Foscari students claimed to be completely positive their teacher had the chance to listen to them regularly. Beside having 15 entries for both number 4 and 3, number 2 has 26 entries, while number 1 has 34 entries. This feedback confirms that the cause for both this question and the previous one for having a low mean is the number of participants in class. Not having a closed number of students in one class clearly influenced Ca' Foscari students' perception of the adequacy of the classes. As a consequence, teachers cannot listen to each student speaking activities as attentive as students wished. In the next following questions, we will study the number of times students were asked to perform speaking tasks during class, if they

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have been prepared for the final exam and how much they believe they learnt.

In the third question, Ca' Foscari students are asked if they had been prepared adequately for the speaking part. As analysed before, being that speaking does not play such an important role for the final exam, we assumed teachers did not pay enough amount of time to prepare students for this task. We believe that they had rather dedicated more time to other tasks which are evaluated on the final exam at the end of the academic year. For this question, we cannot expect a high level of satisfaction from this aspect of speaking. Ca' Foscari students had the chance to enter a number from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for 'low' and 5 for 'high'. Therefore, we might assume that the average mean will be around 2.5 and consider readapting our hypothesis only if the mean goes up by 0.3 for a total of 2.8 mean.

Preparation for the exam

[6c]
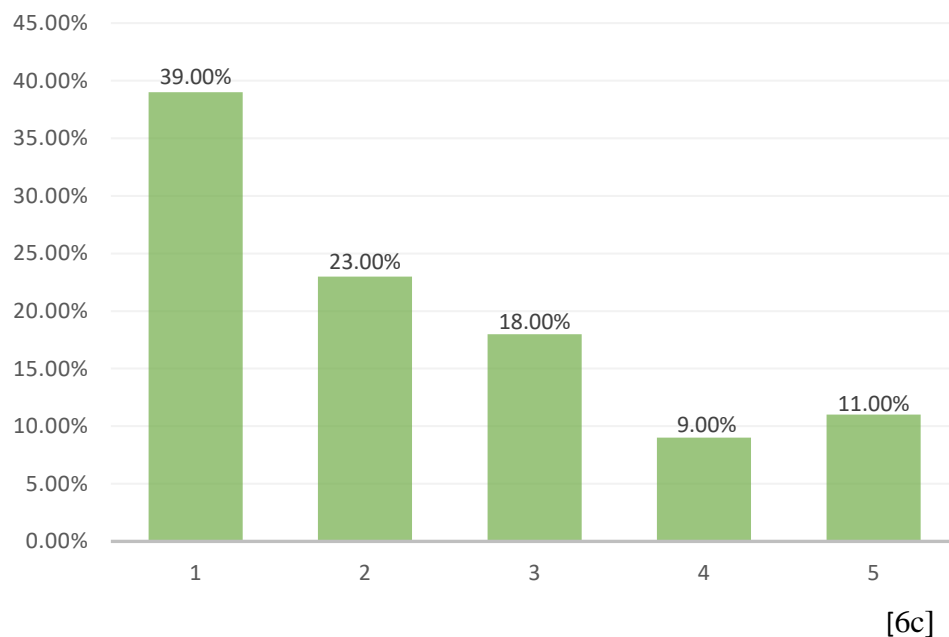
The mean for this question is 2.30. The tendency is once again on the low entries. We can argue that Ca' Foscari students do not believe they were prepared for their speaking exam adequately. We can argue that is due to the small role the speaking part has on the final exam. Consequently, teachers have to sacrifice time during the class to make Ca' Foscari students practice on those aspects that are relevant in the final exam. Even though we will study these aspects in the further questions, we can only argue this and that the number of students in one English language course is not adequate for Ca' Foscari students to practice on their speaking skills. To argue further, the next question will study the amount of times Ca' Foscari students were asked speaking tasks in class.

The fourth question asks Ca' Foscari students to quantify how many speaking activities they have been asked to practice in class. Not only does this gives us a feedback about the amount of time teachers dedicated to these activities, but also the importance that this skill has been given. Nonetheless, a high number of speaking tasks during class versus a low mean for the speaking exam preparation would make us conclude that the preparation time provided to Ca' Foscari students was not enough according to their perception. To collect more opinions possible, Ca' Foscari students had the chance to enter a short sentence (qualitative feedback) or number (quantitative feedback). Here, we will analyse feedback in form of sentences regarding the structure of the English language courses at Ca' Foscari regarding the speaking aspects. Furthermore, we will try to provide a mean for the numbers provided by students. To provide the best representation possible, we will rely on the scatter plot once again.
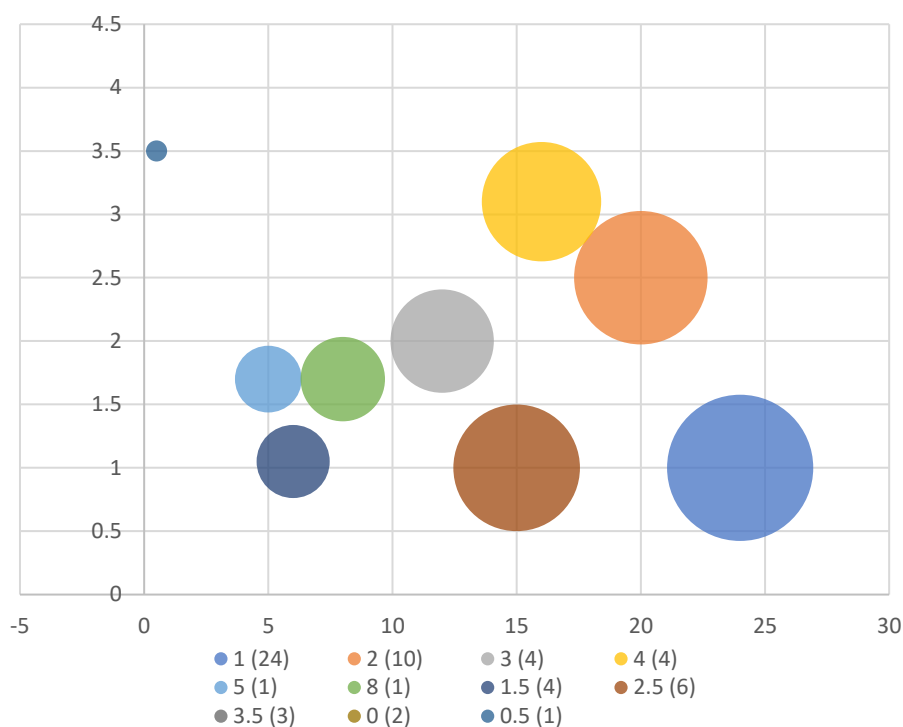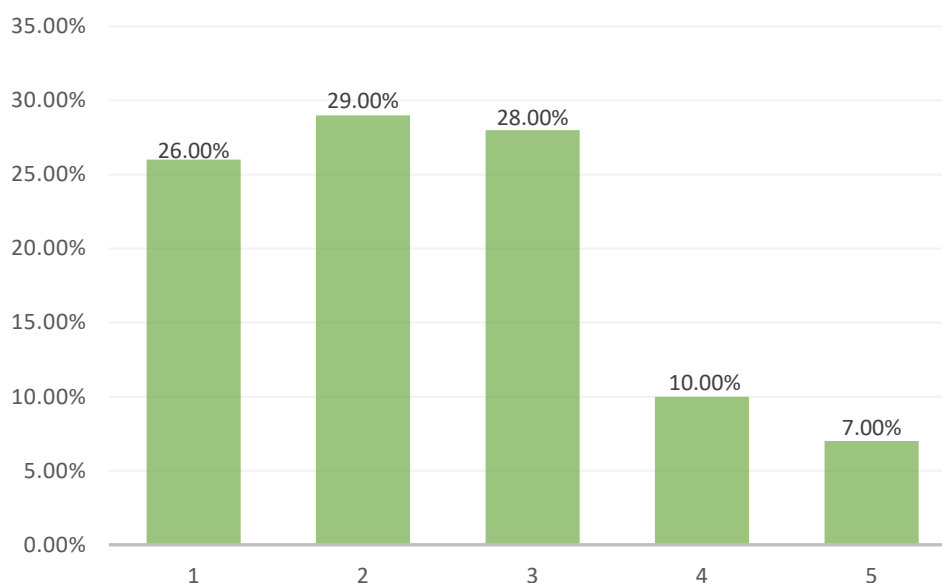
We can see how all the entries are represented on the bottom. For each given speaking tasks during class, we find the correspondent number next to the colour, and in brackets the amount of times it has been entered by Ca' Foscari students. However, some students provided an approximate entry like ½ or once or twice; we represented this data in decimals of 1.5 on the scatter plot. In this way, we could provide a more realistic and closer representation of the given feedback. The size of the bubble grows according to the number of entries and shifts to the right the more it grows. The scatter plot bubbles show the relation between the number of entries and the amount of time teachers make students practice on speaking tasks. It is surprising, how 1 time per class has nearly the same size of 4 times 4. Since the size of the bubbles is created from the percentage of this relation, we see that 4 entries for 4 do not come close to the 24 entries for 1. In terms of entries, it should not take much to pass the relation for 1, yet, this is still the further and biggest out of them all. This highlights how many Ca' Foscari practice less than others. In numbers, the average mean is 1.96 speaking tasks in one lesson. This mean indicates that Ca' Foscari students

are asked for two speaking activities in one class. We need to remember that one class equals two classes in terms of hours. Consequently, we need to divide the mean by two, with a result of 0.98. We can argue that practicing one speaking task in one 90 minutes lesson does not make a Ca' Foscari student practice enough. This might be because of the role of speaking for the final exam. Being that it only gives up to three points to the final mark, this skill might not be a priority in class.

The fifth question of the speaking section for Ca' Foscari students studies the effectiveness of the speaking activities during the English language classes. Teachers move from unit to unit with different topics, starting from the first one at the beginning of the academic year, till the last one by the end of it. Each unit in the book provides different tasks such as reading, speaking, grammar etc. We expected that Ca' Foscari students have been asked to practice their speaking skills regardless of the importance given for the final exam. However, due to the previous results, we argued that hypothesis cannot be proven. However, we expect that these speaking activities have helped them improve their speaking skills. Ca' Foscari students were asked to provide their level of satisfaction with a number from 1 to 5, where 1 means low, and 5 means high. Nonetheless, considering that the textbook provides speaking tasks, we might expect at least a neutral result from this question with a mean of 3.00.
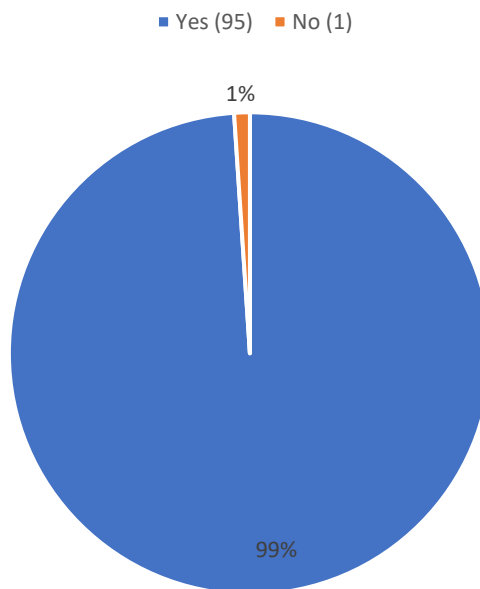
Fostering speaking skills

All the 100 entries ae represented in the bar chart above. We can see how the tendency is between 1 and 3. The mean is 2.43. As previous mentioned, we did not expect Ca' Foscari student to be satisfied with this question. Based on the results we had from the previous questions, we can argue that Ca' Foscari students did not foster their skills due to the little importance given to this skill. In fact, this chart shows that they believe their skills did not improve as much as they wished they did. We will argue further after we discuss the results for next question, where Ca' Foscari students were asked if speaking skill should be taken care of regularly during classes.

The sixth question of the survey for Ca' Foscari students regarding the speaking aspects of English language courses at their institution wants them to provide a feedback regarding the regularity of speaking activities in class. Being the speaking part for the final exam is not mandatory, we do not expect that teachers made enough speaking activities as Ca' Foscari students wished for. However, since the units of the textbook provide speaking tasks, we still expect a fair number of tasks where Ca' Foscari

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students practiced their skills. That is why we want them to provide us a feedback about speaking tasks regularity during classes. The survey did not ask a multiple choice to enter, but rather a short sentence. We split the answers in two main categories: yes and no. We will pick few arguable entries that might prove this research goal. The total of entries is 96 and we will provide them in the form of a pie chart.

Regular speaking tasks

■ Yes (95)   ■ No (1)

1%

99%

[6f]

When it comes to the regularity of speaking skills, Ca' Foscari students strongly believe that it should be practiced quite often during their studies. Out of 96 entries, only 1 answered no. 95 Ca' Foscari students stated that they believe this aspect is rather important. Some of the entries stated they wished for a better organisation or importance to this skill. Others said that the teaching system of this should be redefined. We can conclude that Ca' Foscari students wish for a better structure and importance of the speaking skill aspect at their institution. This is because,

according to the entries we had, 99% of them believe it should be practiced more during their academic studies.

The eighth question wants to provide a further angle of the aspect mentioned above. This question asks Ca' Foscari students if they believe that speaking should be mandatory in their institution. The three options given to students are 'mandatory', 'optional', 'indifferent/not relevant'. In this way, we will be able to provide an additional feedback for speaking skills at Ca' Foscari. We expected that Ca' Foscari students found speaking tasks taught at their institution should be mandatory. That said, we do expect at least 75% of entries for 'mandatory' in the pie chart to prove our thesis research. The following pie chart will represent all the entries graphically.

Role of speaking tasks

■ Mandatory (90) ■ Optional (4) ■ indifferent/not relevant (6)

6%

4%

90%
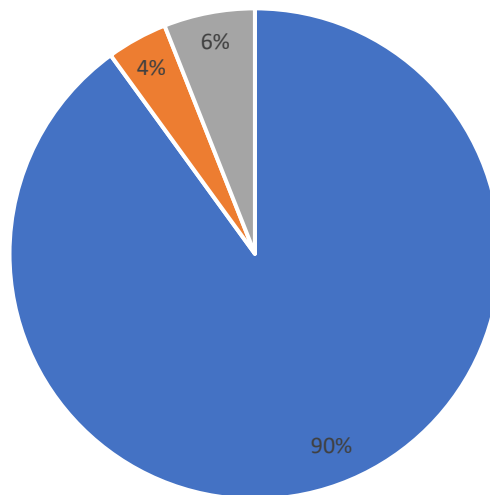
[6g]

When it comes to the importance of speaking skills, Ca' Foscari students strongly believe that it is highly relevant to their studies. Out of 100 entries, only 10 answered optional or indifferent/not relevant. 90 Ca' Foscari students stated that they believe this skill is very important. There

is no need to discuss that these results are quite significant. We can conclude that Ca' Foscari students wish for a better structure of the speaking skill aspect at their institution. This is because, according to the entries we had, 90% of them believe it is important to their academic studies.

The third section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students studies student's feedback about the structure of grammar activities both during classes and regarding the final exam. As we analysed before, grammar lessons are taught from teachers during the English language course *lettorato.* It is important to point out that Ca' Foscari students practice using the textbook during the whole year. Grammar is an important task of the final exam. That is why we expect that teachers and Ca' Foscari students spent quite a good amount of time on grammar topics. Consequently, Ca' Foscari students' feedback should be very positive on these aspects. As a result, the Ca' Foscari survey investigates all these aspects in five questions that have been passed on the institution's students.

The first question of the grammar section for Ca' Foscari students ask them if timewise, grammar has been practiced throughout the whole year equally, sporadically, just close to the exam finals or it has not been covered enough. The most important aspect to remember for this question is that the English language courses at Ca' Foscari have a textbook. As we analysed in chapter 2, this textbook is divided into different units. Each unit has grammar topics that need to be covered to fulfil the preparation the book wants to provide. However, it is up to the teachers how to teach these topics, either following the order of the book, or by implementing it with extra materials. Yet, by following the textbook structure, every topic must be covered for good regularly during the academic year. For these reasons we expect that Ca' Foscari students have been given regular grammar lessons and tasks during the academic year. However, we need to take into consideration another aspect. If the teacher thinks that the class understands grammar topics fast, we will expect that grammar tasks have been present through the year sporadically. We therefore expect that at least 60% of them answered that grammar has been practiced regularly. For an overall

feedback to be considered positive, we then expect that 80% of Ca' Foscari students answered that grammar has been present through the academic year both sporadically and regularly.

Practicing grammar tasks

■ Equally (56)　　　　　　　■ Sporadically (33)

■ Close to the exam finals (7)　　■ it has not been covered enough (4)
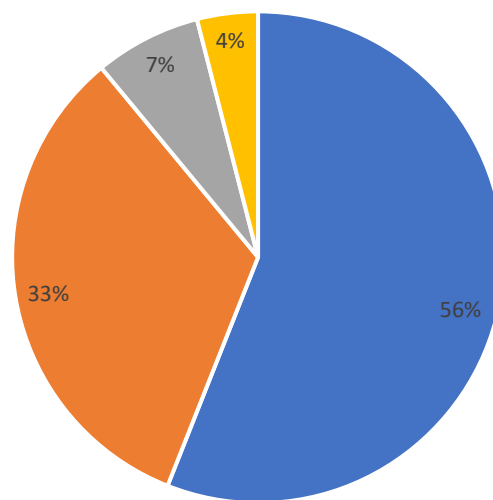

[7a]

Only 56% of Ca' Foscari students answered that grammar has been practiced regularly during the academic year. 33% of Ca' Foscari students stated that grammar has been taught sporadically. By adding these two results, we get that 89% of students have practiced grammar skills with a certain rhythm. Even if 11% stated they did not, this result is important for our research. By stating that grammar has been practiced sporadically, we expect that the 33% of students were made to practice other skills. By comparing the students who answered sporadically with their other entries, we do not get a consistent result to discuss. Some of them gave positive feedback for the other entries, some of them stated the opposite. We can

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conclude saying that at Ca' Foscari grammar has a high priority when compared to the other skills.

The second question of the grammar tasks at Ca' Foscari asks students if the grammar topics taught during the academic year have been important for their overall improvement in the English language. Considering the previous results, we assume that teachers spend a lot of time introducing the grammar topics useful for the final exam and consequently improving Ca' Foscari students grammar skills. This leads us to this question, where we expect that a good percentage of Ca' Foscari students find that they benefitted from the English course structure at Ca' Foscari. Students have been given a three-enter option; yes, no, just partially. We expect that given the above-mentioned aspects; we can assume that the positive feedback is at least 70% for yes.

Grammar topics

■ Yes (50)   ■ No (5)   ■ just partially (45)

45%

50%

5%
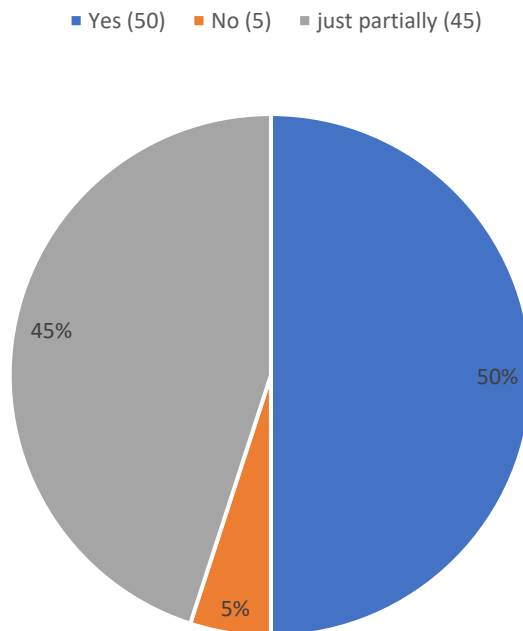
[7b]

Out of 100 entries, 50% of Ca' Foscari students stated that the grammar topics at their institution benefitted their grammar skills. On the other hand, 45% state just partially, and 5% no. Even though we were expecting at least a 70% of entries for yes, we can say that the majority of Ca' Foscari students are satisfied with the variety of topics. Only 5% of them were not. Considering that each student comes from a different background, knowledge, and skills, we need to underline that even not completely satisfied, 45% of students stated that they learnt new topics. We can conclude saying that the variety of grammar topics satisfies Ca' Foscari students when it comes to their aim of Enough level.

The third question of the grammar section for Ca' Foscari students ask them if their grammar tasks have been checked regularly. The three answers possible for this question were yes, no, and not enough. The feedback of this question will allow us to deduce two main aspects; the time invested in grammar activities and students' perspective on it. For the first aspect, while the first question studied the grammar taught through the year, we do not know if enough or the same time has been dedicated to the correction of grammar tasks. This last aspect will be implicitly deducted from the feedback of this question. The second aspect will be directly observed by the entries. To prove the efficiency of the English language courses at Ca' Foscari we would expect that 70% of students answered yes to this third question. The following pie chart will provide the entries we collected.

Grammar tasks checked

■ Yes (56) ■ No (6) ■ Not enough (37)

37%

57%

6%
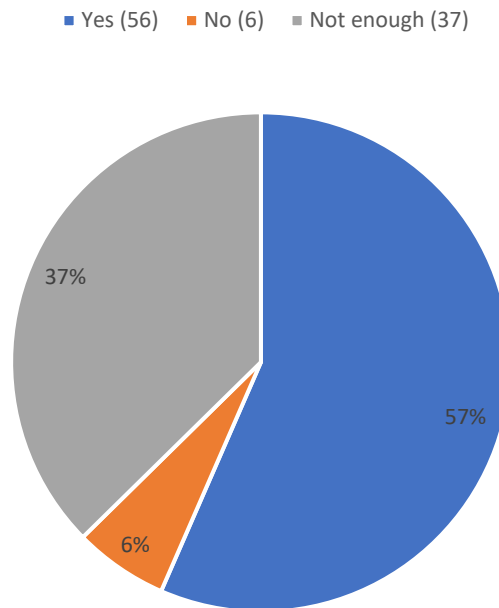
[7c]

For the expectation of this question, we did not reach our goal. We only have 56.6% of Ca' Foscari students claiming their grammar tasks were controlled and taken care of during the academic year. Just 6% of them stated no. We can argue that the rest of students, 37.4%, did not get their assignment checked as wished, due to the numerous tasks and skills teachers need to take care of to give them the preparation they need. However, the percentage does not differ too far to make us assume less than we needed to. We needed to compare this result with the one of the first question. Considering the positive feedback for the first question regarding grammar and the 56.6% of positive entries from this third question, we assume that teachers spend a good amount of time teaching grammar and also enough time dedicated to correcting students tasks to make sure they understood the lesson. We can conclude that our assumptions for the first question are further motivated from the feedback of this question.

The fourth question of the grammar section for Ca' Foscari students ask them if they think that the final exam tests the grammar tasks they have been prepared through the academic year. Given the positive results we got from the previous questions, we expect that students did not feel unprepared for their final exam. Since teachers do know what the final exam is like, we expect that they made students practice on these topics. Furthermore, if there should be any different topic tested, we believe that teachers made Ca' Foscari students practice on these to succeed in the grammar part of the final exam. The answers possible for this question was a number from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for a low score, and 5 for the highest one. Since the syllabus is the same for every student, we strongly believe that, to prove our research goal, we will find a mean above 4.0 for this question.

Grammar skills for final exam
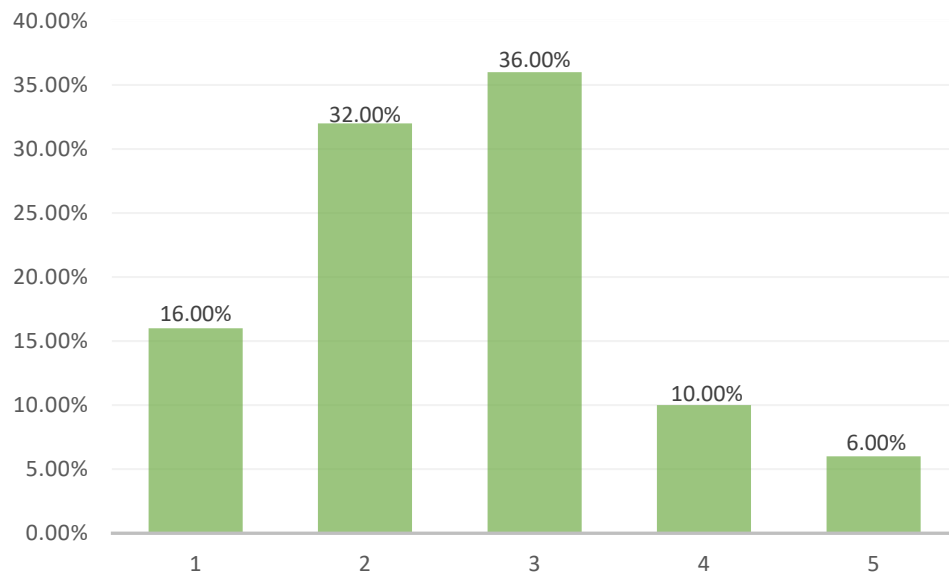
[7d]

Out of 100 entries, we had 16 entries for 1, 32 entries for 2, 36 entries for 3, 10 entries for 4 and 6 entries for 5. The average mean for this question is 2.58. Being the positive feedback we collected from the previous

question; we expected a much higher mean than this. Since the majority of students improved their English, had their grammar tasks checked, we expected that the final mean could have been around 4.00. We might argue that this low score is due to the final exam. The final exam might be more difficult than what Ca' Foscari students expected. Given the good feedbacks, this is the only option to argue. The grammar task for the final exam might be more difficult than what Ca' Foscari students practiced on. Had the previous results being negative, we would have concluded differently.

The last question for the grammar part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students studies the external materials provided by teacher and if they were adequate. This aspect will allow us to implement the previous question; did teachers only focus on the grammar topics of the book, or did they provide adequate materials to make them practice? If we consider that Ca' Foscari students have been given more materials to practice their grammar, we do believe that these materials must have been useful to improve their skills and succeed in the exam. As the textbook already provides grammar units with exercises, we might as well assume that some teachers did not provide extra grammar materials for their students. We will not investigate if these materials have been useful to them or not since this would only be arguable for a qualitative feedback from students and not help us with the structure of the English language course at Ca' Foscari. Students have been given the option to answer yes, no, or they have not been given any materials. The following pie chart will provide all the entries.

Grammar materials from teacher

■ Yes (61)　■ No (4)　■ No extra materials provided (35)

4%

35%

61%
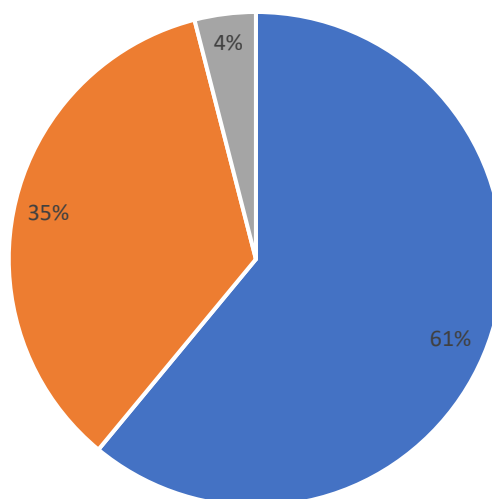
[7e]

61 Ca' Foscari students answered that the materials given to them by teacher were useful. Only 4 answered no. The rest, 35, stated they were not given extra materials. Based on the previous results, we could argue that those who got extra materials answered positively to the previous questions. However, we assume that those who did not received any extra materials besides those in the textbook, are those who answered negatively to the previous questions. If we deduce this, we can argue that, when given extra materials, Ca' Foscari students feel well prepared for their final exam. Furthermore, we can assume that they also believe their English level improves.

The next section of the survey for Ca' Foscari students investigates the structure of English language courses focusing on the aspect of lexis. Lexis is present through the whole academic year and in the textbook units as much as grammar is. For the final exam there is no task that includes lexis from the unit Ca' Foscari students learned from. Lexis activities are meant to improve student's vocabulary. This last should benefit them for

the writing, reading, and listening part of the exam. Henceforth, students can learn from each unit that provides new words and terminology according to the topic. To investigate this aspect, the survey asks three questions to Ca' Foscari students. Since we are only interested in the structure of the course, we will not study what topics have been chosen, but rather if they benefit from them or not. Furthermore, they will be asked their opinion and expectations according to lexis aspects at their institution. In addition to this, the survey asks a fourth question regarding the course of 'Società e culture di lingua Inglese'. This question wants to study if Ca' Foscari students were satisfied with the syllabus of this course. This is because we will compare the syllabus of this course with the one of the LMU and see which one Ca' Foscari students would have preferred.

The first question of the lexis part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students studies if they believe enough tasks and time have been dedicated to the lexis aspect through the academic year. We want to learn from Ca' Foscari students their feedback on this aspect based on the amount of time spent for lexis. Like speaking skills, lexis is not present in the final exam in form of a proper part, but rather indirectly tested through other tasks. Therefore, we do not expect that the same importance to other tasks has been given to lexis during the English language courses in the academic year. Ca' Foscari students have been given three possible entries; yes, no, not enough. That is why we estimate that only 50% of students will find that enough tasks and time have been provided through the year. The following pie chart will give us a visual representation of the data collected.

Lexis tasks

■ Yes (45) ■ No (9) ■ Not enough (46)

45%

9%

46%
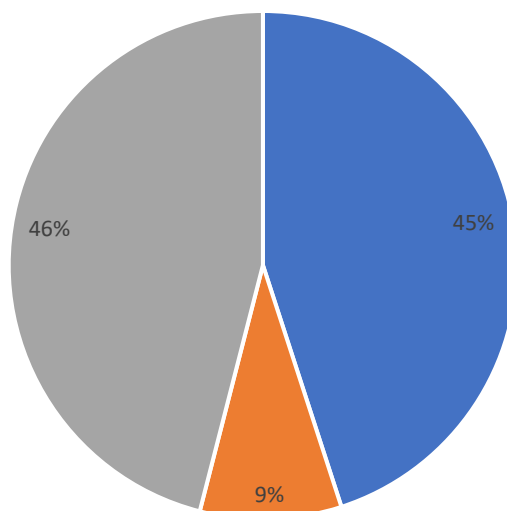
[8a]

What we learn from this chart is quite controversial, yet simple to understand. 46% of students believe that they their teacher did not spend enough time for lexis task. On the other hand, 45% of them believe the contrary. Only 9% stated no. Being the role lexis has for the final exam, and 45% being rather close to our expectation, we can say that Ca' Foscari students believe they spent enough time on lexis. Had we had 46% of entries for no and 9% for not enough, we would have argued differently. Yet, the results are quite clear. For the 45% of Ca' Foscari students who answered yes, we argue that their teacher spent enough time to make them feel prepared or at least that their level of proficiency increased. For the 46% of Ca' Foscari students who entered not enough, we argue that being the secondary role of lexis in this institution, they at least were provided a minimum of lexis competences that would benefit them for their career.

The second question of the lexis part of the survey for Ca' Foscari investigates if lexis is an important aspect for their area of studies. Not only would a positive feedback make us argue that absent tasks in the final exam

like lexis are very relevant for students, but also would hint that students would like more activities. However, we will discuss this last in the next following question. If Ca' Foscari students believe that lexis has a relevant importance for their area of studies and not enough activities are present in the courses, we will argue that the English course structure at Ca' Foscari is not providing students the preparation they wished for their career. They have been given three possible entries; yes, no, not relevant enough. We could only argue this if the entries of the survey are at least more than 60%. The following pie chart will give us a visual representation of the data collected.

Lexis role

■ Yes (99) ■ No (1)

1%

99%

[8b]
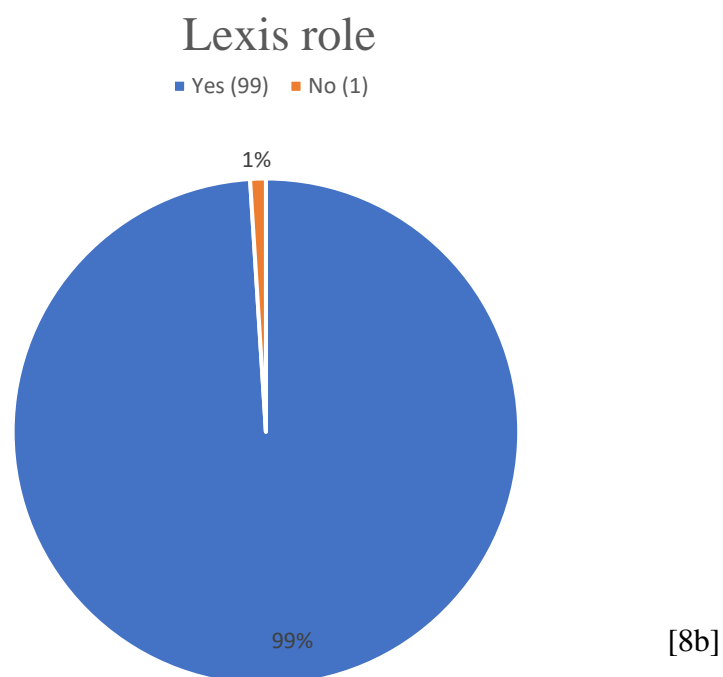
Out of 100 entries, only 1 stated no. The rest 99 entries stated they believe lexis is rather important. It is undoubtedly clear that lexis seems to be an important aspect of the English language in higher education. Ca'

Foscari students do not leave any room for doubts in this question. We can argue this result only saying that Ca' Foscari students strongly believe that lexis is thought to be an important aspect of English studies.

The third question of the lexis part of the survey for Ca' Foscari students asks them if, according to their expectation, they would have rather had more lexis activities or not. The feedback would allow us to investigate Ca' Foscari students perspective about the amount of time spent for lexis courses. Consequently, we will understand if Ca' Foscari students wished for more lexis activities with a direct feedback. They have been given five possible entries; more activities, not relevant, not expecting more, less, or nothing. Being that students were provided five different entries; we will be able to study the most chosen ones to argue what student's expectations are. According to the result of the first lexis question, we estimate that Ca' Foscari students wished for more lexis activities. We can prove our research goal with a percentage of 50% of entries of students wished for more activities.

Lexis tasks expectation

■ more activities (71)   ■ not relevant (6)   ■ not expecting more (21)
■ less (0)   ■ nothing (1)
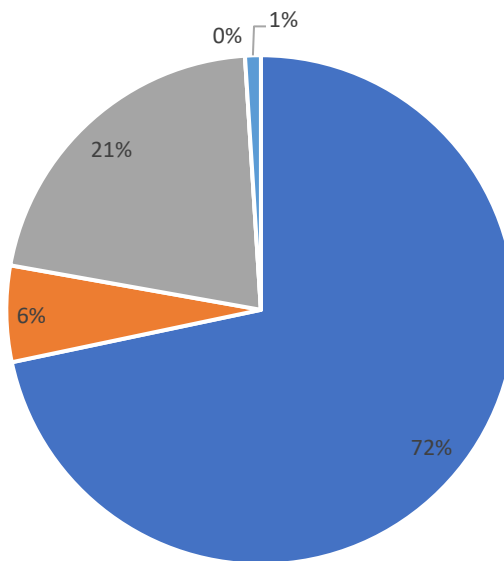
[8c]

According to these results, 71.70% of Ca' Foscari students expected more lexis tasks. Based on the results of the previous questions, we already stated that Ca' Foscari students believe lexis is an important aspect of their career. Furthermore, we stated that the activities done during the academic year were close to be enough. However, with this question Ca' Foscari students stated that they wished for more lexis tasks. Being that lexis has a secondary role in English language courses at Ca' Foscari, we expected a percentage of 50%. More than 50% has been provided from this question. We can conclude that even if the lexis tasks were enough, Ca' Foscari students wished for more tasks. This makes us assume that Ca' Foscari provides sufficient lexis tasks for their students, yet their students want to improve this aspect of their English preparation.

The last question of this survey asks Ca' Foscari students if the syllabus of 'Società e culture di lingua Inglese' is what Ca' Foscari offers, or any different. Ca' Foscari students had been given the option to enter what the syllabus of Ca' Foscari is, literature, and what the syllabus of the LMU course 'Cultural Studies 1'. Moreover, a third option was given where they could enter what they wished it could be. The only reason we are studying this aspect and to collect feedback, is because the LMU has inserted the cultural course under the English language courses, and Ca' Foscari syllabus is a literature course. The following pie chart will provide the number of entries for the Ca' Foscari syllabus, for the LMU syllabus and under 'other' we will pick the entries that differ from these two. However, by going through these, we will argue what they are about and if we could classify them in one of the previous categories.

Società e cultura di lingua inglese sylabus

6%

94%
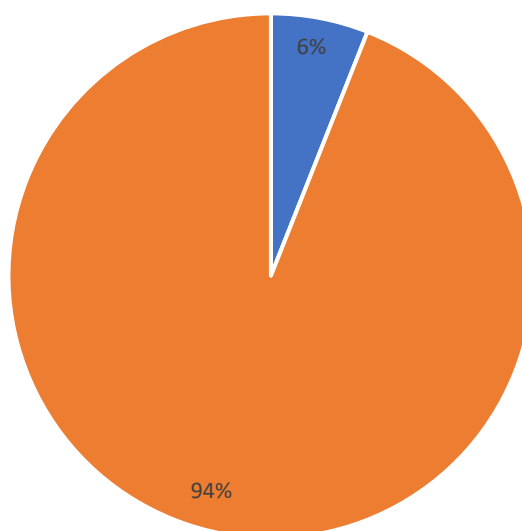
[9a]

Out of 56 entries from Ca' Foscari students, we had 3 entries for the syllabus of Ca' Foscari, and 47 for the syllabus of the LMU. 1 student stated they did not attend the course. 4 Ca' Foscari students decided to give us their opinion on the subject. It is evident how Ca' Foscari students would have much rather had a course about the system of the anglophone countries like the one of the LMU. It must be noted that the name of this course is about society and cultures. However, the syllabus offered at Ca' Foscari is simply English literature. Ca' Foscari students had the chance to enter both options, and clearly they decided for something different than what their institution offers to them.

4.4 Comparing the results of the LMU and Ca' Foscari

This section will consider what we learnt from all chapters. We started introducing important aspects of teaching to adults in the first chapter. Following this, the second chapter outlined the structure of English lessons at Ca' Foscari. We went through the main structure of the Italian university and how the teaching is shaped. Furthermore, we outlined what the final exam expects students to succeed. For the third chapter, we outlined the single courses of the LMU we would analyse and ask questions about to its students on the survey. Last, the chapter 4 started outlining each question and what we expected to prove the efficiency of both systems. Moreover, we analysed each single question with feedback and provided a graphical representation. Each number for each chart will be used in this section instead of reporting the chart when comparing the feedback. For this section 4.4, we want to compare the results of both LMU and Ca' Foscari to highlight how the two structures differ. To do so, we will rely on the feedback of each institution's students and comment about any discrepancy or possible improvement. We will start with the writing skill aspects of the LMU and Ca' Foscari.

The first aspect we will discuss in this section is the adequacy of the classroom for students to practice their writing skills. We went through feedback of both institution and, when compared, we find that the charts 1a and 1e for the LMU are highly positive. Even though the survey was based on the number of hours spent, we argued that the limited number of students in each class played a big role and importance for this feedback. For Ca' Foscari, we argued that there is not an actual limited number of participants in class. We cannot argue what an appropriate number of students for one class could be. However, we can state that the majority of LMU students were really satisfied with their preparation, according to charts 1a and 1e. If we assume that this is because of the number of students in each class, we can then argue that the right amount for students to feel prepared and satisfied is between 15 and 20 participants. It must be noted that we have

not asked any question about class adequacy to Ca' Foscari students. The reason for this is that their classes are not shaped in number, but rather according to students' second language learning aside from English. This would have led to unreliable results since Ca' Foscari students would have come from different classes and contexts. We cannot state what we stated for the LMU for Ca' Foscari as well, since for their preparation on the chart 5a, only 31% of students claimed not to be satisfied with their preparation. Here we argued that one of the main causes could be the possible crowded classes. When compared, we can say that the LMU makes students practice in small classes to avoid crowded classes. This choice made LMU students satisfied, which the undefined number of participants for Ca' Foscari did not for their students. We can conclude saying that we cannot decide what a proper number of students in one class should be, but that the LMU has found what works efficiently for both LMU students and their structure of English lessons.

Another important aspect has emerged from the survey and is relevant to highlight between the two institutions for writing skills is the variety of texts offered. As we learnt before, the LMU makes a first writing skills course for every LMU English student to attend. After having passed this, they can attend the writing skills course which syllabus and texts are based on their curriculum; either this is bachelor, teaching or they expressed their interest in business or similar. This variety seemed to make LMU students satisfied with the English teaching structure at their institution. We learnt this from charts 1c and 1g. In fact, the chart referred to the second writing skill class, 1g, showed a higher mean of 3.97 against 3.13 for 1c. Therefore, we assumed that having a dedicated syllabus for each curriculum speaks for student to reach their personal aim and consequently proficiency in the language they are studying. We adapted the variety topic for Ca' Foscari students in three questions. The first one, 5e, asked students about their level of satisfaction they have for the text types they practiced on. We obtained a low mean of 2.52. We investigated further with the chart 5f. They were asked if they had other text types they wished they had rather practiced during the academic year. They had the chance to enter what text type they

wanted, and what emerged is that only 28 answered no. In terms of satisfaction, this is not a high result. The majority of Ca' Foscari students wished they could practice on other text types like articles and reviews, which probably are needed for their ideal career after their studies. The following question, which feedback are represented in the chart 5g, provided different text types they could have liked, accordingly to those of the writing skills 2 course at the LMU. Only 12 Ca' Foscari students stated they were satisfied with the variety offered at their institution. Since Ca' Foscari has three different curricula, we assume that students are inclined to practice on those topics which could be those they need for their career. However, Ca' Foscari does not give students the chance to choose the syllabus through the three years. When comparing the results from both institutions, we learn that LMU students' feedback are more positive than those at Ca' Foscari. We can argue that the cause of this is the variety of text types offered. It is clear from the chart 5g that Ca' Foscari students wished they had been given more variety of text types during their academic career.

The third aspect to consider is the number of written texts assigned during the academic semester for the LMU and during the academic year at Ca' Foscari. We asked students of both institutions to quantify how many written assignments they have been asked to hand in to their teacher. It is very important to notice that we make as clear as possible that we only meant those regarding writing skills (texts). We need to remember that these institutions have a different structure; the LMU has a single-semester course for writing skills, while Ca' Foscari spreads these through the whole academic year. Therefore, when commenting the two means, we should expect that the mean of the LMU should be half of the Ca' Foscari one. From the charts 1b and 1f of the LMU we learn that from the first course students write approximately 4 assignments in one semester, whereas for the second one, students write approximately 5 assignments in one academic semester. For being a semester course only, we have been provided a high number of written assignments. However, for Ca' Foscari, we only found a mean of 3.40 assignments in the chart 5b for the whole

academic year, or 4.38 if we consider the chart 5c. Even if we consider the chart 5c, LMU reached the same goal or passed it in one academic semester only. This makes us argue that the structure at the LMU works in favour of the times students are asked to write assignments and tasks. Furthermore, for this result, LMU students claimed to be satisfied and therefore prepared for their final task in charts 1a and 1e. The numerous amounts of written assignment have probably influenced their level of satisfaction from these two charts. The low level of written assignments at Ca' Foscari probably had the same influence in the students' perception of the English lesson structure at their institution. This would explain the low percentage, 31%, of positive feedback for the chart 5a. We can conclude saying that a single-skill course makes student practice more and make them feel prepared adequately enough for their exam.

For the next discussion, we will take into consideration the results regarding speaking skills at Ca' Foscari and LMU. As we learnt before, the LMU requires their student to practice on speaking skills in two different courses during the academic year. The second course, speaking skills 2 is graded, while the first one is only pass or fail. Contrarily, at Ca' Foscari speaking is evaluated as extra points, from 0 to 3, for the final exam under the condition that students reach the minimum grade before adding the speaking task points. We will compare these two different structures based on the number of students in class, the times they practiced and if they received an adequate preparation for their exam.

For the first aspect, we need to understand the charts 2a for LMU and 6a for Ca' Foscari. Being that these are both bar charts with entries from 1 to 5, we can directly compare the two means without needing to adapt any argument. For the LMU, we had a level of satisfaction for the class adequacy of 4.30, whereas for Ca' Foscari the level was 2.24. It is evident that LMU students are affected by this result from the limited number of participants allowed in each speaking skill class. As much as stated for the writing skill courses, having a limited number of students in one class allows their participants to foster the skill enough to make them feel

satisfied with it. The reasons behind the low score at Ca' Foscari are two: the low impact speaking has on the final exam and the shape of the classes. Being that speaking only adds up to 3 points to the final grade, this skill only has a second role when compared to others. Furthermore, the shape of the classes is secondly to the language students' study at Ca' Foscari after English. While we might expect some low participants in some classes, there might be a high number of students picking the same language to study and find themselves in a crowded English language class. We need to underline that we cannot decide what a proper number of students in one class should be. However, based on the results of our research, it seems that the LMU has found what works efficiently for both LMU students and their structure of English lessons.

The second aspect we are going to compare between the two institutions is the number of times they practiced for the final exam. Being the structure at Ca' Foscari, we could not expect a high level of entries for this aspect. In fact, if we consider the charts 6b and 6c, we can argue that Ca' Foscari student were not under the impression they have been prepared enough for the final exam. In addition to this, if we consider the chart 6d, we can argue that the relation between the amount of entries for the same number of speaking tasks during class is not enough to make them feel like they practiced for it. In fact, the speaking tasks from the textbook are not those asked for the final exam. The tasks of each unit are related to the unit of the book. What Ca' Foscari students are asked to perform in the speaking exam is different and decided from the commission of English studies at Ca' Foscari. On the other hand, LMU students stated that in a one-semester course they practice nearly 4 times for the exam with a mean of 3,75. Here, the structure at the LMU facilitates the chance to practice on speaking skills during classes. In fact, what we learn from chart 2b, is that thanks to the structure of these courses, they strongly believe that their teacher has the chance to listen to them regularly during classes. Furthermore, the chart 2c proves that their level of satisfaction with their preparation for the final exam is of 4.15 out of 5. It is relevant to underline that from chart 2e at the LMU and 6f from Ca' Foscari, both students at these institutions strongly

believe in the importance of speaking skills. We can conclude saying that the structure at the LMU allows students to practice and feel they had been provided an adequate preparation thanks to the structure of English language courses. On the contrary, the second role speaking has at Ca' Foscari and the structure of the classes do not help Ca' Foscari student neither to foster this skill nor to be prepared enough for the final exam.

The third aspect we are comparing underlines the different results between the two institutions for students' perception of preparation for the final exam. For the LMU we have asked students to express their grade of satisfaction from 1 to 5 and collected the result in chart 2c. Here, we obtained a mean of 4.15 out of 5. We did the same with Ca' Foscari: we obtained a mean of 2.30 from the cart 6b. The two results differ significantly, and we can argue that this is because of the structure at their university. Since at Ca' Foscari speaking does not have the same importance as other skills, teachers do not do the same either. That is why, when seeing the results in chart 6b, Ca' Foscari students do not believe their teachers had the chance to listen to them regularly enough. Even if this could be due to the number of participants, we can also argue that this is because of the role the structure at Ca' Foscari gives to this skill. From their students' point of view, we saw how they believe speaking is a very relevant skill from charts 2e and 6f. Moreover, judging from the high results of these last charts, we can argue that speaking is maybe more relevant than other skills which probably receive more attention than speaking.

The next aspect we are going to compare between the two institutions, LMU and Ca' Foscari, is the structure of the English grammar during the whole academic career of students. Unlike the previous classes, LMU only has a one-semester class of grammar. We argued that this course has the identical structure for the lexis one at the LMU. That is why we formulated the same questions for these two courses. This structure of teaching grammar at the LMU differs a lot when compared to the one at Ca' Foscari. In the last one, grammar is practiced during the whole cycle of studies. Furthermore, grammar is always present in the final exam. We will

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compare these two different structures based on how they make their students practice, the duration of the skill during the academic career of students and the adequacy of topics offered.

For the first aspect, we know that both LMU and Ca' Foscari use a textbook to support the teaching of grammar and lexis. While for the LMU courses students have one book for grammar and one for lexis exclusively, at Ca' Foscari courses students have the same textbook that provides all the topics needed. Furthermore, both structures allow their teachers to provide materials to their students. The LMU structure needs students to fulfil the online Moodle test every week. Each test is based on the topic that was taught in class. Moreover, each test consists in multiple choice like the final exam. By doing so, LMU students will practice their new grammar topics fostering their skill and practice on exam examples at the same time. This aspect of the English structure at the LMU has proven that students believe this method has made them practice enough for the final exam. We assume this due to the positive number of entries for the chart 3a. The data from the chart 3a provides a percentage of 90% LMU students stating they believed the Moodle tests were a good approach to make them keep exercised. Studying the Ca' Foscari structure, we know that a mandatory Moodle quiz does not exist. Every practice task is provided by teachers during the academic year. Even though we learnt from chart 7a that grammar is a skill that receives a proper amount of attention during the academic year, in chart 7d Ca' Foscari students did not enter a positive feedback. In this chart students had to provide their feedback regarding the final exam if they believed the final exam tested their skills that have been fostered during the academic year. With a low mean of 2.58 out of 5, we can argue that Ca' Foscari students do not believe the final exam tests such skills or aspects. We think this low score is due to a possible low preparation for the final exam. In other words, only tasks from the textbook were assigned during the academic year. We can state this, due to the 35% of entries in the chart 7e. Even if a good 61% of students were provided extra materials from teachers, 35% of them did not. We believe that even from these 61% who answered there might be a disagreement with the way they were prepared

for the exam. When the two system are compared, we learn that at the LMU students practice on grammar tasks from Moodle every week. We conclude saying that a continuous and focused approach to grammar can be the main difference between these two systems which consequently affects students' perception and preparation for the final exam.

The second aspect we are going to discuss is how the teaching of grammar differs from these two structures in terms of duration. While the LMU offers one grammar course during the academic career, Ca' Foscari includes grammar topics and tasks for the final exam in every single academic year. For LMU students we asked students if they wished to have more grammar classes, or if one was enough. We collected the data in chart 3b. What we learnt from this, is that 54 students, meaning the 65% of the entries, stated they believe one course was enough. This feedback makes us assume that LMU students believe the English grammar structure works efficiently for them. Moreover, with chart 3c we proved that 82% of the entries claimed that the variety of topics covered by one single grammar course makes them satisfied. We assume that having one course that goes through given topics for one semester without focusing on one single skill makes students feel prepared for what their expectation of academic level of English should be. In comparison with the Ca' Foscari results, we needed to formulate different questions. From the chart 7a, we learnt that the structure at Ca' Foscari provides a consistent teaching system for grammar skills. Moreover, when considering chart 7c, we see that grammar tasks are controlled for most students, but not the 70% we were expecting. This is probably due to the numerous skills teachers need to prepare their students for in one class. We can argue that teachers had the time and gave the priority to make students practice on grammar, yet, they did not have enough time to check or correct the grammar assignments. Last, if we consider the results from chart 7d, we get the final proof that Ca' Foscari students do not think their final exam tests what they practiced during the academic year. In terms of duration, we must remember that the LMU structure focuses on grammar skills for one semester. Even if from chart 3b we learn that 35% of students wished for more grammar courses, we need

to consider that 65% of them finds this approach and structure efficient for them. In fact, from the pie chart 3c, we learn that the 82% of LMU students believe that enough grammar topics were covered for their satisfaction of English level. On the other hand, we learnt that for more time spent on grammar on a different structure, the opinion of Ca' Foscari students was controversial and did not reach our expectations. We conclude saying that a single focused course on grammar skills collected more positive results than a longer approach to grammar skills spread through academic years, in terms of duration and preparation for the final exam.

The last aspect we are going to discuss for the grammar structure at the LMU and Ca' Foscari is the range of topics. We are not going into detail as in what topics have been taught, but rather if students of both institutions believed that enough were covered for their academic preparation in higher education. For this feedback we will rely on chart 3c for the LMU. For Ca' Foscari, we will analyse charts 7b and 7e. Since the syllabus of grammar topics is focused on one single course, we only asked one question and its date are represented in chart 3c. LMU students answered positively to this question with a percentage of 82% for yes. This makes us assume that their satisfaction with grammar topics is high. Furthermore, we need to remember that other grammar topics can be taught during other courses like the writing skills ones. Comparing the Ca' Foscari chart 7b, we see we do not have a consistent answer. In fact, only 50% of students stated they are satisfied with the grammar topics offered. Furthermore, we need to consider the chart 7e. To implement this previous aspect, we tried to understand if having further materials from teachers helped students in learning and practicing grammar skills. From this question, we learn that 61% of Ca' Foscari students believed these materials were useful to them. From this feedback we learn that in terms of topic, both students from LMU and Ca' Foscari provided positive answers. However, LMU students are slightly more satisfied than Ca' Foscari's. We can conclude that when it comes to topics, both structures work efficiently. Though, the LMU structure works slightly better than Ca' Foscari, according to students' feedback regarding their own institution.

The next aspect we are going to compare between the two institutions, LMU and Ca' Foscari, is the structure of the English lexis during the whole academic career of students. Unlike the previous classes, LMU only has a one-semester class of lexis. However, by learning English in other classes, the vocabulary of students will enrich during other courses, even if these are not lexis focused. We argued that this course has the identical structure for the grammar one at the LMU. That is why we formulated the same questions for these two courses. This structure of teaching grammar at the LMU differs a lot when compared to the one at Ca' Foscari. In the last one, lexis is practiced during the whole cycle of studies through the units of the textbook. We will compare these two different structures based on how they make their students practice including the duration of the skill during the academic career of students and the adequacy of topics offered.

For the first aspect, we know that both LMU and Ca' Foscari use a textbook to support the teaching of grammar and lexis. While for the LMU courses students have one book for grammar and one for lexis exclusively, at Ca' Foscari courses students have the same textbook that provides all the topics needed through the units. The LMU structure needs students to fulfil the online Moodle test every week. Each test is based on the lexis topics and units that were taught in class. Moreover, each test consists in multiple choice like the final exam. By doing so, LMU students will practice their new lexis knowledge and skills while practicing on exam examples at the same time. This aspect of the English structure at the LMU has proven that students believe this method has made them practice enough for the final exam. We assume this due to the positive number of entries in chart 4a. The data from chart 4a provides a percentage of 88% LMU students stating they believed the Moodle tests were a good approach to make them keep exercised. Studying the Ca' Foscari structure, we know that a mandatory Moodle quiz does not exist. Every task is provided by teachers during the academic year. We learnt from chart 8a that lexis is not a main focused aspect at Ca' Foscari, it still receives a fair amount of attention during the academic year. For the second aspect, from chart 8b we learnt that 99% of

Ca' Foscari students in the survey believe it is a rather important aspect of their English competences for an academic level. From these three charts we learn that, according to Ca' Foscari students' impression, lexis has been given a marginal role. In chart 8c Ca' Foscari students expressed their wish for more lexis activities. From these three charts we learn that, according to Ca' Foscari students, lexis should not be given a marginal role, but rather central. When the two systems are compared, we learn that at the LMU students practice on lexis tasks from Moodle every week. On the other hand, Ca' Foscari students only practice according to the textbook. Moreover, their lexis is only tested in their final exam indirectly from their written elaborates. We conclude saying that a continuous and focused approach to lexis can be the main difference between these two systems which consequently affects students' perception and preparation for the final exam.

Regarding the topic aspect, we can only spend few words about the LMU. Since they use a textbook for advanced learner, we expected that the topics covered were fitting into the higher education system we are analysing. In fact, from chart 4c, we learn that 69% of LMU students who participated in the survey was satisfied with the lexis topics covered during the academic semester. Since not all the units of the textbook are included for the final exam, we did not go into further details. We could not ask the same question for Ca' Foscari students since lexis is not tested in the final exam. Consequently, we could not expect them to ask the same question we did for the LMU and having arguable entries. We can state that when it comes to lexis, the LMU provides a very specific teaching structure for it.

The last comparative aspect of these two institution we are going to discuss is between the LMU course cultural studies 1 and Società e culture di lingua inglese at Ca' Foscari. We did not ask any question about this to LMU students, since we are only focusing on the syllabus offered at Ca' Foscari. We asked Ca' Foscari students their opinion about this and collected the results in chart 9a. What we learn from this is that Ca' Foscari offers a syllabus about English literature, whereas at the LMU students learn

the system of the United Kingdom and United States of America in terms of culture, society, politics etc. We asked Ca' Foscari students to enter which syllabus they expected. Consequently, we assume they enter what they believed it should be. From this chart, we observe that only 6% of the entries were in favour of the Ca' Foscari syllabus, whereas the 94% of them was for the LMU syllabus. We agree that a course name including the terms society and culture might mislead, but Ca' Foscari students were not expecting a literature course at all. In fact, when put between an option from two syllabus, nearly the total of them choose in favour of the LMU syllabus. On top of this, the cultural studies 1 course is under the language classes, and not seminars. This might also be due to the amount of specific lexis they would learn from these specific studies. We conclude saying that a course about society and culture at Ca' Foscari should include topics about society, politics etc like the LMU and not providing another literature course.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to study and compare the English language courses in higher education at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), Germany, and the one of Università degli studi di Venezia (Ca' Foscari), Italy.

We started our research with the first chapter introducing the aspects of teaching to adults. Before doing this, we stated why we decided to set our research on students. It has been underlined how students are part of the teaching system, and how reliable their feedback can be. Furthermore, we explained why teaching to adults differs to younger learners, and what are the main aspects. We defined three different approaches. The first one, behaviousrism, highlighted how we can learn from the output of students. The second one, functionalism, taught us how to process data learnt from students. The last one, constructivism, taught us how adults experiences are connected through the learning processes. After having outlined this, we moved to the definition of *andragogy* by Knowles Malcom. Here, we discussed the features of adults in learning contexts. We need to underline some of the followings, which affect the student group we studied. The need to know pushes adults into the learning process. Unlike younger learners, adults are aware of the fact that they need to know, in order to succeed in what they are doing. Following this, another feature of *andragogy* to remember is the experience of learners. Even if this might be more relevant that older age groups than our, we need to remember that university students come from different high school, meaning different contexts and experiences. A further aspect to mention is the readiness to learn. Adult learners are not in the compulsory learning context anymore. It is their choice to study. Therefore, the readiness to study comes to play in this context. The last one, which connects the dots in the *andragogy* theory, is motivation. This last can be seen as the engine of the students' learning experience. For Knowles, this has to come first from the student, and fostered by their learning environment, including teachers, classes, syllabus

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etc. The following sections highlighted those aspects relevant to age group that are doing English studies in higher education systems. Following this, we underlined the role of the skills for learning languages in an adult age. We tried to adapt the content based on our age group, and argued what needed in order for adult learners to succeed and be satisfied with their learning experience. In fact, from this second sections, we learnt why we decided to study writing and speaking skills from the two institution, and grammar and lexis skills aspects as well. This has led us to the third section, regarding assignments. We studied how the assignment is relevant for adult learners, and how they need these to be corrected from their teacher. From this, students will see their improvement, and teachers will have a clearer overview of their learning development. It cannot be stressed enough that this first chapter is very important for our research. Based on this, we decided how to formulate questions in the surveys. Therefore, each question will reflect what learnt from this chapter.

The second chapter analysed the structure of English language courses at Ca' Foscari. We described the structure the courses and how they are distributed during the Bachelor course. We went through the most important aspect of this, and underlined how this structure works. We learnt that students would foster various skills during one class. Classes are distributed evenly during the academic semester with a total of three hours per week. Moreover, the final exam will test all the skills practiced during the English language classes. It is important to have understood this structure, since chapter 4 focused on the survey where questions have been asked according to the literature studied in chapter 1 and the structure analysed in this chapter.

The third chapter outlined the structure of English language courses at LMU. We argued the structure of the English language courses and how they are distributed in the *Anglistik* studies in this institution. Moreover, we discussed the two curricula whose students answered out survey. It was important to do so, to understand that even if there was a distinction between these, the courses we studied were attended by both of them. From this, we

learnt that LMU structure makes students practice on one skill at a time. By doing so, students will attend a single-skill course for a whole semester for one hours and a half. Furthermore, discussed each single course in the sub sections. We argued how they are shaped, what syllabus they have and the class sizes. It is important to have understood this structure, since chapter 4 focused on the survey where questions have been asked according to the literature studied in chapter 1 and the structure analysed in this chapter.

Last, chapter 4 guided us through the study of the feedback we collected. In order to collect data, two surveys (one for each institution) have been distributed to students. We collected 100 surveys for each university whose English language courses structure we are studying. Chapter 4 has been divided in four main sections. In the first two we learnt how we collected the data and what the limits of this study were. Following these two sections, the 4.2 part studied each question of each survey alone. We discussed how each question has been formulated and passed to students. We decided to divide this section into two sub-sections where each institution will be analysed alone. Moreover, according to the literature of chapter 1 and the description of the structure, we argued what we expected from each structure to work efficiently to make students feel satisfied. Our goal was to prove that both English language courses structure of each institution fulfil students' satisfaction. To do so, we provided means and percentages for the question we are asking. Such expectations were provided in chapter 4.2. Following this, we analysed the data we collected in section 4.3. Here, to help us understand the results at their best, we decided to provide a visual representation with pie charts, bar charts and scatter plots. By reading the results, we argued that these met our expectations set in chapter 4.2. If this was the case, we argued that the structure worked efficiently. However, if this was not the case, we have argued that some aspects discussed in chapter 1 have not been fulfilled. This leads us to the last section; 4.4. Here, we compared the results of the two institutions, where, according to their structures, we can detect similarities and differences.

From this comparative research, we learn that both structures of Ca'
Foscari and LMU work on different aspects in different ways. First of all,
we learnt that the two institutions spread the language courses in different
ways. While some students might appreciate this division at the LMU, Ca'
Foscari students have controversial opinion about not having this structure
applied to their institution. From what emerged, Ca' Foscari students
believe that speaking skills have a secondary role at their institution and that
these are important for their language development. Moreover, we assumed
that one of the causes is that some classes might be crowded, due to the
structure of the classes in terms of number of participants. On the contrary,
LMU requires every English students to attend two one-semester long
speaking courses to improve their speaking skills. We can argue the same
when it comes to writing skills. Ca' Foscari students do not believe that the
syllabus helped them improving their writing skills or met their
expectations. Here, curriculum-divided classes would help students'
satisfaction, as LMU provides to their students during the academic career.
However, when it comes to teaching grammar, we need to argue the
opposite. While some LMU students were satisfied with their structure,
some of them were not. On the contrary, the majority of Ca' Foscari students
stated that they were satisfied with their structure. This is because grammar
is taught every year and it is part of their final exam too. For the lexis part,
we cannot argue precisely the same. All we can state is that students of both
institutions strongly believe that lexis is an important part of their language
learning, and a high level of attention should be paid to it.

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Appendix 1

English language courses at LMU

These few questions will help me with my comparative research based on the system of English courses at your University

if you did not attend the course mentioned in the question, feel free to skip it -

- Quantitative questions where you are asked to give a number are meant to be approximate and only based on your experience.

If you have any question about the survey or are interested about this, email me at 857231@stud.unive.it

Thank you very much for your time

| Writing Skills (WS) 1 and 2 | This section studies the WS lectures of the LMU - you will find the same questions for both WS1 and WS2 - if you only attended one, you can skip the questions about the other one |

1. WS1 - Do you think you were prepared adequately for the final exam (Klausur) - based on the amount of hours spent on lectures?

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ Yes
   ◯ No
   ◯ Not enough

2. WS1 - how many essays did you write during the semester? give an approx. number

   _____

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3. WS1 - Assuming your writing skills improved, do you think the WS1 syllabus helped you reach your personal aim?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yes

4. WS1 - are you satisfied with the materials provided by your teacher?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Quite satisfied

5. WS2 - Do you think you were prepared adequately for the final exam (Klausur)- based on the amount of hours spent on lectures?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not Enough

6. WS2 - how many assignments did you write during the semester? give an approx. number

_____

7. WS2 - Assuming your writing skills improved, do you think the WS2 syllabus helped you reach your personal aim?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yes

8. WS2 - are you satisfied with the materials provided by your teacher?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not enough

9. WS1 - WS2 : which one did you find most interesting and why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Speaking Skills (S) 1 and 2	This section studies the SS lectures of the LMU - you will find questions referring to both S1 and S2 - if you only attended one, you can answer according to that

10. Did you find the number of students in your class adequate to practice your skills?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yes

11. Do you think your teacher had the chance to listen to you regularly/ often enough ?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yes

12. Do you think you were prepared adequately for the exam?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yes

13. How many times did the teacher make you practice for the exam?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

14. Assuming your level improved, do you think Speaking classes should be optional or mandatory? If you like, you can leave a brief comment :-)

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What did you find most relevant for you? S1 or S2?

_____

In this sections you are asked questions based on your own perception of the CSG lecture - if you only attended this course, feel free to skip the question

16. Do you think having the online tests on Moodle was a good approach to practice and keep you exercised?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not enough

◯ Altro: _____

17. Do you think that Grammar courses should be only one semester long or do you wish for more?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ More lectures

◯ Just one is fine

◯ Altro: _____

18. Do you think enough grammar topics were covered for your level of English grammar competences?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not enough

Core
Skill
Lexis

In this sections you are asked questions based on your own perception of the CSL course - if you only attended this course, feel free to skip the question

19. Do you think having the online tests on Moodle was a good approach to practice and keep you exercised?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not enough

20. Do you think that lexis is a lecture that should be present all over the academic career or only one semster?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ More lectures

◯ Just one is fine

◯ Altro: _____

21. Do you think the topics covered in the course enriched your vocabulary and lexis competences for your final level of English?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Not enough

Appendix 2

Lettorato inglese triennale Ca'Foscari

Ciao!
Questo format si basa sulla tua esperienza riguardo l'insegnamento della lingua inglese a
Ca'Foscari -
Ci sono 4 sezioni ed ognuna riguarda una competenza diversa - il questionario può essere
compilato da chiunque abbia frequentato le lezioni di almeno uno degli insegnamenti di
Lingua Inglese (sia essa la 1, 2 e/o 3)

Grazie mille :-)
*Campo obbligatorio

Writing	Questa sezione riguarda la preparazione durante il lettorato sull'insegnamento e preparato del 'writing' in vista dell'esame finale'

1. Pensi di essere stato/a preparato/a adeguatamente per l'esame finale?

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ Sì
   ◯ No
   ◯ Non abbastanza

2. Quante produzioni scritte / elaborati (writing) completi in vista dell'esame sono
   stati assegnati durante un anno approssimativamente? fornisci un numero

   _____

3. Pensi di aver ricevuto una preparazione adeguata in vista dell'esame finale?

   Contrassegna solo un ovale.

   ◯ Sì
   ◯ No
   ◯ Non del tutto

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4. Sei soddisfatto/a della varietà di testi che sono stati richiesti (essays, article ecc.)

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Si

5. C'erano altre forme di testo che avresti voluto impratichirti in particolare che non sono state oggetto nel corso? se si, quali *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Hai trovato che ci fosse spesso la stessa forma di produzione scritta (es. Essay) richiesta per l'esame finale e se si quali avresti preferito imparare? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ No

◯ Articolo di giornale

◯ Articolo scientifico

◯ Articolo letterario

◯ Critical review

◯ Altro: _____

Speaking	Questa sezione rileverà la tua esperienza riguardo le attività di produzione orale svolte durante l'anno accademico.

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7. Pensi che il numero di studenti nella tua classe ti abbia permesso di praticare questa attività adeguatamente?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Si

8. Pensi che il tuo lettore/lettrice abbia avuto la possibilità di ascoltarti regolarmente / opportunamente?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Yes

9. Sei stato/a adeguatamente preparato/a per la prova orale?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Si

10. In una lezione quante volte il tuo lettore/lettrice ti ha fatto fare pratica di speaking in classe?

_____

15. Gli argomenti di grammatica trattati sono stati importanti per il tuo rendimento e livello di inglese?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Si

◯ No

◯ Solo in parte

16. I tuoi compiti di grammatica sono stati controllati e curati durante l'anno?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Si

◯ No

◯ Non abbastanza

17. Pensi che l'esame testi le tue abilità di grammatica per le quali sei stato/a preparato/a durante l'anno?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Si

18. I materiali esterni (non del libro) ma forniti dall'insegnante sono stati adeguati?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Si

◯ No

◯ Non mi sono stati forniti materiali extra

Lessico, Società e culture di lingua inglese

Questa breve sezione riguarda attività di lessico svolte durante l'anno - se non hai frequentato Società e culture di lingua inglese lascia in bianco

19. Sono state svolte sufficienti attività di lessico durante l'anno? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Si

◯ No

◯ Non abbastanza

20. Pensi che il lessico sia un aspetto importante nel tuo percorso di studi? *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Si

◯ No

◯ Indifferente

21. secondo le tue aspettative avresti voluto fare: *

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Più attività di lessico

◯ Indifferente

◯ Non mi aspettavo di più

◯ Meno / Nulla

22. Se hai frequentato il corso di Società e culture di lingua inglese, che cosa ti aspettavi fossero i contenuti?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

⬭ Letteratura

⬭ Un corso sul funzionamento dei paesi anglofoni (politica, lavoro, stato ecc)

⬭ Altro: _____

11. Le attività di speaking in classe sono state utili ai tuoi fini di miglioramento dello speaking?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Si

12. Presupponendo che le tue abilità di speaking siano migliorate durante l'anno, pensi che sia d'obbligo tenere una certa regolarità di speaking in classe?

_____

13. Desidereresti che lo speaking fosse obbligatorio o pensi debba essere facoltativo?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Facoltativa

◯ Obbligatoria

◯ Indifferente

Grammatica   Questa sezione riguarda le attività di grammatica svolte durante l'anno e la prova finale

14. Pensi che la grammatica sia stata una attività presente durante tutto l'anno o solo in parte?

Contrassegna solo un ovale.

◯ Tutto l'anno equamente

◯ Tutto l'anno ma sporadicamente

◯ Solo in vista dell'esame

◯ Non è stata ricoperta abbastanza