MULTIPLES (UGENT) & CENTER FOR MULTILINGUALISM AND DIVERSITIES RESEARCH (UWC)
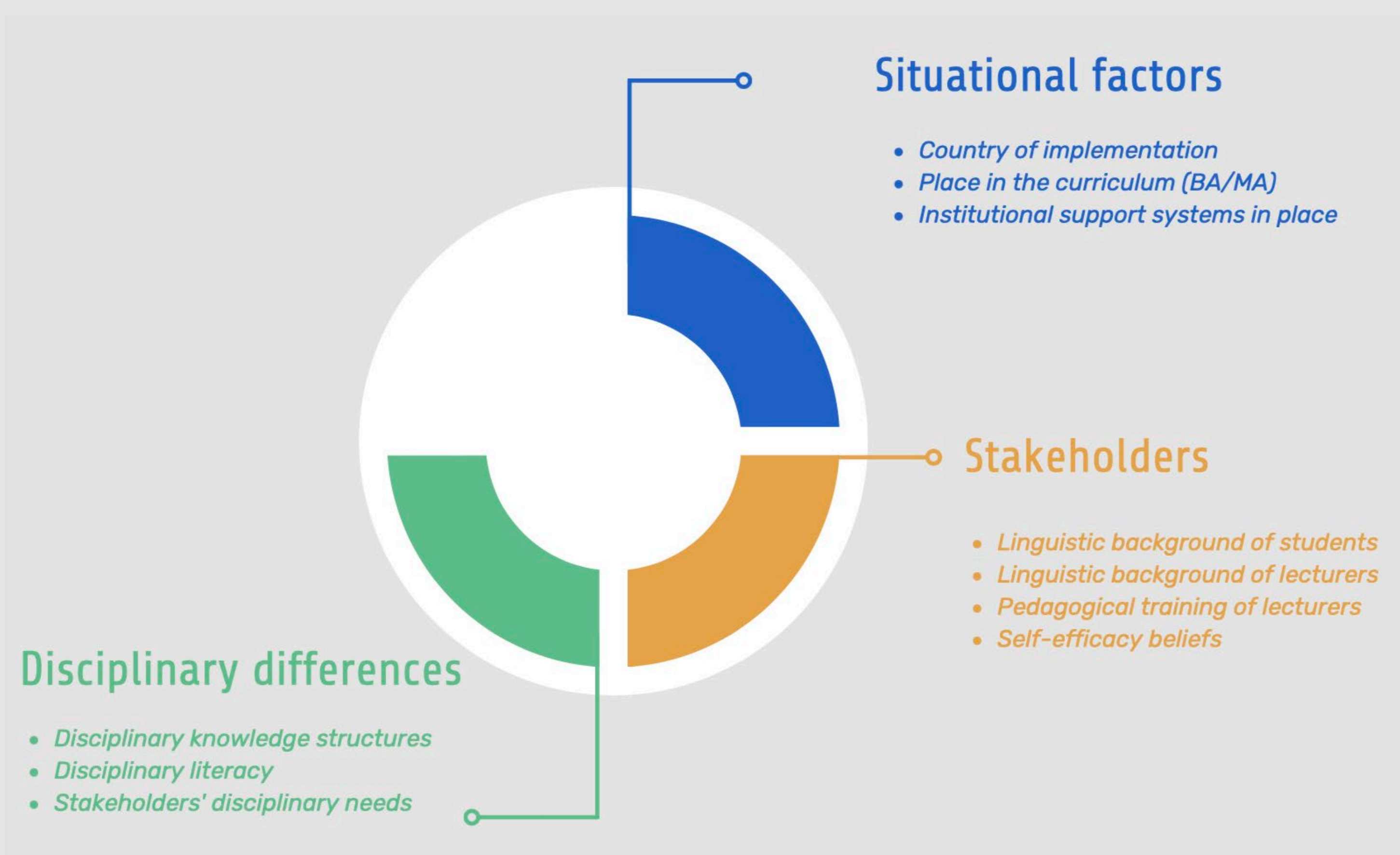### Alexander De Soete, Stef Slembrouck

EMI AND ITS SOCIOLINGUISTIC ENTANGLEMENT WITH LOCAL LANGUAGES: TWO ENGINEERING CASES AT GHENT UNIVERSITY

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last couple of decades, tertiary education around the world has seen an increase in the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), underpinned by ambitions of supranational mobility, the democratization of education, and an accurate preparation of students for the future workplace. Recently, there have been calls for a heightened attention to context-specifity in EMI research.

While situational-institutional parameters and stakeholder profiles are more readily available and therefore more commonly foregrounded in calls for context-specific approaches, **the way in which disciplinary differences warrant differentiation in policy and implementation remains underexposed**.

Situational factors
- Country of implementation
- Place in the curriculum (BA/MA)
- Institutional support systems in place

Stakeholders
- Linguistic background of students
- Linguistic background of lecturers
- Pedagogical training of lecturers
- Self-efficacy beliefs

Disciplinary differences
- Disciplinary knowledge structures
- Disciplinary literacy
- Stakeholders' disciplinary needs

3. METHODS

Through means of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork (spanning the length of one semester), four different datatypes were collected:

1. Classroom **observations** (field notes)
2. **Interactional** data (audio and video recordings)
3. **Survey** data (beginning and end of semester)
4. **Interview** data (lecturers and students)

5. VALORIZATION

Our understanding of how disciplinary knowledge structures inform differences in the stakeholders' disciplinary communication needs (including the active inclusion of local languages in teaching and learning activities) **lays the theoretical groundwork for intra-institutional differentiation in EMI policy and implementation.**

The authors would like to ask the question why the debate about EMI vs. the locally-dominant language(s) continues to be framed in terms of a pillarized choice. We suggest that going beyond binaries and adopting **pragmatic, situationally-adaptable implementation strategies (such as pluralistic multilingual language policies) should be considered viable options.**

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study attempts to analyze the influence of disciplinary knowledge structures on the use of English as the Medium of Instruction (potentially alongside local languages) through means of a comparison between two different engineering programs taught at a Belgian Higher Education Institution:
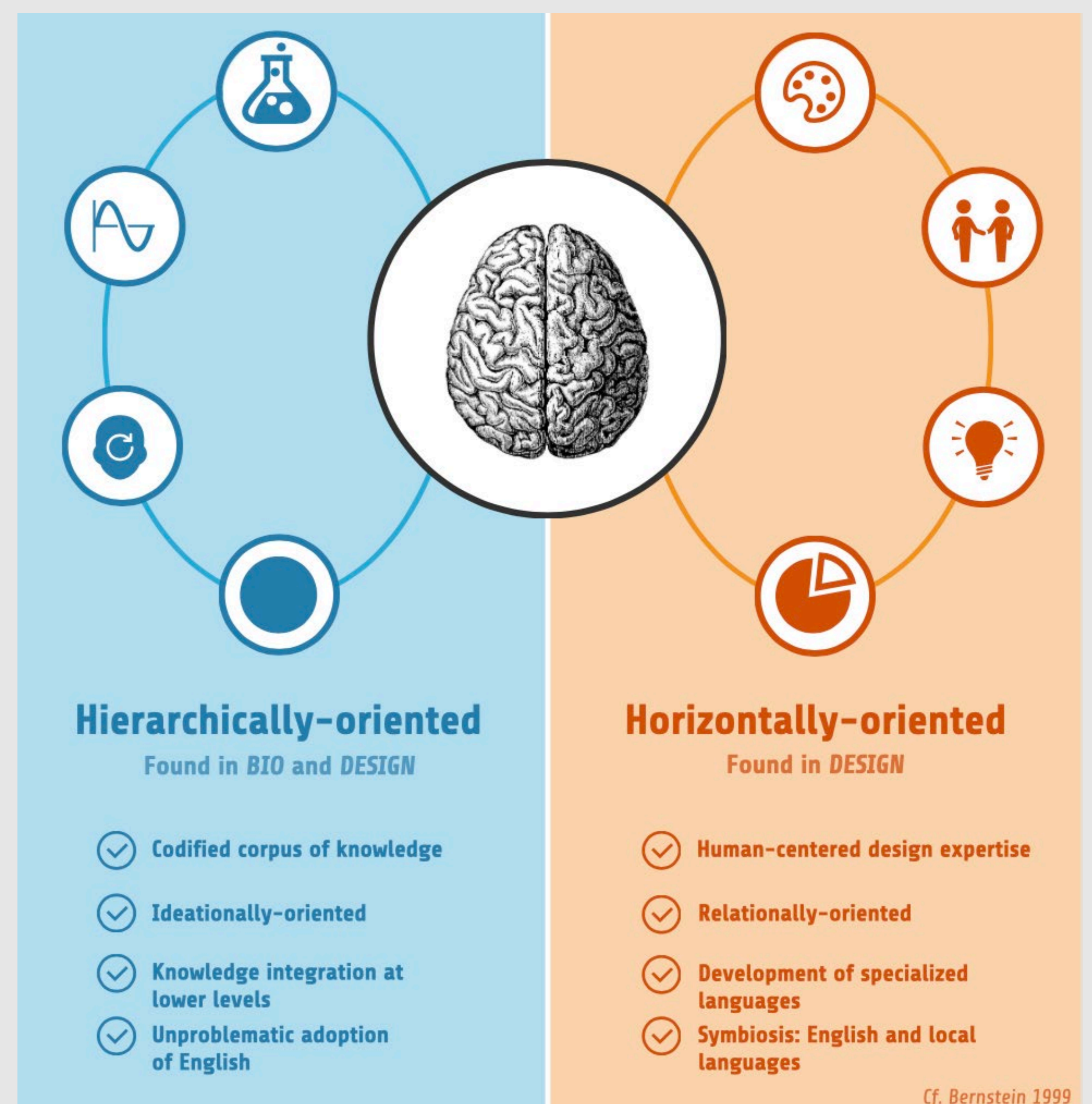
Data Collection Site 1: Bio-Engineering – Food Technology

The first data collection site was an international MA program in bio-science engineering hosted by two Flemish Higher Education Institutions. It attracts a highly diverse audience of international students from Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia.

Data Collection Site 2: Industrial Design Engineering

The second data collection site was an industrial design course, which functions as a university-wide elective curriculum component. Its intended audience displays both supranational mobility and various disciplinary affiliations.

4. RESULTS

Hierarchically-oriented
Found in BIO and DESIGN

- ✓ Codified corpus of knowledge
- ✓ Ideationally-oriented
- ✓ Knowledge integration at lower levels
- ✓ Unproblematic adoption of English

Horizontally-oriented
Found in DESIGN

- ✓ Human-centered design expertise
- ✓ Relationally-oriented
- ✓ Development of specialized languages
- ✓ Symbiosis: English and local languages

Cf. Bernstein 1999

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