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Language friction and multilingual policies in higher education: the stakeholders’ view

Aintzane Doiz, David Lasagabaster* and Juan Manuel Sierra

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The learning of prestigious international languages becomes a process fraught with tensions in multilingual settings. The process of internationalisation in many universities has led to the spread of English-medium instruction (EMI), which tends to raise linguistic debates particularly in the case of bilingual institutions. However, and despite a few exceptions, there is scant research into the effect of EMI on the different bodies that make up the university community, especially in the case of teaching staff and administration personnel (as most studies focus on students). The participants in this study were 648 students, teachers and administration personnel who filled out a questionnaire. The analyses of the data revealed the existence of language tensions among the different languages in contact. Parallelisms and differences were found among the three different bodies, which led us to put forward a series of implications related to the implementation of EMI courses, as well as to multilingual language policies at university.

Keywords: English-medium instruction; multilingualism; students; teaching staff; administration personnel

Introduction

The internationalisation process at higher education institutions (HEIs) has made English the language of higher education and, as a result, English-medium instruction (EMI) is burgeoning worldwide. As noted elsewhere (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2013a), even in countries with little tradition of learning English as a foreign language, such as Italy, Greece, Spain, Brunei, China, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, EMI is rapidly growing. The implementation of the Bologna process has also accelerated EMI in Europe. However, in the new European Higher Education Space, universities are supposed to promote multilingualism to comply with the European Commission’s objective to augment citizens’ language proficiency in at least two languages besides their mother tongue (henceforth, MT+>2). Considering the overwhelming presence of English both in pre-university and tertiary education, this objective seems rather difficult to achieve. As Coleman (2006, 1) puts it, ‘even enthusiasts acknowledge the problems of implementing such policies in the face of an inexorable increase in the use of English’. Coleman asserts that the Bologna process itself may aggravate this situation as the Diploma Supplement, which states graduates’ acquired knowledge and competences, is ‘generally issued in

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English or in the language of instruction and English’ (Eurydice 2005b, 27, cited in Coleman 2006, 9).

In bilingual communities such as the Basque autonomous community (BAC) in Spain, the difficulty is even greater, as a minority language (Basque) is also used to teach subject matter, involving the presence of three languages in the curriculum (Spanish, Basque and English). Furthermore, the characteristics of the Basque educational context at pre-university level, with a growing implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning programmes in English, do not favour an effective accomplishment of the European Commission’s objective (MT+>2). Since the 1983 proclamation of Basque as an official language, the Basque autonomous government and the University of the Basque Country (UBC) have made great economic efforts to guarantee the possibility of studying in Basque or Spanish at both pre-university and tertiary levels. In the current economic recession, budgets do not support the teaching of content through other foreign languages. Consequently, most foreign language-medium courses at the UBC are taught in English.

Darquennes (2011), reflecting on the European Commission’s 2005 and 2008 communications on multilingualism, highlights the societal dimension of multilingualism and warns against the assumption that language conflict is a phenomenon of the past. Taking as examples Catalonia and the BAC in Spain, the case of the national languages in the Baltic states or the Hungarian language policy, he concludes that

language conflict...deserves a lot more attention than it gets today. In this respect, it is a major challenge for research as well as teaching in institutions of higher education to first of all point to the relevance of research on societal aspects of multilingualism, and to more closely investigate the contribution of language policy and language planning to the neutralisation and/or the prevention of language conflict. (Darquennes 2011, 156)

Other authors (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Shohamy 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 2008; Phillipson 2009) have advocated a human rights perspective on language ecology, claiming that ‘today we are killing biocultural diversity faster than ever before in human history. Seriously endangered languages disappear with little trace, at the same time as other not-yet-endangered languages, though official, are undergoing domain loss in high-status areas when English is being extensively used in research, universities, business, media, etc.’ (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 2008, 11). The increasingly dominant role of English in HEIs has led Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to take measures protecting the Nordic languages in research and education (Nordic Council of Ministers 2007). In Sweden, one of the European countries with the highest proficiency in English, the Language Act (Swedish Government 2009) stipulates that Swedish is the main language of a multilingual Sweden while at the same time regarding parallel language use as a guiding principle for the dual use of Swedish and English in tertiary education. Nevertheless, as Bolton and Kuteeva (2012, 2) have recently noted, ‘there are still questions about how parallel language use is best implemented in practice’.

Recent research on bilingual approaches in universities has revealed different bilingual practices, such as the use or the incorporation of multilingual support material in the classroom in South African universities (van der Walt and Kidd 2013). Elsewhere, for example in Wales, there is evidence (Lewis, Jones, and Baker 2012a) of translanguaging practices across the board, ranging from pre-school to university. Translanguaging is ‘a new and developing term, the idea that both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organise and mediate mental
processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning needs multi-
disciplinary and interdisciplinary research’ (Lewis, Jones, and Baker 2012b, 652).

Linguistic tensions between EMI and local languages in bilingual settings have been
reported in many different contexts, such as Catalonia (Cots 2013) and the BAC (Doiz,
Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2013b) in Spain, China (Li 2013) or South Africa (van der Walt
and Kidd 2013). But should English be considered the problem? King et al. (2011) see
the dominant role of English as a fact of reality and a determinant of policy, and it is
undeniable that the international lingua franca par excellence has a privileged role in
language planning and policy:

…there is a need to stop regarding English as the problem. We could instead welcome the
emergence of an effective lingua franca which means that all educated, employable people
have a first language and a language for international communication…. The question, then,
is not ‘what should we do about English’, but what are the implications of this (current)
dominant role? How do we encourage real multi/plurilingualism? What does it mean for our
present and future identities? (King et al. 2011, 262)

This links with the need to consider the political dimension. What Lewis, Jones, and
Baker (2012b) say about the Welsh context is also applicable to other bilingual contexts
such as Catalonia and the Basque Country. From the 1960s, bilingualism evolved from a
fight for survival of the minority language (be it Welsh, Catalan or Basque) to a more
favourable perspective associated with the positive features of bilingual education such as
better communicative skills, cognitive positive effects, greater cultural sensitivity and
better employability. In that respect, English should be regarded as a resource rather than
as a problem.

As Spolsky (2008) has observed, when researching language education policy, clear
evidence is often difficult to obtain. He encourages research into the beliefs and attitudes
of different sectors of the university community: ‘Do they believe monolingualism is
natural? Do they think a multilingual society is possible or desirable? What values do
they attach to plurilingual proficiency? How do they value the languages potentially
included in the policy? …At this point, one can usefully look for conflicts in values and
attitudes’ (2008, 31).

Despite a few exceptions (Armengol, Cots, and Llurda, 2011, Dewey and Duff, 2009,
Tange, 2010), there is scant research into the effect of EMI on the different bodies that
constitute the university community, especially teaching staff and administration
personnel. Most studies focus on students. Drawing on Spolsky’s (2008) and King
et al.’s (2011) question framework, we have gathered information from three bodies at the
UBC – local students, teaching staff and administration personnel – to reflect on the
stakeholders’ opinions concerning EMI, the coexistence of English and Basque, and
multilingualism. Our study examines the increasing presence of EMI in an officially
bilingual university. We first provide some key facts to help understand the Basque
context and the development of multilingualism in the UBC. Second, the different bodies’
perspectives are analysed. Finally, some implications for the implementation of future
EMI programmes at bilingual universities are proposed.

The UBC: towards the internationalisation of a bilingual university

The BAC is one of the 17 autonomous communities that make up Spain and has a
population of over two million. Both Spanish (the majority language) and Basque (the
minority language) are co-official. According to the latest sociolinguistic survey (Basque
Government 2012), 50.8% of the population is monolingual in Spanish, 32% bilingual (Basque/Spanish) and 17.2% are considered passive bilinguals (those who are able to understand Basque but do not speak it well). However, it is worth considering that 60% of the population aged 16–24 are bilingual speakers due to the fact that both parents and students increasingly choose the available bilingual models at pre-university level. The UBC, the only state HEI in the community, is also an officially bilingual university, with lectures and research conducted in both languages. It has over 5300 teaching staff, approximately 45,000 students and 1700 administration personnel, most coming from a relatively homogeneous linguistic background, and mostly Spanish monolingual or Basque/Spanish bilingual speakers. International students (Erasmus scheme and other international exchange programmes) number around 1200.

Parallel to the development of a comprehensive range of compulsory and optional subjects in Basque and Spanish, the UBC is implementing an internationalisation process, in which the Multilingualism Programme (MP) is one of the main forces. This means that students can take subjects in a foreign language, overwhelmingly English. The goals of the MP are as follows:

1. to continue at tertiary level with the experimental trilingual programme implemented at pre-university level, in which Basque, Spanish and English are used as languages of instruction;
2. to improve local students’ proficiency in a foreign language, and provide students with specialised language and access to research in the foreign language;
3. to improve students’ work/career prospects;
4. to facilitate the pursuit of postgraduate degrees abroad; and
5. to attract foreign students and teachers.

Students under the MP can choose compulsory subjects taught in Basque, Spanish or a foreign language, which has meant, in some few cases, tripling the number of groups (i.e. one in Spanish, one in English and another in Basque). Optional subjects (the majority within the programme) are usually taught in only one of the three languages. Since its beginning in 2005, the MP has been growing rapidly: in the 2011/2012 academic year, the programme had around 1300 students and over 400 qualified teaching staff who had the necessary official language qualifications to teach in the programme (C1 proficiency level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]). As mentioned above, the leading role of English as a lingua franca, the characteristics of our educational context and the current economic crisis have all contributed to the Englishisation of the MP curriculum. The choice of subjects in a foreign language has grown in just six years from 16 to 171, all but six (in French) taught in English.

Research question
As mentioned in the literature review, the presence of EMI in higher education has been regarded as either a threat or a blessing. In this paper, we investigate the different university bodies’ perspectives on EMI and multilingualism in a bilingual university due to the lack of research into this issue. Specifically, this study focuses on the following research question: Do local students, teaching staff and administration personnel show different opinions about EMI and multilingualism at university? After analysing the data, we consider implications relating to the implementation of EMI courses and to multilingual language policies at university.
The study

The sample

The participants were 648 members of the three university bodies: 495 local students, 103 teaching staff and 50 administration personnel. They belonged to 17 different faculties. 43.4% of them were males and 54.8% females. 58.3% had Spanish as their L1, 18.8% Basque, 20.4% both Basque and Spanish and 2.5% other mother tongues (Catalan, Galician, Polish, both Spanish and Galician, etc.). The participants’ age ranges can be observed in Table 1.

Whereas almost 9 (88.3%) out of 10 students were in the 18–25 age range, both the teaching staff’s (84.4%) and the administration personnel’s (82%) ages ranged primarily between 34 and 57, which simply reflects two different generations, as could be expected when comparing this variable – age – amongst these three bodies.

The instrument

The questionnaire, the tool chosen for data collection, was based on the initial goals of the project, the literature review, and group discussions conducted with participants from the three bodies. This instrument was developed within a project involving three bilingual universities – Cardiff University, the University of Lleida and the UBC. It comprised open-ended and closed items. The open-ended questions concerned the advantages and disadvantages of a multilingual university, the introduction of EMI courses and the coexistence of English and Basque. The closed items consisted of a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = mostly disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = mostly agree; 5 = strongly agree (i.e. the lower the mean, the higher the disagreement with the proposed statement). The instrument was originally designed in Spanish and later translated into Basque. As both Basque and Spanish are official languages at the UBC, the participants were given the choice of languages. Students completed the questionnaire in class; teaching staff and administration personnel completed it on their own.

After piloting and passing both Basque and Spanish versions, internal consistency reliability tests were performed, which led to the analysis of 14 of the original 22 items, as the remaining eight items did not fit into any of the three scales analysed in this article. Internal consistency reliability was measured by means of the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. As mentioned above, the items were drawn from discussion groups undertaken with the three university bodies (see Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2011, 2013c) and the review of the literature. The Cronbach analysis relied on the use of the ‘alpha if item deleted’ option, so that alpha statistics were checked to see if the deletion of any particular item added to the internal consistency of the three scales. This procedure led us to eliminate the aforementioned eight items, until the remaining 14 items provided a set with a reasonable alpha, and the items gathered in each scale showed no sign of not belonging together. Table 2 shows the reliability coefficients of the three scales: The EMI
scale consisted of five items and the reliability coefficient was 0.635, the **coexistence of English and Basque** scale was made up of three items and the coefficient was 0.703, and the **multilingualism** scale included six items and obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.580. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were therefore close to or above 0.60, which can be deemed satisfactory (Dörnyei 2007). These results led us to calculate an average mean for each of the scales by adding the means obtained in each of the items and dividing the result by the number of items included in each scale. This allowed us to have an average mean for the EMI, coexistence of English and Basque, and multilingualism scales, which will also be examined in the Results section together with the 14 individual items.

### Results and discussion

Since the data were not normally distributed in any of the three scales, non-parametric tests were required. The Kruskal–Wallis test showed that there were significant differences between groups in both the EMI ($p < 0.001$), the **coexistence of English and Basque** ($p < 0.001$) and the **multilingualism** ($p < 0.001$) scales. However, the Kruskal–Wallis test does not provide **post hoc** tests, and so we could not be sure which groups were statistically different from one another. Following the procedure suggested by Field (2005) and Larson-Hall (2010), we performed separate Mann–Whitney $U$ tests in place of the **post hoc** tests. Since there were three groups (teaching staff, students and administration personnel), we ran three tests.
The results for the first scale are shown in Table 3.

The English-medium scale revealed a clear-cut trend, as the administration personnel showed the highest means in all items but one, and, similarly, the teaching staff came second in all items but one. However, no statistical difference was found between these two groups. The students exhibited the lowest means, and their support for items 1, 2, 3 and 5 and the mean for the whole scale was significantly lower than that of the other two bodies. The teaching staff and the administration personnel were more positive regarding supporting the presence of English at university, the need to teach non-language modules in foreign languages, and the need to require students to take a few modules in English and to be competent in English at the end of their studies.

Curiously, item 4 (the students at this university are linguistically prepared to be taught in a foreign language) was the only item in which the students’ mean was not the lowest, as the teaching staff were even more negative. In this item, the administration personnel were significantly more positive than the other two bodies, but it should be noted that this was the item where the three bodies displayed the lowest means (none of them reaching the scalar mid-point, 3). These results indicate that all the university stakeholders were rather unhappy regarding students’ competence in foreign languages, a


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>English-medium instruction</th>
<th>Students Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Admin. Personnel Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1. In an international university, there is a lot of English language used in the classes</td>
<td>3.45 (1.21)</td>
<td>3.91 (1.02)</td>
<td>4.08 (0.82)</td>
<td>Teach = Adm &gt; Stud&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2. Using a foreign language to teach a module in a non-language subject (e.g. mathematics) is not necessary (already reversed)</td>
<td>3.08 (0.05)</td>
<td>3.79 (0.10)</td>
<td>3.62 (0.13)</td>
<td>Teach = Adm &gt; Stud&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3. Students should be required to take a certain number of modules taught in English</td>
<td>2.56 (1.22)</td>
<td>3.23 (1.19)</td>
<td>3.38 (1.00)</td>
<td>Teach = Adm &gt; Stud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4. The students at this university are linguistically prepared to be taught in a foreign language</td>
<td>2.25 (1.03)</td>
<td>2.10 (0.84)</td>
<td>2.62 (0.78)</td>
<td>Adm &gt; Stud = Teach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5. The university should require students to be competent in English at the end of their studies</td>
<td>2.73 (1.19)</td>
<td>3.46 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.68 (0.93)</td>
<td>Teach = Adm &gt; Stud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Teach = teaching staff; Adm = administration personnel; Stud = students.
<sup>b</sup>Teach = Adm means that no statistical differences were found between the teaching staff and the administration personnel. Teach = Adm > Stud means that the teaching staff and the administration personnel were significantly more positive than the students towards the item concerned.
weakness that clearly needs to be overcome in the Spanish educational system in general and the Basque system in particular.

This lack of foreign language competence may be the reason why teaching staff and the administration personnel were rather positive about EMI, as the following quotations taken from the open-ended items illustrate:

The UBC has to provide the means to equip students so that they are able to face the new social reality. The new generations are ever more plurilingual and, therefore, require at least training in English, as this is the most important language in the scientific world. (Administration personnel 12)

Very positive due to three main reasons: firstly, it is a very good training in a foreign language for our students before they may join a foreign university; secondly, it helps to improve their command of English and teachers’ and students’ use of English in the scientific and academic context; thirdly, it facilitates the incorporation of foreign students, while international programmes are designed. (Teaching staff 41)

It is a good experience that has to be fostered. I am taken aback by the scant success of EMI among our local students. (Teaching staff 66)

Amongst students, there was not such widespread positive agreement. Many comments were mainly neutral and even negative:

Those students who have problems with the foreign language are forced to learn in English and this will have a negative impact on their academic results. (Student 388)

I would say that, as in the case of Basque, the knowledge of the subject matter would be lower than if it were taught in Spanish, unless the classes are taught by native speakers. (Student 166)

Table 4. Mann–Whitney U test. The coexistence of English and Basque scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Students Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 6. The university should provide more opportunities to learn Basque</td>
<td>4.04 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.38 (1.31)</td>
<td>3.30 (1.28)</td>
<td>Stud &gt; Teach = Adm&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7. There should be more teaching through Basque</td>
<td>3.65 (1.31)</td>
<td>3.26 (1.37)</td>
<td>3.34 (1.11)</td>
<td>Stud &gt; Teach = Adm&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8. The increasing presence of English at the university may be an obstacle for the recovery of Basque</td>
<td>2.97 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.09 (1.03)</td>
<td>2.18 (0.98)</td>
<td>Stud &gt; Teach = Adm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coexistence of English and Basque</td>
<td>3.55 (0.98)</td>
<td>2.90 (0.95)</td>
<td>2.94 (0.78)</td>
<td>Stud &gt; Teach = Adm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Teach = teaching staff; Adm = administration personnel; Stud = students.

<sup>b</sup>Teach = Adm means that no statistical differences between the teaching staff and the administration personnel were found. Stud > Teach = Adm means that the students were significantly more positive than the teaching staff and the administration personnel towards the item concerned.
Coexistence of English and Basque

In the case of the coexistence of English and Basque scale (see Table 4), the trend was the opposite to that found in the EMI scale: the highest scores always belonged to the students, whereas the lowest came from the teaching staff (in all cases but item 6). The students’ more demanding stance was disclosed by their request to have more opportunities to learn Basque, to have more teaching in Basque and their fears that the increasing presence of English may represent a risk to the recovery of Basque; in fact, the students’ means and those of the other two groups were statistically different. Thus, it can be concluded that the students were more concerned about the weaker position of Basque and about English becoming a threat to the Basque normalisation process. In contrast, both the teaching staff and the administration personnel were less pessimistic and shared a similar viewpoint, with no statistical differences between these two groups in the individual items or the means for this scale.

The following comments jotted down by administration personnel and teaching staff summarise the general feeling of these two bodies in the open part of the questionnaire:

I don’t believe it [the increasing presence of English] will have a negative influence. Speaking more languages will always be positive for Basque. Internationalisation is not at odds with Basque. (Administration personnel 33)

[Through English] foreign students have contact with Basque. It sparks their interest and curiosity when they get to know that Europe’s oldest language has been maintained. In addition, they see that it is taught at university which represents an additional cultural value. (Administration personnel 42)

This coexistence is a challenge that needs to be met. I believe the promotion of English has to go hand in hand with the promotion of Basque. The objective has to be to produce graduates who are able to communicate in three languages and not just in one (either Basque or Spanish), as is the case nowadays. (Teaching staff 49)

I think it is beneficial to diminish the Basque/Spanish antagonism. With the advent of English, the language of instruction can become an “option” rather than a linguistic “positioning” [in favour of one or the other co-official language]. (Teaching staff 60)

Conversely, the students were more reluctant and happened to be particularly worried about the negative impact that the presence of an international language such as English may have on the normalisation process of the Basque language:

Bearing in mind that we live in a bilingual society and that the current situation of Basque is not the best, I don’t think more English will be in the benefit of Basque. (Student 45)

The minority language may be set aside and, in fact, that’s what I believe is already happening. Basque’s losing presence and it’s being downgraded. (Student 112)

Multilingualism

On the multilingualism scale, the higher means were obtained by the teaching staff (items 10, 11 and 12) and the administration personnel (items 9, 13, 14 and the mean for this scale), while the students exhibited the lowest means in all cases except item 12 (already reversed) (Table 5). There were different trends depending on the item, but on no individual item did the students appear more positive than the other two groups. The administration personnel were significantly more supportive of the presence of a range of
languages and cultures than the students (although the three groups showed high means), and the teachers were also significantly less happy than the students with the UBC keeping to one language used correctly. The teachers and the administration personnel were more in favour of the need to provide more opportunities to learn foreign languages, although the means of the three groups were above 4, which showed widespread agreement in this regard. Both the teachers and the administration personnel felt significantly more than the students that foreign language courses should be compulsory, and the administration personnel also believed more strongly that students should be competent in two foreign languages, although item 14 exhibited the lowest means of the multilingualism scale. These results seem to indicate that foreign language learning should be boosted, but not by making it obligatory. There seemed to be an agreement in the sense that, in a bilingual university such as the UBC, the requirement of two additional foreign languages is still quite a challenge.

In any case, the general picture of this third scale was provided by its mean, as the teachers and the administration personnel were significantly more favourable to the

<p>| Table 5. Mann–Whitney U test. The multilingualism scale. |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 9. In an international university, a range of languages and cultures must be present</th>
<th>Students Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 10. I think it is better for the university to keep to one language that gets used correctly, instead of two or more languages that get used incorrectly (reversed)</td>
<td>Students Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11. The university should provide more opportunities to learn foreign languages for staff, students and administration personnel</td>
<td>Students Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12. If there were only three or four languages spoken in the world, everything would be easier for everybody (already reversed)</td>
<td>Students Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13. Foreign language courses should be compulsory in university.</td>
<td>Students Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 14. The university should require students to be competent in two foreign languages at the end of their studies</td>
<td>Students Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingualism</td>
<td>Students Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Teaching staff Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Admin. personnel Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teach = teaching staff; Adm = administration personnel; Stud = students.
fostering of multilingualism than the students. The following comments evidence the differing degrees of support for the spread of multilingualism by the different university bodies, as the number of comments that include disadvantages is higher among the students, whereas the general trend is more positive in the other two bodies:

By learning different languages, we will all get to know more about diverse cultures and social realities. It entails exchange of different ways of dealing with both education and research. (Administration personnel 30)

In our current globalised world the boost of multilingualism is essential to improve the human, social and intellectual capital. (Teaching staff 9)

The spread of multilingualism is rather complicated because it is not dealt with at school, and then those who join university have problems. First of all, multilingualism has to be fostered at school and, afterwards, considered at university. This is not the best moment to try to push multilingualism at university. (Student 123)

On the one hand, the presence of different languages is positive, because it facilitates foreign students’ learning about the Basque language and culture, but on the other hand it may be negative if authorities focus only on multilingualism and forget about the defense of the Basque language. (Student 90)

In my opinion, and based on my own experience, multilingualism will increase the degree of difficulty of my degree, which is already quite complicated. (Student 349)

To focus too much on languages may lead to content teaching playing second fiddle, and content teaching is what really matters. (Student 401)

In summary, the statistically significant data indicate that students, teaching staff and administration personnel hold different opinions with respect to (mandatory) EMI and multilingualism at university. EMI and multilingualism are widely supported by teaching staff and by administration personnel but not by students, especially by students whose first language is Basque. As Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2013b) report, these student views are particularly pronounced amongst those whose first language is Basque.

There are two main reasons for the students’ stance. First, students are concerned about their lack of competence in English. The students’ opinions expressed in the open-ended items of the questionnaire and the opinions gathered during the discussion groups conducted with students and university teachers reported by Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2011, 2013c) revealed that students do not feel confident about their competence of English and consequently are hesitant about taking courses in English. Even good students with an adequate level of English are not willing to risk lowering their grade point average because of the added language difficulty of courses taught in English. Second, many students whose first language is Basque are concerned about the alleged negative impact of the increasing presence of English on Basque. For them, English represents a threat to Basque, a regional and minority language, meaning that efforts have to be made supporting the normalisation of Basque.

Implications for the implementation of EMI and multilingual language policies

The students’ lukewarm reaction towards (compulsory) EMI and multilingualism underpins the importance of hearing students’ opinions about the implementation of top-down initiatives, which are likely to impinge on students’ academic performance and
student life at the university campus. Hence, if the MP is to be accepted by all the members of the community, a battery of measures designed to achieve a change in the students’ attitude is needed. We suggest three actions of a methodological kind.

First, it is important to allow for certain flexibility in the target language in EMI. Teachers should move away from an obsession with correctness or a ‘valued target language’ (e.g. standard British English or general American English) (Canagarajah 2008, 223), and opt for what is an appropriate usage in a particular context instead. There are two facts in support of this idea. First, students are exposed to other varieties of English outside the classroom through the Internet and in their interactions in the multicultural city and, consequently, they develop competences in these varieties (Harris, Constance, and Ben 2002; Ibrahim 1999). Second, there are new communicative norms of English being developed among non-native speakers of English (Seidhofer 2004), the primary source fostering ‘new Englishes’, which will have implications for the future character of the language (Crystal 2008, 6).

The second methodological measure is the reconsideration of the classroom role of the L1. Three main arguments support the use of the L1. First, since the L1 cannot be banned or vanish from the students’ minds, teachers may as well think about its rational use (Cook 2006). Second, the research on classroom underlife reveals the desire for students to bring other codes into learning (Canagarajah 2008, 219), as in the case of vocabulary learning. It has generally been assumed that non-native speakers of English pick up most of their new words and expressions incidentally from context and that, consequently, the best way for teachers to promote vocabulary learning is through the use of the students’ ability to infer word meaning from context. When inferencing fails, students are expected to tolerate a certain degree of vagueness in the message containing the unfamiliar linguistic expressions (Boers and Lindstromberg 2008; Nation and Waring 1997). However, this may affect the understanding of the subject matter and may result in an increase in the students’ anxiety level. Third, research conducted by Cummins (1991, 2008) has shown that skills and language awareness developed in the L1 can transfer positively to the L2. Similarly, Hornberger (2005, 607) has argued that ‘bi/multilingual’ learning is maximized when [students] are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in 2+ languages), rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices’.

Finally, accepting translanguaging in the classroom is also proposed as a means of warming (certain) students’ attitudes towards multilingualism and EMI. In a natural context, translanguaging is commonplace among bilinguals even though monolinguals are seldom aware of these bilingual practices, evaluate them as a deficiency or are dismissive of their value (Garcia 2009, 46). Translanguaging or flexible bilingualism (or multilingualism) has already been proven to be highly effective in complementary schools in the UK which focus on language, culture and heritage learning. In general, ‘[p]edagogy in these schools emphasizes the overlapping of languages in the student and teacher rather than enforcing the separation of languages for learning and teaching’ (Creese and Blackledge 2010, 112). Translanguaging is successfully used by teachers as a strategy to build bridges for classroom participants between the social, cultural, community and linguistic domains. At university, translanguaging may help to reduce some of the students’ misgivings towards English and its purported negative impact on Basque by facilitating the establishment of links between the students’ linguistic and cultural domains. This practice is compatible with the ecological approach to languages proposed by van Lier (2008) among others, whereby the development of new languages alongside the development of existing languages may bear on the students’ acceptance of EMI.
The adoption of EMI has crucial consequences for teachers and teacher training. Obviously, established practitioners have to desist from some of their habitual behaviours, and teaching through another language has challenged teachers to question some of their teaching practices. As Ball and Lindsay (2013, 46) argue, ‘teachers understand that “assumptive” teaching (Clegg and Afitska 2011) can no longer be practised [in EMI], since in very simple terms, you cannot teach the same conceptual material to a native speaker in the same way as you can to a non-native speaker’. Assessment in EMI is another area that requires reconsideration, as stated by one teacher who was interviewed by Ball and Lindsay (2013, 56):

I feel that students taking courses in a foreign language should be treated differently when assessing how well they are doing. I put most of my effort into providing them with formative assessment … Overall I am worried about the fairness of the assessment criteria. The contents are exactly the same, as are the learning objectives, but in terms of competences and skills, I believe that different criteria of assessment should be applied. (Teacher 32)

Thus, not only do teachers need to be willing to change their beliefs and attitudes; they also need to change their ‘practices regarding language and learning across the curriculum’ (Wright 2008, 250). They need to ‘reinvent themselves within the same work setting’ (Wright et al. 2005, 255). It follows from these ideas that the ideal teacher would be represented by one who takes advantage of the multilingual competence of the students and, therefore, is flexible enough to allow the presence of the ‘other’ languages as a way to scaffold and enhance content learning, instead of penalising the use of the students’ L1.

To become consolidated, changes in the teaching practices require time, financial support and training. At the UBC, several teaching training courses have been designed to cater for the teachers’ specific needs in the new teaching context. Some focus on the teachers’ non-linguistic needs and linguistic needs, such as pronunciation improvement, the use of discourse markers and subordinators, or body language. Others deal with the pedagogic issues that arise when teaching in an EMI-oriented context, such as the promotion of learner engagement and participation, assessment and feedback, and the clarification of concepts in the target language. These courses were highly valued by the teaching staff participating in the MP (see Ball and Lindsay 2013).

Final thoughts

The CEFR of the Council of Europe (2001) states that the current aim of language learning is no longer seen as the acquisition of mastery in one or two languages in isolation. The goal is to develop a linguistic repertory in which all linguistic abilities have a place. Within this paradigm for language learning, a shift towards the development of multilingual speakers characterised by their multicompetence (Cook 2006) is adopted. In the words of Jessner (2008, 100), a multilingual person is somebody who

...has a different way of using and knowing her or his languages in contrast to native speakers of the respective languages.... Such a perspective requires we credit a less prominent role to the ‘linguistic deficits’ of second language learners and users in exchange for the cognitive benefits that the life with more than one language can offer, so that we will understand that multilingualism is not just additive monolingualism in several languages.
The measures or actions proposed in this paper, such as the acceptance of the flexibility of the target language, the revision of the role of the L1 in the classroom and the practices of translanguaging, are in line with this goal.

Finally, the sociolinguistic context in which EMI is implemented needs to be taken into account. In particular, in multilingual contexts in which minority languages are present, such as the BAC, it is crucial to propose a linguistically balanced model of EMI if we are to soften some students’ negative stance towards EMI and multilingualism, or if we are to avoid tensions between supporters of the spread of English and advocates of the minority language (Cenoz and Gorter 2011). However, attaining language ecology in a multilingual setting such as the UBC requires careful planning, more so when scarce economic resources dictate the need for decisions which limit the financing of different strategies (Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra 2013a). Furthermore, Creese and Blackledge (2010, 107) and Martin (2005, 90) issued a word of caution about the development of bilingual strategies/pedagogies based on a flexible approach and argued for the need to study the efficacy of bilingual interactions in the classroom context and their role as learning facilitators. Obviously, more empirically based bottom-up and top-down research in this incipient field is required.

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