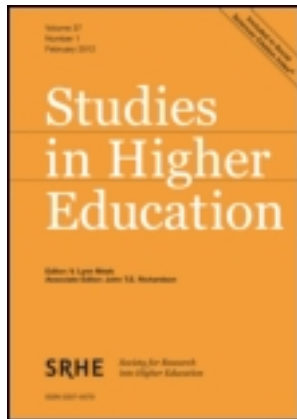


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### Globalisation, internationalisation, multilingualism and linguistic strains in higher education

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## Globalisation, internationalisation, multilingualism and linguistic strains in higher education

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One effect of the Bologna Declaration is that teaching staff and students are becoming more mobile, increasing linguistic diversity in the European Higher Education Area. This multilingual internationalisation is especially noticeable in bilingual universities such as the University of the Basque Country in Spain, where English-medium instruction is becoming more popular. In order to understand higher education multilingual contexts, it is essential to analyse the personal, social, cultural, political and economic struggles that surround the different languages in contact, while becoming critically aware of what this multilingualism implies. Through discussion groups in which different members of the community participated, we researched how the university community deals with the main issues surrounding the university's multilingual policy and practices. We shall address the concerns that different members of the community have expressed in this new context, and the interplay between Basque, a minority language, Spanish, the mainstream language and English.

**Keywords:** internationalisation; minority language; multilingualism; English-medium instruction

### Introduction

One of the main tools for globalisation is language. In higher education globalisation has turned English into the global lingua franca, as universities now compete at a global level (Coleman 2006; Graddol 2006). Subsequently, English has become the tertiary education language *par excellence*, and plays a key role as a commodity of globalisation. In this context we are led to believe that English is the language university students, faculty members and administration personnel need if they are to succeed in a globalising world that demands an international career (Wilkinson 2004). However, languages, and in particular English, play a role in invading other nations linguistically and culturally (Phillipson 2009). In this sense, globalisation cannot be deemed neutral, as the learning of powerful languages becomes a heavily loaded engagement by raising feelings of imposition, cultural occupation and identity loss on those who are forced to learn these powerful languages (Shohamy 2007). Thus, the globalisation process may bring about tensions between the different languages involved, be they the local language(s), English as a lingua franca, and/or the home language(s) in the case of international students.

At university level, internationalisation refers to the implementation of specific measures to tackle the global context. However, the decisions to boost internationalisation have overwhelmingly been made by education authorities (a typical top-down approach), rather than as the result of grass-roots initiatives.

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With a few exceptions (Dewey and Duff 2009; Tange 2010), there is a dearth of research into the effect of internationalisation on the different sectors that make up the university community. In particular, many of the studies carried out so far have focused on students, but more often than not other members of the community such as faculty members and, especially, the administration personnel have been disregarded. In this article we look, first, at how the university community perceives globalisation in general and internationalisation in particular. Second, the university community's perception of the value of English-medium instruction will be examined. Finally, the effects resulting from the implementation of a multilingual language policy at the university will be scrutinised. In order to do so, we have gathered data from some members of all university bodies: home and international students, faculty members, administration personnel and the university authorities. The decision to look at the different concerns from the multiple perspectives of the different stakeholders will help to uncover the complexity of the implementation of multilingual language policies, and will hopefully allow policy makers in other higher education contexts to reflect on the decision-making process.

With these objectives in mind, the study was undertaken in a bilingual context in Spain, namely the Basque Autonomous Community, where three languages are represented on the university curriculum due to the increasing presence of English. Since Englishisation of academic programmes is prevalent in many contexts (Coleman 2006; Graddol 2006), there is definitely a need for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. One way to achieve this understanding is via the collection of different case studies. In this article we will try to delve into our local setting in an attempt to relate it to the overall global picture of the consequences that Englishisation entails. Our case study is representative of similar settings in which two conditions apply: the hegemony of English as a foreign language, and the struggle for recognition of the weaker language. This is a question that needs to be addressed, as the number of bi/multilingual contexts in which (at least) two other languages coexist with English is large: Aosta Valley and Bolzano (Italy), the Balearic Islands, Catalonia, Galicia, and the Valencian Community (Spain), Brittany (France), Finland, Friesland (the Netherlands), Hong Kong, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico or South Africa, just to name but a few. The description of a particular university will hopefully help us to better understand the university picture in a global scenario, as many of the issues analysed in this article apply not only to bi/multilingual universities, but also to monolingual ones.

### **The University of the Basque Country: the internationalisation of a bilingual university**

The Basque Autonomous Community, located in the northeast of Spain, is one of the 17 autonomous communities in Spain and has a population of approximately three million. Since 1982, it has had two official languages, Spanish, the majority language and Basque, the minority language. The University of the Basque Country is an officially bilingual university and, by virtue of its statutes, guarantees the possibility of studying in Basque or Spanish to its students. It has over 5300 teaching staff, approximately 45,000 students, and 1700 administration personnel, most of who come from a relatively homogeneous linguistic background, and are Spanish monolingual or Basque/Spanish bilingual speakers. International students enrolled at the university for one year through mobility programmes, such as the well-known Erasmus scheme and exchange programmes with Latin America, currently number around 1200.

Alongside the development and implementation of a language policy for Basque and Spanish, the university is immersed in the process of internationalisation, which translates into three broad measures. The first measure consists of the development of cross-border education through the implementation of tertiary degrees offered in Latin American universities. This action has resulted in student mobility (students enrolled in those degrees abroad have come to the campus in the Basque Autonomous Community), academic mobility (teaching staff from the university have travelled to the other universities to teach courses) and the creation of courses that are delivered online. A second set of actions includes the university-wide involvement in international networks and research, participation in established student/academic staff and university personnel mobility programmes, and the creation of new study abroad programmes. A third kind of strategic action is the creation of the multilingualism programme, launched in 2005/06. This programme was designed by the academic authorities (the rector and his team) and was approved by the Governing Council in 2005. Under the multilingualism programme students can take optional and compulsory subjects in a foreign language, overwhelmingly English. The objectives of the programme are:

- 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;
- to improve local students' proficiency in a foreign language, and to provide students with specialised language and access to research in the foreign language;
- to improve students' work/career prospects;
- to facilitate the pursuit of postgraduate degrees abroad;
- to attract foreign students and teachers.

Under the multilingualism programme parallel groups in Basque, Spanish and English have been created in the case of compulsory subjects, thereby tripling the number of groups in some instances (i.e. some subjects have three groups, one in Spanish, one in English and another one in Basque) and students can choose the language in which they wish to take a specific subject. Optional subjects (which are the majority within the programme) are usually taught in only one of the three languages.

In the 2010/11 academic year, five years after it was first implemented, the multilingualism programme had around 1300 students and over 400 qualified teaching staff who had the necessary official language qualifications to teach on the programme (C1 proficiency level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The choice of subjects in a foreign language has grown in just five years from 16 to 132, all but 12 taught in English.

### **The research questions and methodological issues**

In this article we consider the following three specific research questions:

1. What does internationalisation and globalisation at university mean to the university community?
2. How much does the community value English-medium instruction?
3. What are the effects of the spread of multilingualism?

The research questions are approached from a qualitative perspective based on discussion groups. While encouraging participants to open up and talk freely in interactive groups (Ho 2006), this method serves to capture and analyse ideological discourses and to ascertain different positions – spontaneous expressions – and contradictions (Iglesias-Álvarez and Ramallo 2002) which are less forthcoming in one-to-one interviews. Furthermore, the analysis of discussion groups is a very productive tool for research, as it produces data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group setting. This interaction allows the participants to listen to each other and verbalise their own experiences, while the discussion stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences, allowing the researcher to explore insights that could otherwise remain hidden.

In the study at hand, the interaction hinged on a planned series of topics set up by the researchers, one of whom also acted as moderator during the group dialogues. Our research is based on the analysis of the data obtained from two sources. First, a one-to-one interview with the Vice-Rector for Basque and multilingualism at the University of the Basque Country was conducted. Second, the following six separate discussion groups were arranged: international students from mobility programmes such as Erasmus; home students who participated in the multilingualism programme; academic teaching staff who taught in this programme; academic staff who had international students in their classes; general administration personnel; and administration personnel of the international relations office. The names and emails of the home students were provided by faculty members, and the researchers or the faculty members themselves contacted the students by email. International students' names and emails were provided by the personnel of the international relations office; the academic staff groups were formed in response to an email soliciting their participation. Those who took part in the group made up of administration personnel were contacted personally by the researchers.

The discussions in the focus groups were video- and tape-recorded for later analysis and reference with the participants' prior consent; the interview with the Vice-Rector was only tape-recorded. Confidentiality was assured for all the members of the discussion groups with the exception of the Vice-Rector, who was easily identifiable given his post. At each session there were two facilitators, one of whom also acted as the coordinator of the recording equipment. A guide containing a number of questions on globalisation, internationalisation, opinions about English-medium instruction, and the effects of a multilingual language policy, was used to direct the discussion groups. Table 1 specifies the duration of each of the discussion groups (for a total of nine hours and seven minutes). The discussion involving teaching staff who had international students was particularly lengthy, lasting twice as long as the others.

In the following section the respondents' contributions are set out in three main groups: (1) the students, who are divided into two subgroups, 'international students' and 'English-medium students'; (2) the academic staff, who are split up into two subgroups, the 'non English-medium academic staff' (those with international students in their classes) and the 'English-medium academic staff' (those participating in the multilingualism programme); and finally (3) the administration personnel, who are divided into the general group ('general administration personnel') and the 'international relations office administration personnel'. The institutional perspective was apportioned by the Vice-Rector. The categories are followed by a number which identifies the particular member of each group.

Table 1. The discussion groups.

	Number of Participants	Duration
<i>Students</i>		
International students*	6	1 h 13 min
Local students participating in the multilingualism programme	4	44 min
<i>Academic staff</i>		
Academic staff participating in the multilingualism programme	5	1 h 12 min
Academic staff with international students	5	2 h 55 min
<i>Admin. personnel</i>		
General administration personnel	4	59 min
Administration personnel of the International Relations Office	2	1 h 21 min
<i>Vice-Rector</i>		
Interview with the Vice-Rector	1	43 min

\*The international students were from four different countries: two from France, two from Italy, one from the UK and one from the Czech Republic. They were all very fluent in Spanish.

The discussion groups were conducted in Spanish because some of the participants could not speak Basque, but all of them were proficient in Spanish. Verbatim transcripts were produced from the recordings of the focus groups. The process of analysis was based on grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1990) and carried out by the three researchers. Procedures of descriptive and analytic coding with notes were followed in search of categorisation and analytic understanding, so that data were organised according to themes in the form of summaries of the words taken directly from the data. In this way the data were grouped and given conceptual labels.

## Results

The space dedicated to research question 3 is considerably longer than that devoted to research questions 1 and 2, because the participants had stronger feelings towards this issue due to their bi/multilingual background, and, therefore, spent more time expressing their views.

*RQ1: What does internationalisation and globalisation at university mean to the university community?*

The analysis of the participants' contributions resulted in the category termed *globalisation*, which was recurrently mentioned and linked to concepts and key words such as increasing immigration, changes in society, scientific exchange, imposition of English and one-way thinking. The second category was *internationalisation*, and included two main concepts: mobility programmes and the presence of foreign languages. It has to be noted that the discussants were not aware of the differences between globalisation as a broader term and internationalisation as its implementation at higher education

institutions. However, for the sake of coherence when analysing the data, this distinction is maintained as captured by the two categories proposed in the introduction.

The academic staff with international students perceived the notion of globalisation from two different perspectives: sociological and academic. Within the former view, one of the causes of globalisation is immigration from different countries. In the Basque Autonomous Community immigration from foreign countries is a recent phenomenon, and consequently, this particular aspect of globalisation is relatively new. However, its presence is already felt and is becoming an important issue. As one of the academic staff put it:

Globalisation is changing the make-up of society in the Basque Autonomous Community. It's the Basque society itself which is undergoing an enormous change. It is a sign of the times: from a fairly homogeneous society we've gone to a more heterogeneous one ... there are many immigrants. (Non English-medium academic staff, 3)

The discussion reflected the social changes that are taking place as a result of globalisation. In other European contexts such as Germany, France, or the UK, immigration has steadily increased since the end of World War II, whereas this is a recent phenomenon in southern European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, whose population migrated in large proportions to richer countries during the same period. However, this situation has changed radically in the last few years, Spain being the second European country regarding the total number of immigrants (5.6 million) after Germany (7.1 million).

From an academic perspective, globalisation was mainly understood by the academic staff as the exchange of scientific knowledge and academic mobility. Within this view, many of our participants stated that globalisation is nothing really new, and noted that it is hard to establish when it first manifested itself at university level. This is corroborated by Williams (1981), who dates internationalisation through the mobility of scholars across national boundaries back to the fourth century BC, and places the causes for its emergence in the search for knowledge and wisdom. In the words of the Vice-Rector:

Before entering the Bologna process, our university was fairly globalised: we used English references, there were international academic exchanges, widespread use of the Internet.

This perspective reveals that the academic staff (the Vice-Rector is a member of the academic staff who temporarily occupies an elected position) mainly linked globalisation with global knowledge and academic exchanges, probably due to the fact that the presence of immigrant students in their classrooms was very scarce.

Three main issues were noted by all the participants. First, they believed that globalisation has resulted in a change of perspective, namely that the university community looks abroad more, and this was deemed to be positive. Second, internationalisation has led to a higher presence of foreign languages at the university. Third, and related to the second outcome, discussants noted a wider presence of international students and teaching staff than previously. In the case of the teaching staff, their positive attitude towards the presence of these students in their classes was noteworthy.

The student groups also highlighted the benefits of incoming international students and were enthusiastic about their own participation in the mobility programmes and the

benefits associated with it. This enthusiasm was not shared by the general administration personnel, who appeared less concerned about participating in mobility programmes, the main reason being a lack of foreign language skills. Thus, these different opinions reflect that the groups have different stakes. Academic staff and students can benefit from their participation in mobility programmes, as such participation is recognised in their prospective careers, while enhancing their market value (Naidoo 2006). By contrast, this is not the case for the administration personnel, whose career prospects are much more limited.

However, globalisation prompted one main concern, which was voiced by the teaching staff and students particularly: globalisation as a process leading to one-way thinking. Teaching staff and students were very much against the role of globalisation as a creator of uniformity/standardisation of thought. As one of the academic staff stated:

In contrast to the positive effects of academic globalisation such as the fostering of broad-mindedness, diversity of thought, and multiculturalism, what I most fear is globalisation understood as one-way thinking. (Non English-medium academic staff, 5)

The literature distinguishes two main perspectives regarding the effect of globalisation. The transformationalist perspective (Held et al. 2003) sees globalisation as a major stimulus for social, political and cultural change, rather than a homogenising process leading to greater westernisation. By contrast, the homogenisation perspective states that the homogenising process does take place. Our participants' perceptions seem to support the latter perspective.

This fear was also accompanied by the negative effects associated with the imposition of English as the hegemonic language of communication. One of the academic staff members demonstrated strong anxieties regarding the role of English as *lingua franca*:

The vision of the world may be conditioned if its description is couched only in one language, because there are culturally marked terms in one language but not in the other, and the reality they capture may be lost in a different language. (Non English-medium academic staff, 4)

We will delve into this issue in our third research question.

*RQ2: How much does the community value English-medium instruction?*

The following three main categories came up from the participants' responses and their analysis: *gains*, *personal investment* and *drawbacks*. The first category will be linked to personal and academic gains. Personal investment is related to the effort required to deal with English-medium instruction and the lack of recognition of such effort. Finally, the drawbacks refer to the perception of English as an imposed language and to insufficient command of the English language.

As for the first category, all the participants acknowledged both personal and academic gains derived from English-medium instruction. From the personal perspective, it broadens their minds and makes them aware of other peoples; from the academic side, linguistic benefits and higher mobility came to the fore. They all also highlighted some additional benefits: English-medium students are often more motivated, and there is an attraction factor, especially for international students with a low command of Spanish



who can take courses in English while improving their Spanish until they feel ready to join the Spanish group.

The students participating in English-medium instruction classes were very positive about the general linguistic benefits and the gains in specialised language: 'Just one hour of English-medium instruction is worth three hours of English as a subject. It helps to express yourself better' (English-medium student, 2). Despite being aware of their limitations in the productive skills, the English-medium students did not see any detrimental effect on content learning: 'But, with effort, we manage to understand the content of the subject. Although we understand well, we find it more difficult to express our ideas' (English-medium student, 3).

Among both the general and international relations office administration personnel there was wide consensus. They were clearly in favour of English-medium instruction, as they deemed it important for students' career prospects, academic mobility, study abroad opportunities and to improve language competence. However, they expressed concerns about students' linguistic proficiency to cope with the English-medium subjects: 'Do secondary education students enter university with the appropriate level of English to do English-medium subjects? I have my doubts' (general academic personnel, 5).

The English-medium lecturers and the students were the two groups that raised several issues pertaining to the second category, namely personal investment. Despite the gains mentioned above, the students participating in the multilingualism programme underscored that they have to make an effort to deal with a subject taught in a foreign language, in particular when it comes to writing and speaking in English. The English-medium lecturers considered English-medium instruction of utmost importance as English is the language of research. However, they thought that it requires more effort on the academic staff's part, an effort which frequently goes unrewarded, as their teaching load is not reduced despite the extra time required to offer a subject in English. Several factors lead to the lack of recognition which frequently discourages other colleagues from participating in the multilingualism programme. Apart from their teaching load not being reduced, they complained about the lack of support from their heads of department and the colleagues not involved in the multilingualism programme. They also expressed discontent about the need to adapt and create teaching materials in English. In addition, the faculty noted that English-medium subjects should be better planned in the curriculum, and have a continuity in the different degrees.

Finally, the third category (i.e. drawbacks) embraces the lack of English language competence and the imposition of English. All groups acknowledged their own and local students' limitations in English language proficiency. The lecturers who had international students in their classrooms complained about their local students' lack of linguistic competence in English and, as a consequence, their being reluctant to speak English, despite signs of improvement, especially in the receptive skills, for example in reading articles. They were also aware of the challenge that teaching in English encompasses, and they expressed doubts about non-native teaching staff's language ability. However, English-medium lecturers have a different perception and regarded non-nativeness as positive:

Students understand our accent easier than that of native speakers. Moreover, we can resort to the co-official languages in tutorial hours, whereas a native speaker cannot. (English-medium academic staff, 5)

This example brings to light the conflicting view of the two groups of academic staff. Those not involved in the multilingualism programme perceived non-nativeness as a drawback, whereas those participating in the programme pointed out the advantages of being non-native instructors. Thus, experience seems to help to overcome the prejudices usually associated with non-native teachers (see Lasagabaster and Sierra 2002, and Moussu and Llurda 2008, for some insights on the native *versus* non-native teachers debate).

In this third category, international students' change of discourse through the discussion group happens to be striking. Initially, they were in favour of the multilingualism programme, but once they delved deeper into it, a new perspective arose: English was judged to be imposed. Five students out of six turned out to be against English-medium instruction at European universities. Three main arguments were put forward during the debate. The first one had to do with their interest in improving their command in the language of the host university: 'I don't like the idea of having subjects taught in English at the University of the Basque Country, because we are here to improve our Spanish' (international student, 2). Second, these international students brought to the fore their desire to be taught in the local language(s). In the words of one of the international students: 'I am dead against English-medium instruction both in my home university and abroad' (international student, 1). Towards the end of the discussion about the spread of English-medium instruction, both English-medium students and international students shared the view that the imposition of English as a trend should be avoided, as illustrated by the following words uttered by one of the participants:

I think it is very important that University of the Basque Country students can study in their own languages, that is, in Basque or in Spanish. I was also able to study in Breton while I was in high school in Brittany, but then I couldn't do a degree in Breton at university. (International student, 2)

Lastly, they make clear that other languages should be considered, and that language diversity should be promoted at tertiary education: 'It would be a good idea to have optional subjects, for instance, in French or German. English should not be the only language included in the multilingualism programme' (English-medium student, 1).

### *RQ3: What are the effects of the spread of multilingualism?*

Two main categories were formed after examining the key words that arose during the debate. The first category was labelled *multilingualism*, and encompassed the coexistence of languages and the diversity of language attitudes. The second category was related to the actual *implementation of a multilingual language policy*, and included two main issues: curricular planning and limited resources.

With regards to the first category, multilingualism, the discussion among the academic staff led to the emergence of three different perspectives depending on the importance attached to each of the three languages in contact. First, in some lecturers' opinion, the normalisation of Basque may become a hindrance for English learning and research:

I put the blame on our bilingualism because it has discouraged the learning of foreign languages ... there is the perception that top-research departments have been negatively affected by the implementation of the Basque language normalisation programme... the

resources devoted to the bilingual programme have detracted means from the internationalisation process. (Non English-medium academic staff, 1)

Second, other lecturers object to the fact that publishing in Basque has no international impact and plays a minor role – or even none at all – in the academic world. Moreover, bilingual academic staff teaching through Basque have been penalised: ‘We are penalised because we have more lectures, since there aren’t enough bilingual teachers ... less bibliography and teaching resources’ (non English-medium academic staff, 4). Finally, others think that Spanish may be downplayed as an emergent international language due to the hegemony of English. These comments reflect the different attitudes harboured among the faculty, although the first two ones are clearly predominant. These statements are obviously linked to the speaker’s attitudinal stance. Some lecturers consider that the presence of Basque has been disparaged at the University of the Basque Country, and there is still a long way to go in the normalisation process of Basque. By contrast, others contend that too many resources have been devoted to the recovery and normalisation of Basque, and these efforts are backfiring on the institution, and have shackled and restricted development in other areas, such as research (due to the economic and human resources being aimed at normalising Basque instead of being devoted to research) or the spread of English. Therefore, the idea of a *killer language*, proposed by Skuttnabb-Kangas (2000), is not always unidirectional, as, depending on the stake, an international and widely spread language such as English or a minority language only spoken in a corner of Europe such as Basque can be regarded as a killer language.

International and local English-medium students, however, showed a high degree of affinity in connection with this issue. English was widely perceived as an imposed lingua franca that squeezes out the possibility of having courses delivered in both the local and other foreign languages.

They also criticised the case of students who have stayed abroad through an exchange programme and have used only English while residing in the target country, not making the slightest effort to learn the local language. This situation leads them to conclude that the achievement of linguistic diversity should be higher on the agenda, and not limited to politically driven discourses delivered by university authorities. Thus, in the case of the students the killer language is clearly represented by English.

Students also stressed that, despite the general interest in foreign languages shown by Basque undergraduates, they had the impression that those students who have Basque as their first language may be less open to other languages, as they want to preserve and boost the minority language. This impression is confirmed by studies completed in the Basque Autonomous Community (see Lasagabaster 2004), and could be related to the idea of a *bunker attitude* (Baker 1992), which sometimes leads speakers of minority languages to be overprotective of their own minority language.

Finally, the administration personnel expressed strong agreement on the different issues put forward during the discussion group. They mentioned the efforts that the normalisation process of the Basque language has demanded of them, many having had to learn Basque to different degrees of competence in order to maintain their current positions, or to have the opportunity to apply for promotion. This is the reason why the inclusion of English, and the need to learn it as an additional language, was described as a linguistic burden in a bilingual university:

People are currently struggling with Basque to have the possibility of getting a permanent position or of promotion, as it is required in many positions. Go and tell them now to start learning English. (General administration personnel, 2)

The administration personnel also showed their concern about the pressure that English may exert on the minority language. Apart from the challenge of learning a third language, the administration personnel were also well aware of the strains that contact between different languages may produce:

If English becomes ever more important, the normalisation of Basque could be hampered, but if it (the spread of multilingualism at university) is properly implemented, there should be no problema. (General administration personnel, 1)

The only disagreement that emerged amongst members of the administration personnel and academic staff had to do with the use of Basque when addressing international students. Some of the participants were not in favour of its use in this particular case, whereas others considered that it is important to make foreign students aware of the presence of the minority language.

To sum up this first category, we see that the teaching staff show two main opposing views on multilingualism, the students largely share a negative stance towards the predominance of English, and the administration personnel consider that local and foreign languages can coexist, although they also disagree when it comes to addressing foreign students in institutional events.

The second category has to do with the implementation of a multilingual language policy. The examination of the academic staff's responses (both English-medium and non English-medium lecturers) led us to identify curricular planning as a key issue. Whereas the academic staff did not find compulsory subjects controversial (as they are usually taught in the three languages in the multilingualism programme), strains arose in the case of optional subjects. This controversy lay in the fact that, unlike compulsory subjects, optional subjects are not taught in the different curricular languages. Thus, if a particular department decides to offer the subject concerned in English, this decision implies that it will not be available in any of the two co-official languages, as the number of students in optional subjects is much smaller, and there is a need to focus human and economic resources on compulsory subjects. Thus, curricular planning and limited resources are linked by the academic staff. The following faculty member had to deal with one of his students' annoyance and uneasiness:

A student whose command of English was not good enough to attend the English group complained and told me that he couldn't understand why the subject was not offered in Basque. (English-medium academic staff, 5)

Once the students realise they cannot attend a subject that interests them due to their linguistic limitations, they find it unfair and fall back on their linguistic rights as a way to put pressure on the department that has made this decision. And this is especially so if the language negatively affected is the weakest one, Basque, because it means that there is no Basque group in this subject.

The Vice-Rector provided the institutional point of view, and underscored the impossibility of providing complete degrees in Spanish and Basque concurrently, let alone in the three languages:

We need to get away from the idea that students have to study their degree exclusively in Basque or Spanish ... It is simply not viable to offer all subjects in the three languages.

Timetables also turned out to be a difficult issue on the practical side. The delivery of a compulsory subject in three languages implies that there must be three parallel linguistic groups running at the same time, otherwise there may be a clash of students' interests. This entails that the Vice-Dean responsible for classroom and time allocations has to ensure that the timetables of the three language groups do not overlap and impede students from attending other subjects scheduled for the same time slot. Notwithstanding this, sometimes the clash is unavoidable, such as in those instances when the same lecturer is in charge of both the Basque/Spanish and the English groups (which is sometimes the case), and, therefore, both groups need to have different time slots. Students are obliged to choose between the particular language group and other subjects offered in the same time slot. One of the faculty members put it bluntly: 'The time slot assigned to the English-medium subject from the Dean's office suited nobody' (English-medium academic staff, 3).

As for the use of the different languages and the transmission and updating of information, there was widespread agreement, for all the participants deemed that this is a complex matter that requires too many resources. Drawing on their own experience, the academic staff and the administration personnel turned out to be well aware of how complex it is to update all information in both Basque and Spanish (the translation center is often overloaded), let alone if English needs to be fitted in the equation: 'It is not practical to translate everything. This kind of thing cannot be done by decree' (English-medium academic staff, 1).

In this vein, all students also referred to the complexity of having all the information updated in different languages. International students once again gave an interesting outlook, as they disclosed how their stay abroad experience affected their pre- and post-stay perspective. Thus, whereas before their arrival they found it indispensable to have academic information available in English, once they were in the target country, they changed their minds and preferred to have the information provision in the local languages:

Before arriving in Spain we believe that the programmes of the different subjects and other relevant information (such as the organisation of the degree) on the university Web should be in English, but once we are in the country, the local language is enough. (International student, 1)

All the participants acknowledged that the implementation of a multilingual language policy is fraught with difficulties, the updating of the webpage being a very good case in point, but once again the three bodies focused on different issues. Curricular planning was mainly dealt with by the academic staff, as could have been expected, since they are the ones in charge of carrying it out. The students underscored the impossibility of taking courses in the language of their choice, whereas the academic staff were more concerned about the updating of the webpage.

## Conclusions

In this article we have gathered the opinions and beliefs of members of the university community with regard to three main issues: the effects of globalisation and internationalisation

on the university's everyday life, their appraisal of the impact of English-medium instruction and their perceptions about the effects of a multilingual language policy.

Regarding the first of these topics, the participants claim that globalisation and internationalisation are not completely new at tertiary level: just that their impact is greater, reflected in the spread of English-medium instruction, and in the increase in both graduate and undergraduate students involved in mobility or exchange programmes.

One of the most noteworthy practices to have transpired in the internationalisation process is the use of foreign languages (overwhelmingly English) to teach subjects. English-medium instruction is highly valued by all three bodies (students, faculty and administration personnel), although all three also bemoan their own failings in English, a language shortcoming that emanates from the historically low importance attached to foreign language learning in Spain in general, and in the Basque Autonomous Community in particular.

One of the main complaints regarding the multilingualism programme is the lack of support from the university authorities. Consequently, the participants claim that more economic support, tailor-made courses and personnel are indispensable if English-medium instruction is to succeed. This lack of economic support and specific courses aimed at improving the implementation of English-medium instruction programmes has also been observed in many other European university contexts (Fortanet 2010; Wilkinson 2003, 2004). Even so, all groups acknowledge the inherent complexities of a multilingual university and the many (sometimes insurmountable) challenges faced. English-medium instruction is a rather recent trend in most European universities (Wächter and Maiworm 2008), and will therefore need time to settle in and improve its implementation.

Linguistic tensions resulting from the implementation of multilingual strategies at university generated the most sensitive debate. In a context where a minority language, a majority language and a foreign language are in contact, the clash (to a greater or a lesser degree) seems unavoidable, and university authorities should endeavor to minimize and cushion its detrimental effects. The hegemony of English is seen by some as a danger to linguistic diversity, but our data suggest an outstanding paradox: some voices warn against the predator effect that English may have, not only threatening the development of Basque, but also forcing other foreign languages off the curriculum. At the same time, however, insufficient English language skills on the part of both faculty and students are given as one of the grounds hampering the successful implementation of English-medium instruction.

In university contexts such as that at the University of the Basque Country, where the Basque minority language plays a very significant role, there is a need to boost multilingual language awareness (García 2008), that is to say, a sensitivity towards multilingual language learning and use. And this is especially pertinent in the case of Basque loyalists and pro-English (to the detriment of Basque) supporters, since they are the ones who show what Baker (1992) dubs a bunker attitude; that is to say, local Basque speaking individuals may see English as a threat to the normalisation of Basque, whereas pro-English supporters may think Basque encumbers the much needed development of the current international lingua franca. As O'Donnell argues, indigenous speakers should not shy away from globalisation, but rather take advantage of it:

One way that indigenous communities in Mexico can coexist with and benefit from global expansion is by becoming an active part of it, rather than a victim of language shift and assimilation. With more indigenous language speakers matriculating throughout Mexican universities, and learning the world's leading economic and scientific languages, a larger

group of the populace will be exposed to the methods and means to develop their communities through their ability to learn languages. (O'Donnell 2010, 401)

This linguistic conflict between English and minority languages may interfere with the multilingual language policy being fostered at different universities worldwide, which is why university authorities should encourage debate on these issues and articulate a clear-cut language policy, explicitly stating the objectives to be reached for each language. By doing so the university community can eventually become functionally multilingual, creating an additive multilingual atmosphere to help diminish the linguistic strains entailed in the higher education internationalisation process. A sound multilingual language policy should also develop the tools and indicators to measure how well these objectives are fulfilled.

We hope that our findings may go some way to helping multilingual strategies at university level be more successful. Although English is considered to be *the* global language, 'the real meaning of globalisation is multilingualism' (Shohamy 2007, 132). We strongly believe that by exchanging data obtained in research in different contexts, higher education's multilingual path will be more easily paved.

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