Motivation, anxiety and classroom interaction in English-Medium Instruction: a qualitative insight into students' experiences

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Abstract

This paper reports on empirical research examining the motivation and anxiety of 31 undergraduate students enrolled in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in two Spanish universities. Due to the scant literature on this topic in EMI, the current paper is intended to fill a research gap by analysing the interplay between classroom interaction, motivation and anxiety. The study aims at reaching a better understanding of the driving forces to engage in English-taught programmes at tertiary level and assessing to what extent motivation and anxiety affect such engagement. The investigation presents the results of an exploratory study screening students enrolled in the first and second year of several degrees –Chemistry, Computer Science, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, and History–. The paper takes a qualitative approach, using focus groups to collect the data. The findings of the study underline the importance of students' vision as speakers of English interacting fluently in all spheres of their future lives. The positive learning experience in EMI courses is backed by a general anxiety-free atmosphere, fostering student motivation and their engagement in classroom interaction.

Keywords: English-Medium Instruction (EMI), motivation, anxiety, interaction, higher education.

1. Introduction

English-Medium Instruction (EMI) has mushroomed in most European countries (Macaro et al., 2018; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014), with universities offering programmes taught in English with the aim of attracting international students, becoming more visible globally, and climbing the ladder of rankings of higher education (Dafouz & Smit, 2020; Dimova et al., 2015; Doiz et al., 2013). However, with EMI courses becoming a requirement to graduate in some contexts (Kojima, 2021), local students' classroom-related anxiety and motivation should be borne in mind. Although EMI is a burgeoning avenue of research, and motivation is pivotal in second language (L2) learning (Dörnyei, 2009; Lamb, 2017), there is a paucity of studies analysing the impact of English-taught programmes on the affective factors of university students (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021). In this scenario, student interaction deserves further scholarly attention, as, the interplay between students' motivation, anxiety and classroom interaction in EMI has not yet been explored.

The purpose of our article is thus to scrutinise the perceptions of university students regarding their motivation and anxiety in EMI courses. Specifically, drawing from Dörnyei's framework (2005, 2009), our study sets out to explore: i) what drives EMI students' motivation in terms of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves, ii) what they think about their learning experience in EMI and the student-student and teacher-student interaction, and iii) what is the effect of EMI on their classroom-related anxiety. The investigation is part of a larger project examining the teacher-student interaction in EMI courses in Spain.

The article aims to contribute to EMI research by providing empirical evidence on the motivation and anxiety of students in two settings in Spain –Asturias and the Basque Country–. Specifically, the findings of the investigation will lead to a better understanding of the interplay between motivation, anxiety and classroom interaction in several study fields, ranging from the humanities (history) to hard sciences (chemistry).

2. Theoretical backdrop

In this section, we present a brief outline of the state-of-the-art and the theoretical underpinnings of the two critical notions related to the current study: EMI, on the one hand, and motivation and anxiety in L2 learning, on the other.

2.1 English-Medium Instruction

EMI can be defined as "an educational system where content is taught through English in contexts where English is not used as the primary, first, or official language" (Rose & McKinley, 2018:114). Although EMI is "a relatively new phenomenon" (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021:1), it has spread across Europe, with most higher education institutions (HEIs) offering so-called bilingual programmes as a standard strategy to meet internationalization policies (Dearden, 2014; Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Macaro, 2018). In fact, in some contexts such as East Asia, EMI is "closely related to government goals of improving the English proficiency of its citizens" (Galloway et al., 2020:397). The exponential growth of EMI in the last decade follows the trail of primary and secondary education, where Content and Language Integration (CLIL) has proliferated since the 90s, –especially in Europe– based on linguistic, intercultural and cognitive benefits for learners (Cenoz, 2015; Fernández-Costales, 2022; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016).

Using English as the medium of instruction can contribute to encouraging international mobility and enhance the language competence of students and faculty. However, research has consistently evidenced the lack of integration between language and content in EMI (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021; Macaro, 2018), making EMI different from content-based approaches, such as the aforementioned CLIL, or Content-Based Instruction (CBI).

In the European context, universities in northern countries pioneered the introduction of EMI with positive results. Some of the first studies analysing the implementation of multilingual policies in northern HEIs also reveal a critical issue – which is also a common feature in CLIL– (Airey, 2011; Wilkinson, 2004): there is no single and uniform EMI standard, and heterogeneous approaches can be observed depending on particular contexts. Countries in southern Europe have approached multilingualism at a tertiary level more recently, with most HEIs deploying bilingual programmes since 2010 (Costa & Coleman, 2012; Doiz et al., 2013; Fernández-Costales & González-Riaño, 2015).

Undoubtedly, the most salient finding in the specialised literature is that EMI might contribute to meeting a dual objective: fostering the simultaneous acquisition of content knowledge and language competence in the L2 (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2020; Rose et al., 2020). In fact, the improvement in L2 proficiency has been identified as a key benefit by EMI students in different settings (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Tazl, 2011; Wu, 2006; Yeh, 2014). However, further empirical evidence is required, especially, to confirm that L2 proficiency is improved and there is no negative impact on content learning for EMI students at tertiary level (Lasagabaster, 2022). Leaving aside L2 command, other benefits for EMI students have been unearthed, such as the promotion of their international dimension and the improvement in their career prospects (Fernández-Costales, 2017).

A topical issue is the neglection of language objectives in EMI (Doiz et al., 2019; Lo, 2015), as university lecturers seem to ignore the linguistic dimension when delivering contents through English. This might be related to the paucity of specific training for lecturers in EMI (O'Dowd, 2018). The significance of teacher education in EMI has also been underscored by meta-analyses (Lasagabaster & Fernández-Costales, 2022; Macaro et al., 2018) that identify collaboration between language and content lecturers and the importance of the provision of professional development programmes as key issues that still require empirical evidence. Other critical elements include the competencies and certification processes of EMI lecturers (Macaro et al., 2019), teachers' L2 proficiency (Dimova & Kling, 2018), and more specifically, the use of interactive metadiscourse markers by EMI lecturers (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022).

Despite the positive perception of EMI and the benefits reported by research for students' learning, it is worth stressing that attending university lectures in an L2 is a challenge for most learners, and students find it hard to understand the lessons, demanding support from their lecturers (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018). Taking into account the role of motivation in L2 learning, the dearth of studies delving into its connection with EMI is puzzling. More empirical evidence is needed to critically examine which are the motivating drives of EMI learners and the impact studying through English may have on their anxiety levels and, subsequently, on EMI classroom interaction.

2.2 Motivation and anxiety towards L2 learning

The concept of the "self" has been widely explored in psychology, but it has only recently been applied to language learning. Aiming to provide new insights into the study of L2 motivation, Dörnyei proposed the L2 Motivational Self-System (L2MSS), which challenged the well-established paradigm of integrative vs. instrumental motivation coined by Gardner (1985, 2001). Based on the premise that learners can develop a mixed orientation –which may vary with time, as motivation is dynamic (Dörnyei, 2010; Kopinska & Azkarai, 2020)–, and considering that Gardner's models were developed in a particular context where English was not spoken as a foreign language, Dörnyei drew on the theory of the possible selves updated by Markus and Nurius (1986) to elaborate a model where learners envisage themselves as proficient users of the L2. The overarching principle of the L2MSS is that we are motivated to learn an L2 as long as we develop a strong vision of ourselves as future users of the language.

The L2MSS model comprises three components: 1) the "ideal L2 self", which is the speakers' vision of themselves as competent users of the L2 in the future. For instance, if students visualise themselves as proficient and successful users of the L2 in their jobs, this image will act as a driving force when studying a foreign language. In other words, having a powerful (and achievable) ideal self will have a positive effect on their

motivation to learn the L2. 2) The "ought-to L2 self", which refers to the characteristics speakers consider they should have to fulfil the expectations of other people and avoid any negative aftermath. As opposed to the ideal L2 self, which is intimately linked to our individual vision for ourselves, the ought-to L2 self deals with the standards we should meet according to other people. Hence, an EMI student may be willing to pass a subject taught in English or reach a certain level in the L2 to meet his or her parents' expectations. 3) The L2 learning experience, which is concerned with the learning environment and the student experience when learning the L2. This third component relates to the learning of the L2 language in formal settings (inside the classroom) and also in non-formal environments (outside the school).

The L2MSS has been revised by several researchers (Dörnyei, 2009, 2010; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Ushioda, 2014) and there is evidence that the ideal L2 self is critical to predicting motivation toward L2 learning (Lamb, 2017; Taguchi, et al., 2009). However, this general tendency has been challenged by the recent results of Rose et al. (2020) in Japan, where the ought-to self seems to be a more robust measure of motivation in explaining success in language learning. Nonetheless, the L2 learning experience is a strong predictor of "intended effort or L2 achievement", and even "the most powerful predictor of motivated behaviour" as found in numerous studies (Dörnyei, 2019:22). Hence, the positive L2 learning experience itself, rather than "internally or externally generated self images", might play a significant role in learners' motivation and enable a successful engagement in the language learning process (Dörnyei, 2009:29). That is why the present research is concerned with classroom interaction as an integral part of L2 learning in EMI, and its interaction with students' motivation and anxiety.

Within the scope of the current paper, it is worth mentioning here research addressing motivation in EMI settings. The pioneering study by Lasagabaster (2016) assessed the motivation of EMI students toward English. Besides, to the best of our knowledge, offering the first insights into EMI and motivation in Spain, this paper is also important for a different reason: the L2MSS was used to explore students' motivation towards the L3, as the setting of the research was the University of the Basque Country (UBC), a bilingual institution where Basque and Spanish are the working languages. The tool used to measure students' motivation was the questionnaire developed by Taguchi et al. (2009) and the sample comprised 189 participants. The results of the study confirmed that students' motivation in EMI is prompted by self-identification processes, in particular by their "aspiration toward an imagined L2 future self, as well as by the EMI learning experience itself" (Lasagabaster, 2016:14). The article underscores the adequacy of Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS to evaluate learners' motivation and highlights the significance of the ideal L2 self, as it was recognized as the driving force in students' engagement in EMI. On the contrary, the motivational impact of the ought-to self on the language learning experience seems to be rather limited according to the results, as students do not feel pressed by external elements to learn the L2.

Following this line, Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018) examined the L2MSS of teachers and students enrolled at the UBC. This study took a qualitative approach to analyse several constructs: participants' identity, investment, imagined community, vulnerability and immunity in the EMI context. The sample included 13 teachers and 15 students enrolled in EMI in the faculties of Engineering, Social and Communication Sciences and Economics and Business Studies. Most students (9 out of 15) had been enrolled in CLIL programmes at school. The researchers used focus groups and organized contents into keywords that were codified into conceptual categories. Interestingly, the study revealed that the ideal self prevailed over the ought-to self in university lecturers, while both components were more balanced in EMI students. The ideal L2 self of the

students enrolled in EMI was one of fluent, successful speakers of English. Although they did not regard the English native speaker ideal as part of their L2 ideal self, they considered their English skills and accents might hinder the development of their multilingual identities. When it came to the ought-to L2 self of participants, students acknowledged the external pressure of their parents to learn the L2 and the overwhelming importance of English today. They also recognised some feared consequences of not commanding the foreign language, namely, being less qualified when searching for a job, failing to get an Erasmus grant, the impact on their academic records or the effect on their curriculum vitae. The general assessment of the EMI programme was rather positive, and students were happy with their classes in the L2; they were able to cope with language-related issues and would have liked more subjects in English. As for the most noticeable challenge, they identified speaking in public (especially, when they did not have time to prepare for the interaction) as the most noteworthy challenge, followed by pronunciation and vocabulary.

In a different setting, Du and Jackson (2018) delved into the evolving L2 motivation of (mainland) Chinese students taking part in an EMI experience in Hong Kong. The researchers aimed to reconstruct students' motivational trajectories from high school until higher education. Relying on a mixed methods research design, this longitudinal study examined the evolution in the motivation of eight students through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The most salient finding was that students developed a more elaborate idealized L2 self-image (and were more motivated to learn the L2) when they enrolled in an EMI programme. The researchers also concluded that the ideal L2 self was more determinant than the ought-to self when modelling students' future visions.

While motivation is widely regarded as a positive factor in the language classroom, including EMI courses, foreign language anxiety (FLA), although common among many L2 students, has been considered detrimental to L2 learning (Chen & Lin, 2009; Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Trang et al., 2013). FLA, understood as a sense of apprehension related to language learning in a formal context, stems from learners' nervousness over performance on tests, oral tasks or interaction in the classroom, and the fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986: 127). Still, it can also be attributed to such L2 course-related situational variables as activities performed in class, other in-class situations, or atmosphere, and individual learner variables –e.g., personality, motivation, confidence, L2 competence, and attitudes– (Chou, 2018; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

In the Asian context, Chou (2018) examined speaking anxiety in 638 Taiwanese students enrolled in partial (bilingual communication, Chinese-English) and full (English-only) EMI courses. The findings indicated that those receiving partial EMI experienced higher speech anxiety and lower self-confidence while performing orally than those who attended full EMI courses (Chou, 2018:628). They were also more negative towards the L2. The analysis of speaking difficulties revealed that anxiety was sustained by deficiencies in lexical, grammatical, and content knowledge. These aspects, together with students' pronunciation were found difficult to improve.

In Japan, Kojima (2021) surveyed 222 EMI students and found that EMI motivation was driven by students' willingness to learn English and –to a lesser extent– content. In a qualitative follow-up study, she interviewed six students to analyse how they felt in EMI classrooms and she found that speaking anxiety played a major role. The results revealed that the learning environment in EMI was so harsh that it hindered students' motivation. English was identified by students as a barrier to learning, EMI courses were overloaded with work, and the learning environment itself was highly

unsatisfying, because of lack of interaction and large class size. The students expressed a desire for a more interactive EMI.

Receiving instruction in English may benefit EMI students in many aspects of speaking (Chou, 2018), although more attention should be given to speaking anxiety and its influence on students' participation. This is important because classroom interaction provides the students with opportunities to practice their foreign language, which, in turn, contributes to lowering their anxiety, encourages them to learn autonomously and participate actively in class. However, to the best of our knowledge, no qualitative study has yet addressed EMI-related anxiety in the Spanish context.

This review of the literature reveals that our study is innovative on several grounds. First, prior research on EMI has not examined different branches of knowledge, while our paper includes participants from Chemistry, Engineering, Computer Science and History. Second, we are analysing participants with different self-reported levels of English, as this is a variable that may exert a significant influence on students' affective factors. And third, we analyse the interplay between student interaction, motivation and classroom anxiety.

3. The present study

The current research is framed within the Spanish context of higher education, where EMI is "viewed as the cornerstone of the internationalization process" (Lasagabaster, 2021:78). In Spain, EMI has mushroomed since 2010, with most universities offering bilingual programmes at undergraduate or graduate level (Bazo et al., 2017; Fernández-Costales & González-Riaño, 2015; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013). The study took place at the UBC and the University of Oviedo (UO) and is part of a longitudinal research project investigating interaction in EMI. The UBC is an officially bilingual institution (with Basque and Spanish being present across all faculties and degrees). In 2005, the Multilingualism Programme was implemented, with English and French used to teach content subjects (although English is the L2 used in 95% of optional and compulsory courses). For its part, the UO implemented its bilingual programme in 2010, offering degrees and master's degrees partially or entirely in English. Coinciding with the adaptation to the European Higher Education Area, Asturian has also become a language of instruction at the University of Oviedo by means of a minor in the degree of Philology, and specialization tracks in the degree of Primary Education and the master's degree in Teacher Training for Secondary Education, Baccalaureate and Vocational Training. The majority of the EMI courses at both universities are semestral, comprising 60 in-class study hours, usually in groups of around 20 students. Although teachers are not specifically trained in EMI, they have the opportunity to receive some courses on pronunciation and discourse organisation in English, and the majority of the instructors who taught the students involved in the present study had two-three years of experience delivering EMI classes. EMI courses are not compulsory for students, and they choose to enrol in these subjects voluntarily.

4. Methodology

The present study focuses on examining students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves, their L2 learning experience in EMI, and the effect of studying content in English on EMI-related anxiety and teacher-student or student-student interaction. The research questions we seek to answer are the following:

RQ1. What drives EMI students' motivation, in terms of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves?

RQ2. What effect does studying EMI have on their classroom-related anxiety?

RQ3. What do students think about their learning experience and classroom interaction in EMI?

4.1 Participants

A convenience sample of 31 students, 17 females and 14 males, drawn from five different Degrees (Chemistry and Computer Science at UO, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and History at UBC) took part in the study. They were all aged 18-19 and were enrolled in the first year of their corresponding degree, or second year in the case of Computer Science. Their level of English ranged from B2 (11 students) to C1 (15 students), while five of them reported having a C2 command of English. Since the study was focused on the participants' feelings and experiences concerning EMI, their English level was not controlled for, but self-reported (although some participants held an official certification). Specifically, they were asked about their self-perceived proficiency in English and in what way it affected their performance and understanding in EMI classes. Eighteen participants (58%) had already had some previous experience with learning content through English at school. Prior to the audio recording of the focus groups, the students who volunteered to participate in this study signed the corresponding consent forms, as required by the ethical committees of both universities.

4.2 Instrument and Procedure

Data were gathered by the researchers via six focus groups organized between January and May 2022 with four to eight students per group. Four focus groups were carried out at the UBC, two with students majoring in History (five students per group) and another two with students of Electrical (eight students) and Mechanical Engineering (four students). Another two focus groups were organized at the UO, one of them with students enrolled in the Degree in Computer Engineering (four students), and the other with students of Chemistry (five participants). The discussions, which were conducted in Spanish, were audio-recorded and lasted, on average, between 40 and 60 minutes. The interviews at UBC were done face to face, with one of the Mechanical Engineering students –tested positive for COVID– participating online, while the ones at UO were done integrally via Teams, due to COVID restrictions.

The guide for the group interviews included, among others, questions targeting students' (1) ideal L2 self and (2) ought-to L2 self –adapted from Ryan (2009) and Taguchi et al (2009)–, (3) their L2 learning experience and classroom interaction in EMI (adapted from Kojima, 2021), (4) intended effort to learn EMI subjects or their *motivational intensity* –adapted from Yashima (2002) and Ryan (2009)–, and (5) EMI-related anxiety they experience based on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), adapted from Horwitz et al (1986), the latter comprised of such dimensions as *Communication apprehension and interaction in EMI*, *Test anxiety*, or *Fear of negative evaluation* (see Appendix).

4.3 Data analysis

Data gathered through focus groups were transcribed yielding a corpus of 33,206 words. The corpus was then analysed by the two researchers following the approach proposed

by Strauss and Corbin (1998; see also Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and used in previous studies in the field (Kojima, 2021). First, the units of meaning identified in the transcripts were coded. Second, concepts were created to describe each code. Only concepts relevant to the study were taken into consideration. Third, concepts sharing a similar meaning were grouped into broader categories related to the motivational components under scrutiny in the current study, i.e., ideal and ought-to L2 selves, EMI-related anxiety, and learning experience and classroom interaction in EMI. In case of any disagreement, steps two and three were repeated until a consensus was reached.

5. Results and discussion

The analysis yielded 235 concepts, which were grouped into 12 categories presented in the following sections under the three research questions (Tables 1-3). For ease of identification, categories will be provided in the text in angle brackets << >> and concepts in italics, while literal words or expressions used by the students are enclosed in single quotation marks and longer excerpts in double quotation marks.

5.1 EMI students' L2 selves

The analysis revealed that our participants had a clear vision of themselves as competent users of English in the near future, as all of them stated they imagined themselves interacting in the FL with ease either in their work or personal environment. As a matter of fact, as displayed in Table 1 below, most comments related to the ideal L2 self regarded the promotion-oriented instrumental motives to attain a good command of English and its importance in the different dimensions of their lives, expressing their willingness to reach such competence.

> The majority of the comments reflected the pivotal role of English in the <<professional sphere>>, comprising such concepts as offering *more job opportunities*, the possibility and willingness to *work abroad*, being able to *communicate internationally* or *English being an asset for the future*. Regarding the <<academic sphere>> the students highlighted the relevance of English for their *academic records* and *academic career*, the possibility of *studying abroad*, better *availability of materials* in FL, and the *importance of language certifications*. The category of <<interacting in English essential in the private sphere>> encompasses opportunities knowing English may give the students to *travel*, to get access to *entertainment* (series, movies and videogames), and for *personal growth*.

> Even if originally prompted by instrumental motives with a clear promotion focus, the importance of interacting in English fluently seems an interiorised notion and an integral part of the students' ideal L2 self. This can be identified in the following excerpt:

> > "Learning English is something natural to us, you take it for granted, it's essential (…) I think that not only does it open doors regarding where you can travel, with whom you can talk, or how you can communicate, but also if you speak English a lot, it changes your way of thinking, it opens your mind" (S1, Computer Engineering).

> Mastering English, which was regarded as something *essential*, seemed also intrinsic, 'natural' to the students and enabled them to do numerous things. The concepts categorised here were positive and referred to interacting in English being a tool to 'open doors' in the different areas of their lives. This points at the promotion-oriented instrumental motivation to learn the L2, now a 'taken-for-granted' part of their own

identities. In line with previous findings (Du & Jackson, 2018; Lasagabaster, 2016), this future self-guide (i.e., ideal L2 self) seems to be a driving force in EMI.

Table 1. List of categories (in bold) and concepts (in italics) related to EMI students' ideal and ought-to L2 selves.

IDEAL L2 SELF
Category 1: <<Interacting in English essential in the professional sphere>> (26)
Interacting in English is essential for future work opportunities (14)
English is essential for working abroad (5)
English as an important asset for the future (4)
English is essential for communicating internationally (3)
Category 2: <<Interacting in English essential in the academic sphere>> (14)
English essential for academic records (5)
The importance of language certifications (4)
English is essential for an academic career (3)
English is essential to study abroad (1)
More materials available in English (1)
Category 3: <<Interacting in English essential in the private sphere>> (11)
English is essential for travelling (6)
English is essential for entertainment (3)
English essential for personal growth (2)
OUGHT-TO L2 SELF
Category 4: <<Interacting in English as an obligation>> (18)
Parental pressure to learn English in the childhood (9)
Knowing English is an obligation nowadays (7)
Interacting in English as an obligation in EMI (2)

Note: The numbers in parentheses are the number of times that the concepts were mentioned by different participants.

On the other hand, in line with Lasagabaster (2016) and partially contrary to Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018), Rose et al. (2020), and Kojima (2021), students' ought-to L2 self did not seem to play a major role. Only nine students mentioned <<interacting in English being an obligation>> to comply with societal rules. According to these comments, which reflected external pressure, or prevention-oriented instrumental motives: "nowadays you can't go anywhere without speaking English, it's a 'must'" (S7, Chemistry), because, even though "not entirely unavoidable, (…) not knowing English is a burden" (S18, History). In addition, some of the participants felt obliged by their parents to learn English during childhood, and they confess they "(…) enter[ed] the world of English in a forced manner" (S28, Electrical Engineering).

5.2 (Lack of) EMI-related anxiety

With regard to students' comments about anxiety in EMI courses, presented in Table 2, the category with most concepts identified was <<communication apprehension>>. Students mentioned they felt *anxious* or *uncomfortable* when *performing orally* or *interacting in EMI* classes, and sometimes being *ashamed of making errors while speaking*, although more than half of the comments in this category referred to a general *apprehension while speaking in public as a personality trait*, that is, a third of our sample disclosed such behavioural characteristic, irrespective of the language of interaction. In

fact, speaking in public was identified as the most noticeable challenge also in other studies on EMI (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018).

The language of instruction was considered the <<source of anxiety>>, as the *necessity of constantly paying attention not to lose track of the class* made some participants anxious. English was also identified by some as a *source of additional stress* and the reason why EMI contents might be *harder to study.* Some students also expressed their concern about *losing time at the exam due to language-related doubts*, or their lack of ability to "improvise in English" (S10, History) at an exam.

Table 2. List of categories (in bold) and concepts (in italics) related to EMI students' (lack of) classroom-related anxiety.

ANXIETY
Category 5: <<Communication apprehension>> (23)
Anxiety related to speaking in public as a personality trait (12)
Anxiety-related to oral performance in EMI (4)
Anxious when interacting in EMI (3)
Ashamed of possible errors while speaking (2)
Feeling uncomfortable when having to interact in English (2)
Category 6: <<English as a source of anxiety>> (8)
Anxious not to lose attention to keep track of EMI class (4)
Afraid of losing time at the exam due to language-related doubts (2)
English as a source of additional stress (1)
Content in English is harder to study (1)
LACK OF ANXIETY
Category 7: <<Conscious -not anxious- about making mistakes>> (23)
Error self-awareness (8)
Wish to be corrected by EMI teachers (8)
Worried about (pronunciation) errors (6)
Worried about making errors at the exam (1)
Category 8: <<Lack of fear of negative evaluation>> (21)
Lack of language error correction in EMI (5)
Lack of negative feedback (3)/lack of any feedback (1)
EMI teachers are empathetic with students in terms of language errors (5)
Teachers not being too strict while correcting because of English (3)
EMI students' English level is better than that of EMI teachers (2)
EMI teachers do not expect students to improve their English (2)

Actually, it was the lack of anxiety the students mentioned most often (44 concepts *vs.* 31 related to the presence of apprehension). They were found to be more <<conscious about making mistakes>>, yet not anxious about it, *self-aware* and *concerned about the* (pronunciation) *errors they make*, just to keep improving their English.

They pointed at the <<lack of fear of negative evaluation>> since there seems to be *no error correction on the part of EMI teachers*, and *lack of (negative) feedback*, which might help to create a comfortable atmosphere to interact in EMI classes freely. Nevertheless, according to our participants, EMI teachers seemed either *empathetic* with their students and *not too strict* in terms of communicating in a foreign language, or directly *not caring about their students' language improvement*. As a consequence, students seemed more concerned about making errors related to content and not to language:

> "I'm more worried about the content; doing an exercise on the blackboard badly I'd die of shame, but making an error in English, no" (S30, Electrical Engineering).

Nevertheless, the students expressed the *wish to have their language errors corrected* by teachers, which, unfortunately, seems hardly fulfilled, as found in previous studies (Doiz et al., 2019; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021; Lo, 2015; Macaro, 2018).

5.3 Classroom interaction and learning experience in EMI

The list of categories and concepts related to classroom interaction and students' learning experience in EMI unveils an overall positive picture, contrary to Kojima (2021). They were generally happy with the experience and willing to take more EMI courses. As displayed in Table 3 below, EMI-related benefits (55), both <<language-related>> and <<learning environment-related>>, outweighed negative comments (36). The students highlighted having *improved* their language skills (*vocabulary*, *expressions, fluency,* and *listening skills*), while they *get used to listening to lectures in English* which are longer than in the previous stages of education. The improvement in EMI students' L2 proficiency was identified as a key benefit also in other studies (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Tazl, 2011; Wu, 2006; Yeh, 2014), although research is far from conclusive (Lasagabaster, 2022). In addition, they appreciated the opportunity EMI gives them to *keep in touch with the language* and to gain *more confidence to interact* in class. Having classes in English made them feel they *learn more than just the content*, as well as enabling an *'unconscious'* or *involuntary learning* of English.

The most gratifying element of EMI were *small groups* which offer *more personalised attention* and contribute to *better conditions* and *atmosphere in class*. Students felt *more comfortable when interacting in a small group*, and *teachers' explanations* seemed *better* when there is a reduced number of students:

> "Teachers speak more slowly when there are fewer people, as nobody disturbs, they take their time to know whether you've understood or at least to explain [contents] more comfortably" (S11, History).

Fewer students per group also provide more opportunities to interact, which was also emphasised by the students:

> "Since we are a small group, we can be given more attention and more freedom to ask questions" (S20, Mechanical Engineering).

In EMI classes, the majority of the students were of the *same age* and shared *similar English competence*, which might have encouraged them to interact. The EMI teacher was also regarded by some as the most motivating component of the learning environment. The findings revealed that the learning experience in EMI favouring interaction possibilities prompted students' motivation, in line with Lasagabaster (2016).

Table 3. List of categories (in bold) and concepts (in italics) related to classroom interaction and students' learning experience in EMI.

Category 9: <<EMI-related language benefits>> (33)
Improved vocabulary/specific vocabulary (8)
Opportunity to keep in touch with English (6)
Improved fluency (5)
More confidence to interact in English (3)
Improved listening skills (2)
Learning more than just content (2)
"Unconscious learning" (2)
Involuntary learning (2)
New expressions (1)
Getting used to listening to lectures in English (1)
Having to paraphrase makes you improve (1)
Category 10: <<EMI learning environment-related benefits>> (22)
Reduced groups as a gratifying element (7)
Better conditions in a small group (3)
EMI teacher (3)
Feeling comfortable when interacting in EMI due to small group (2)
More personalised attention in a small group (2)
Good atmosphere (2)
Teachers explain better in small groups (1)
Students of the same age (1)
Students with a similar level of English (1)

Category 11: <<Demotivating elements in EMI>> (22)
Critical attitude towards EMI teachers whose discourse is disorganised/not clear (5)
Lack of interaction, teacher's monologue (4)
Missing information/lack of availability of class materials (3)
Demotivating teacher (2)
EMI class going too slowly (2)
Not understanding a concept (2)
Boredom resulting in loss of attention (1)
Too technical content (1)
Lack of feedback (1)
Having to answer questions EMI teacher makes (1)
Category 12: <<EMI as source of additional effort>> (14)
Having to get used to listening to English for a long time (5)
Additional effort to follow EMI class (3)
Having to think in English slows you down (2)
Difficulties with understanding abstract concepts (1)
Difficulties with understanding too technical vocabulary (1)
Having to think more about how to formulate phrases (1)
Not being able to express yourself more quickly/fluently (1)

The critical comments concerned mainly some <<demotivating elements in EMI>> environment, such as the *lack of interaction* or *feedback,* occasionally leading to the sessions converting into a *teacher's monologue*. This was highlighted by four students, who referred to the class being demotivating "if it's only the teacher who is talking" (S25, Electrical Engineering), as mirrored in the following extracts from the interviews:

> "The lack of interaction, if it's just [teacher's] discourse, so you just stay there listening" (S30, Electrical Engineering).

"Well, if the [teacher] speaks the entire class at the same tone, very monotonous, in any subject, but perhaps in English, you disconnect more quickly. So, if [he/she] doesn't do any activities nor asks questions, it's more [demotivating]" (S11, History).

This, in addition to scarce feedback, might affect students negatively, since: "knowing if you are doing well or how much effort you should make the next time encourages you to keep studying" (S11, History).

It is important to emphasise that two students expressed a direct wish for more interaction in EMI classes, as reflected in the following excerpt:
"Teacher asking me a question directly motivates me more. I'd like my teachers to focus more [on us], to keep a closer watch on us, like asking us to give a solution to an exercise or ask somebody to carry it out on the blackboard, to take part more" (S30, Electrical Engineering).

Curiously enough, one student mentioned *having to answer questions* as a source of demotivation. This is in contrast to the widespread criticism against monologic approaches in language teaching, although the position claiming for more dialogic classes clearly outnumbers the former (criticism of the lack of interaction and teacher's feedback: five comments vs. one critical comment on the need to interact in EMI class).

Some students showed a *critical attitude towards lecturers whose discourse was too disorganised to follow*, apparently not (only) due to the language of instruction. This might have caused a *loss of* important *information*, essential for self-study. Some EMI *classes* were reported to *go too slowly* causing *boredom* and *loss of attention*, after which it was impossible for the students to re-engage. *Not understanding a concept* or *too technical content* was also mentioned as demotivating, together at times with EMI teachers.

Additionally, the EMI experience was regarded as a <<source of additional effort>>, since the students *had to* get *used to listening to English for a long time* making an *additional effort to follow the course*, unlike classes in their mother tongue:
"In English, you have to pay attention and focus more on what [the teacher] is saying to understand it well and it's difficult. We make a double effort to follow [the class]" (S12, History).

Difficulties with understanding abstract concepts and *too technical vocabulary* were also identified as extra work. However, unlike Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018) and Kojima (2021), attending university lectures in an L2 was not found to be a challenge for most learners, and they did not demand support from their teachers.

Students noticed as well that sometimes *having to think in English slowed them down*, they had to *think more about how to formulate phrases* and were not *able to express themselves more quickly or fluently*; however, *having to paraphrase* was likewise mentioned as something beneficial that *made them improve*.

6. Final remarks

The findings of our study revealed that students' vision as speakers of English interacting with ease in all spheres of their future lives seems a fully integrated element of their ideal

L2 self, whereas the impact of their ought-to L2 self was found limited, as they hardly felt any external pressure to take EMI courses or to become proficient in English. Such interiorised need to master the L2, together with a positive learning experience which fosters classroom interaction and is supported by a general lack of EMI-related anxiety, drives students' motivation to engage in EMI.

Concerning the effect EMI courses may have on the students' classroom-related anxiety, the data showed a lack of anxiety, which may stem from the fact that EMI teachers often overlook language-related issues. In our corpus, only 11 comments were specifically related to EMI. This may be due to the relatively high level of participants' English proficiency or might have well been triggered by the learning environment, as the smaller groups in EMI enable an L2-related anxiety-free atmosphere in class, where students feel comfortable while they interact in English and are more prone to participate. As revealed in the analysis, students highlighted a lack of anxiety in EMI. Even if they were concerned with (mostly pronunciation) errors, it did not lead to speaking anxiety, nor did it impede classroom interaction. Additionally, the EMI teacher might have contributed to the relaxed classroom atmosphere, according to the participants. Although beyond the scope of the present study, the analysis of the teacher factor in EMI seems an important element and should be acknowledged as a shortcoming.

The overall evaluation of students' learning experience regarding EMI courses was found positive, as the benefits they mentioned outweighed by far the unfavourable comments. Students were generally satisfied with their EMI courses and looked forward to taking up more in the upcoming years.

The present study does not aim to offer generalizable outcomes, as the implementation of EMI varies depending on the setting. In addition, it has to be acknowledged that the participants' level of competence in English was self-reported and not formally controlled for, and our paper does not examine students in the last years of the degree. Some differences between sub-groups of students (hard sciences vs. soft sciences, and the most vs. the least proficient ones) were identified, although more data are needed to substantiate any further claims. The least proficient students were more withdrawn regarding the contribution to classroom interaction in EMI and preferred to ask questions to a classmate rather than to the teacher. The ones majoring in History showed more concerns about possible language-related problems on exams, which might be due to the fact that their examinations require essay writing. However, this issue was also raised by one student majoring in Chemistry, although the majority of hard science students showed a complete disregard for possible language errors and prioritised the content. Despite these limitations, we believe that the results of our research may contribute to a better understanding of the anxiety levels and the type of motivation of EMI students as factors potentially affecting classroom interaction. The present study also allows offering some pedagogical implications, above all, the need to foster more interactive classes in EMI, as this is consistently demanded by the participants of our study. In this sense, teacher training is paramount to offer lecturers strategies and pedagogical tools to promote classroom interaction and help students to overcome the anxiety provoked by the use of English as means of instruction in their courses.

Regarding prospective research lines, the cumulative effect of EMI on learners' motivation should be examined, as there is a dearth of longitudinal studies in the field. Also, comparative studies between EMI and non-EMI groups may provide new insights into the motivational drives of university students and the possible differences between L1 and L2 instruction. Moreover, the role of teachers' interactional practices as a driving force in student engagement needs further research.

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Appendix: focus groups sample questions

Motivation-related items (adapted from Ryan, 2009 and Taguchi, Magid and Papi, 2009)

(1) Ideal L2 self

Do you imagine yourselves as someone competent in English? Someone who uses English effectively?

When you think of your future career, do you imagine yourselves being able to use English?

(2) Ought-to L2 self

Do you feel pressure to learn English well? From your parents, friends, classmates, teachers, university/your department, and/or society?

Do you think not being able to use English may have a negative effect in your future?

(3) L2 learning experience and classroom interaction in EMI (adapted from Kojima, 2021)

What is the typical classroom interaction in your EMI course(s)?

Does your EMI teacher encourage you to participate in classroom interactions?

(4) Intended effort to learn EMI /"Motivational intensity" (adapted from Yashima, 2002 and Ryan, 2009)

Do you think you make great efforts to learn and practice English in your EMI course?

Do you think of taking more EMI courses to continue to study and improve your English?

Anxiety-related items (FLCAS) (adapted from Horwitz et al., 1986)

(5) Communication apprehension and classroom interaction in EMI

Are you afraid of speaking in your EMI class? Why?

Do you feel more tense and nervous in your EMI class than in your other classes in Basque/Asturian or Spanish?

(6) Test anxiety

Are you usually at ease during your tests in your EMI class? Do you feel confused when you study for an EMI course test?

Do you feel more anxious in exams in English when compared to those carried out in Spanish or Basque/Asturian?

(7) Fear of negative evaluation

Do you feel EMI class moves so quickly that you are afraid of getting left behind?

Do you get nervous when you don't understand what the EMI teacher is saying in English, or does this never happen to you?