

Internationalisation, multilingualism and English-medium instruction

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In the new European Higher Education Space, Universities in Europe are exhorted to cultivate and develop multilingualism. The European Commission's 2004-2006 action plan for promoting language learning and diversity speaks of the need to build an environment which is really favourable to languages. Yet reality indicates that it is English which reigns supreme and has become the main foreign language used as means of instruction at European universities. Internationalisation has played a key role in this process, becoming one of the main drivers of the linguistic hegemony exerted by English.

In this paper we examine the opinions of teaching staff involved in English-medium instruction, from pedagogical, ecology-of-language and personal viewpoints. Data was gathered using group discussion. The study was conducted at a multilingual Spanish university where majority (Spanish), minority (Basque) and foreign (English) languages coexist, resulting in some unavoidable linguistic strains. The implications for English-medium instruction are discussed at the end of this paper.

Introduction

European higher education institutions have crossed the linguistic Rubicon and gone down the internationalisation road by offering courses, modules or complete degrees taught in English, which has become the language of higher education (Brumfit, 2004). The growth of English-medium programmes in European universities is closely linked to the importance attached to developing teaching strategies which ought to foster the learning of a wide range of languages.

However, at tertiary level English has more often than not become the only foreign language used as means of instruction. At the same time, promoting English-medium instruction may inadvertently lead to the belief that learning English as a foreign language is enough, as pointed out by the Language Policy Unit of the European Commission (Holdsworth, 2004). As Airey and Linder (2008: 146) put it: "Although the shift to teaching in English has often been welcomed by teachers and students, the research community is only beginning to understand the dynamics of these changes within the learning environment".

The pervasive presence of English and its effects vary depending on the context. According to Kachru's (1982) well-known three-concentric-circle model, speakers of English can be split into the inner circle (made up of those speakers who are native speakers of English), the outer circle (for whom English is a second language) and the expanding circle (for whom English is the foreign language). Therefore, the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia would be included in the inner circle, whereas European countries (except, obviously, those located in the inner circle, such as the UK, Malta or Ireland) would be encompassed in the expanding circle, as English is a foreign language in these contexts.

In the era of internationalisation and globalisation, higher education institutions (henceforward HEIs) in the inner circle countries are heterogeneous institutions characterized by the presence of both a substantial percentage of international students, and multicultural and multilingual students from diverse minority ethnic groups. Thus, in the UK 10% of the students in HEIs are international students (EU and non-EU) (Bolsman and Miller, 2008) and more than 300 languages are spoken by children in London schools who will potentially attend HEI later on at some point (Martin, 2010). Similarly, in an undisclosed city in British Columbia, Canada, 41% of the population speak a language other than English or French, and 1 in five people are of Chinese ethnicity (Marshall, 2010: 42).

However, in spite of the multilingual and international makeup of their students, HEIs in English speaking countries are for the most part monolingual, and multilingual and multicultural students are expected to adopt language and literacy practices of a certain kind. Hence, the varieties of English spoken by these students are taken as problematic and multilingual students are all too frequently required to go through a 'remedial ESL identity' and to abandon their native languages (Martin 2010). Clearly "...there is a mismatch between the monolingual ethos and the ideology of English-medium tertiary education and the needs and identities of multilingual students" (Preece and Martin 2010: 3).

The situation of the inner-circle HEIs which has been described so far does not correspond with the proposals and recommendations provided by the European Commission, according to which, HEIs are perceived as key elements in the promotion of "societal and individual multilingualism" (European Commission 2004: 8), nor with the European Action Plan, under which universities should also promote language learning and linguistic diversity (European Commission 2004).

This study tries to shed some light on the effects of the increasing presence of English in tertiary level multilingual education by giving voice to teachers who are taking part in English-medium instruction. In the following lines we first provide an overview of English-medium instruction in Europe; then we focus on the situation of the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain; thirdly, the teachers' perspective are presented, as they play a key role in the implementation of English-medium instruction programmes at the University of the Basque Country. Finally, some implications for the future implementation of English-medium instruction at tertiary level are considered.

English-medium instruction in European universities

Until very recently the vast majority of European universities recruited students nationally or even locally. Nowadays internationalisation has become highly topical and all HEIs aspire to being international. Ritzen (2004: 36) puts it bluntly when he says that "An international university cannot be considered truly international if it does not recruit its students from a wide range of cultures and nationalities". And it is precisely this globalization of universities which has become one of the main drivers of global

English (Graddol, 2006). In fact, the literature describing the growing use and influence of English is nowadays vast (Coleman, 2006).

During the last two decades the European Commission has launched different programmes (e.g. Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, etc.) to foster the internationalisation of higher education with a view to increasing contacts among graduate and undergraduate European students, while at the same time making European higher education more attractive to students from other countries. Despite the lack of reliable student mobility data, the UK and the USA seem to account for over a third of all international students in the world, “whereas the ‘major English-speaking destination countries’ (MESDCs) together account for around 46%” (Graddol, 2006: 76). One obvious way for non-English-speaking higher education destinations to compete is to include English-medium instruction in their academic offer, as is actually the case in an increasing number of Asian and European institutions. This is one of the main reasons why the MESDCs' market share is expected to decline in the next few years.

As student and teaching staff mobility programmes burgeon, competition in this market intensifies. In Europe internationalisation pervades the policy discourse of higher education. The so-called “Bologna Process”, aimed at creating a borderless European Higher Education Space, represents the European response to the international *marketisation* of tertiary education (Coleman, 2006). The Bologna Process promotes freedom of movement for university undergraduates and graduates from the 46 countries which have signed the agreement to implement this process by the 2010/11 academic year. Moreover, European universities are interested in recruiting non-EU fee-paying students to garner funding stream for the institution in an attempt to make up for the shortfall in national funding and to meet the full economic cost of EU students (Bolsman and Miller, 2008; Crosier, Purser and Smidt, 2007).

The introduction of teaching in English has added to the attractiveness of many European universities, and English has become the academic *lingua franca* in European higher education, despite the European Commission's attempts to boost multilingualism and multiculturalism at university. During the last two decades the spread of English-medium teaching in European universities has reached figures previously unheard of (Wilkinson, 2004), “yet, the growth in English-medium education is not confined to Europe” (Wilkinson and Vegers, 2006: 26), as this is clearly a global trend. However, as mentioned above, European universities (excepting those in the inner circle) have common features and form part of the expanding circle of speakers of English. According to a study undertaken by Wächter and Maiworm (2008), over 400 European HEIs provided more than 2,400 programmes taught entirely in English in 2007. This represents a remarkable 340% increase on the 700 Bachelor courses and Masters programmes taught in 2002. The main reasons why European universities offer programmes in English are:

- To attract international students.
- To prepare domestic students for the global labour market.

- To raise the profile of the institution.

Moreover, in the current globalized higher education space, internationalisation is necessary even to attract domestic students (Kurtán, 2004). As competition increases, national and local universities fight for new recruits and courses in English are a powerful draw. However, while the number of programmes in English offered by European universities has increased dramatically, their implementation poses various questions: the adequacy of the teachers' linguistic competence to deliver the courses in English; the students' understanding of the content knowledge; or the possible detrimental effect of English-medium instruction on the quality of the programmes.

The upsurge in these courses has not been even throughout Europe. While the Netherlands and the Nordic countries feature strongly (the Netherlands, Germany, Finland and Sweden were pioneers), southern European countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain have been slower off the mark. This situation is due to sociolinguistic differences, because the presence of English is much greater in some countries than in others. For example, the Finns are exposed to English through mass media in general and television in particular on a daily basis (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja, 1998) and in Sweden many are concerned about the overwhelming presence of English in their everyday life (up to the point that the Swedish government was forced to develop legislation to support the position of the Swedish language; see Berg, Hult and King, 2001). This contrasts with the presence of English in Italy or Spain, which is far more limited. These sociolinguistic features have an obvious impact on higher education. In Sweden, for example, half of the masters courses taught in 2007 were taught in English and the presence of English is increasing even at undergraduate level (Airey and Linder, 2008: 146).

As far as English-medium education in Europe is concerned (Wächter and Maiworm, 2008), there is also a divide across level of education and specializations. The majority of programmes are available at Masters level and 72% are in engineering, management studies, social sciences and business. Moreover, international students make up 65% of the students in these classes, mostly from Europe (36%), Asia (34%) and Africa (12%).

Although the power issues related to English-medium teaching have been overlooked till very recently, a power-sensitive orientation currently pervades English language teaching (Canagarajah, 2008). There is no doubt that in many contexts all over the world the burgeoning use of English runs parallel to the decreasing importance of other foreign languages and this is an especially sensitive case in bilingual areas where a minority language is also used to teach content at university level. The emergence of English as the default language in higher education has undermined not only English-speaking students' interest in learning foreign languages (Brumfit, 2004), but also that of their non-English-speaking counterparts (Dörnyei, Csizér and Németh, 2006).

For these reasons, the organisation of language education and the increasing presence of English in small states and European bilingual regions are worth examining, and in

the following section the University of the Basque Country in Spain forms the focus of our analysis.

English-medium instruction at the University of the Basque Country

The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) is one of the 17 autonomous communities that make up Spain. It is a bilingual community in which both Basque (the minority language) and Spanish (the majority language) are co-official. The Basque language almost became extinct as a result of institutional/political measures such as the banning of the use of Basque during the decades that followed the Spanish Civil War (1936 – 1939). However, changes in the socio-political situation in the latter part of the twentieth century led to the proclamation of Basque as an official language in 1983. The subsequent creation of an educational system in which Basque is the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools has been a major force in the recovery of Basque (Garner & Zalvide 2005). For example, in 2008/09, the majority (57.3%) of pre-university students were enrolled in schools with Basque as the language of medium of instruction and 21.4% in bilingual Basque/Spanish schools, while only 18.9% attended Spanish-medium schools in which Basque is only taught as a subject. Currently, according to the latest sociolinguistic survey (Basque Government, 2006), 45.2% of the population is monolingual in Spanish, 37.5% bilingual (Basque/Spanish) and 17.5% passive bilingual.

The University of the Basque Country (UBC henceforth) is a public higher education establishment located in the BAC. It is officially bilingual (Basque/Spanish), thus both these languages are used in lectures, and the university produces a large number of bilingual speaking graduates. In 2008/09, 34% of the teaching staff was bilingual and the goal of the Basque Language Provision Action is to reach 43% of bilingual teachers by the year 2011/12.

The students at the UBC come from a relatively homogeneous linguistic background. In particular, 99% of the approximately 45,000 students enrolled in 2008/09 were local Spanish monolingual or Basque/Spanish bilingual speakers and 0.1%, - 67 students - were international. International students enrolled at the UBC through mobility programmes, such as the well-known Erasmus scheme, are not taken into account here, since they spend a semester or (at most) one academic year at the UBC and their degrees are issued by their home universities, not by the UBC.¹

Within the officially bilingual BAC, the UBC, by virtue of its statutes, guarantees the possibility of studying in Basque or Spanish to its students. The language policy which has resulted from the statutes has required an extraordinary economic effort on the part of the Basque autonomous Government and the university itself, as well as enormous investment in training human resources, namely, the teaching staff and administrative personnel. The efforts made and measures taken have proved effective, as verified by the steady yearly increase of compulsory and optional subjects in Basque in the range of courses designed to meet the also rising student demand. However, in spite of the progress made, there are still some issues which need to be dealt with,

such as the lack of specialists capable of teaching in Basque in certain technical fields. This is curtailing the spread of Basque usage in some disciplines.

Alongside offering a comprehensive range of courses in Basque and Spanish is the internationalisation process currently underway at the UBC. One of the main strategic points of this process is the creation of the Multilingualism Programme (MP), in which students can join optional and compulsory subjects in a foreign language. The goals of the programme are:

- (i) to continue at tertiary level with the experimental trilingual programme introduced by the Basque Government in primary and secondary schools.
- (ii) to improve local students' proficiency in a foreign language, and to provide students with specialized language and access to references in the foreign language.
- (iii) to improve students' work/career prospects
- (iv) to facilitate the pursuit of postgraduate degrees abroad.
- (v) to attract international students and teachers.

The MP has grown at an exponential rate since its beginning in 2005. The programme started with 16 subjects taught in a foreign language in 2005/06. Two years later, there were 44 and, in 2009/10, 125 subjects (i.e. 5% of all courses on offer) were instructed in English, with the exception of 12 subjects which were taught in French. There are currently 400 teachers who comply with the necessary official language qualifications to teach in the programme (C1 proficiency level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Internationalisation policies may have an impact on language policies and on the ecology or the perception of the ecology between the local languages (Pennycook, 2004), in this case Spanish and Basque. Even enthusiasts acknowledge the myriad of problems that need facing due to the inexorable increase in the use of English (Coleman, 2006). It has become fashionable to talk of language ecology and this has led to discussions in which language imperialism and language rights are seen as extremes of a linguistic continuum where English "may not always threaten other languages directly but may do so by upsetting an ecology of languages" (Pennycook, 2004: 214). In the Basque context, the introduction of a foreign language in a bilingual setting may be perceived as a potential threat to Basque by language loyalists and may be responsible for its rejection.

Language and language practices are crucially intertwined with identity. "Academic language and literacy practices are more than simply skills that can be bolted on a socialisation into academic way of knowing. They have a major impact on cultural identity" (Martin 2010: 13), "on one's sense of who one is in the world" (Boxer 2008: 308). Hence, it is crucial for students and teachers to have the possibility of performing their daily activities in Basque/Spanish in the academic environment and to accept, at the same time, the presence of English as an enriching element.

At the heart of the matter is the notion of *tolerability* coined by de Bres (2008) and the need for planning for tolerability by university administrators and policy makers. The concept of tolerability addresses the attitudes of majority speakers towards the minoritised languages (for example the attitudes of English speakers in universities in Wales in which Welsh is promoted, and of Spanish speakers in universities in Catalonia, where Catalan is the regional language) and the influence that these speakers' beliefs and attitudes have on the acceptance of the minoritised languages. In our case, the notion of tolerability may also be applied to the position adopted by minority Basque speakers and majority Spanish speakers towards a third language, namely, English.

The introduction of a foreign language as a means of instruction at the UBC in particular and in HEIs in general necessarily entails implications at various levels. First, it has implications at the personal level, since it forces the academic community to define their standpoints with respect to language issues and the university's internationalisation process. Secondly, at a strictly academic level, there are some pedagogical implications. Thirdly, it may affect the ecology of languages at the HEI. Next, we analyse the discussion of the teachers involved in the MP at the UBC with regard to these issues.

The teachers' perspective on English-medium instruction at the UBC: The research questions

In this section the following three research questions are considered.

RQ1: What is the standpoint of the academic community with regards to the MP at the UBC?

RQ2: What implications does English-medium instruction have for teaching and learning?

RQ3: How does English-medium instruction affect the situation of the co-official languages, Basque and Spanish?

We took a qualitative approach to the research questions via a discussion group. This method serves to capture and analyse ideological discourses and to draw out different positions – spontaneous expressions – and contradictions (Iglesias-Álvarez & Ramallo 2002). It 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 verbalize their own experiences, while the discussion stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences. Our discussion group consisted of 5 teachers from different disciplines, all of whom were participating in the MP: two from the Faculty of Pharmacy, two from the Faculty of Arts and one from the School of Engineering (see table 1).

Table 1. Description of the participants

	Sex	Age	Faculty
Teacher 1	Female	62	Pharmacy
Teacher 2	Male	44	Arts

Teacher 3	Female	40	Pharmacy
Teacher 4	Male	45	Engineering
Teacher 5	Female	42	Arts

Two of the authors of this paper were also present in the discussion group, but their participation was kept to a minimum as their role was mainly to bring up the issues for the discussion. The discussion took place in Spanish, but the participants' selected contributions have been translated into English.

The group discussion lasted 1 hour and 12 minutes and was videotaped for later analysis. Questions prepared beforehand were used as prompts to engage the group in the discussion. The issues dealt with included the process of globalisation/internationalisation, multilingualism at the UBC in practice (mainly focused on the implementation of the MP), and the effect of the internationalisation process on the minority language (Basque). Below is an account of the group's responses.

Results of the research questions

RQ1: What is the standpoint of the academic community with regards to the MP at the UBC?

Three groups are considered by the participants: the lecturers' own views on the MP, the views of their colleagues, and the students' opinions. The lecturers in the discussion group believe that the MP is a breakthrough with some very positive consequences. It gives them the opportunity to work in English, it attracts foreign students, it increases the students' job opportunities, it facilitates the teachers'/students' exchange programmes, and finally, it is indispensable in most research areas: "In my field, English is a must. All research is carried out in this language and students can obtain many benefits if they have the opportunity to improve their English and work in this language. English is the language of science. Besides, their language background will be much richer and they will be able to speak three languages" (teacher 5).

Although the participants are clearly in favour of the MP, they gave voice to the issues that in their opinion need to be solved in order to improve the programme. Perhaps the most serious problem the lecturers face is the fact that teaching in a foreign language (mainly in English) is more demanding and requires more effort on their part. The MP acknowledges the additional demands that teaching in a foreign language places on teachers by authorizing participants a reduction in their teaching loads during the first two years. However, not only is this measure sometimes overlooked in some departments (and consequently teachers have an extra burden), but the teachers' additional effort is also frequently undervalued by their colleagues. The participants criticize the lack of support given to the MP from within higher administrative spheres, not only from deans/vice-deans, but even from their own department heads, as illustrated by the following two quotes by teacher 3 and teacher 2 respectively: "I wish higher administrators helped more with the implementation of

the Multilingualism Programme because a formidable effort is required from the teacher. It is OK for us to make the effort of preparing a subject in English, but then we shouldn't have to teach all our classes in addition to the new subject; they should provide a substitute teacher"; "I am entitled to a substitute teacher to take over some of my classes. However there are no candidates willing to fill in the post because the salary of a part-time teaching position does not compensate for the amount of work involved." As a contrast, teacher 2 highlighted the support she received from the Vicerrectorate in charge of the MP: "I got a lot of support from the Vicerrectorate; they helped me with the translations into English of my class presentations."

Secondly, the discussants point out the need to further develop the programme as it is still in its initial stages, unlike bilingual instruction in Basque and Spanish, which from their point of view is well established at the UBC. They underscore the limited number of subjects offered in the MP, since most students can take just one subject per degree and this lack of options does not live up to the teachers' expectations: "There are very few subjects in English, the programme is very limited. There should be a bigger range of English-medium subjects and they should be evenly distributed throughout the students' study plan and not just in the last years" (teacher 1).

Thirdly, the participants in the discussion group consider that the programme is also somewhat restricted in the scope of its application. In particular, they propose that English should not be confined to the classroom, stressing the need for foreign language training for administrative staff so they can assist foreign students, visiting scholars, etc. As teacher 3 states: "The administration personnel should be able to communicate in English to attend to the basic requirements of foreign teachers and students that visit our university." Teacher 5 also deals with this issue: "... It is important to incentivize administrative staff by valuing their English skills and organising qualified personnel to deal with the new necessities" (teacher 5).

Despite the shortcomings of the MP, the discussants are aware of how difficult it is to implement the programme at the UBC, mainly due to its size (more than 45,000 students, over 5,000 teachers and 1,500 administrative staff), its bilingual character, its geographical division into three different campuses in three different provinces and the complexity of organizational matters, as underscored by teacher 4: "the first year an English-medium subject was offered in my school, its allotted time-slot suited no one: the group of students whose classes are in Spanish couldn't take it, the students from the Basque group couldn't take it either... no one could."

Regarding acceptance of the programme by the respondents' colleagues, the teachers in our discussion group mention the somewhat widespread unwillingness of many of their co-teachers to participate in the MP, as illustrated by the following quotes: "In Engineering out of 100 lectures there are just two taking part in the MP" (teacher 4); "in the Faculty of Pharmacy, there are only two of us out of 80" (teacher 1); "In Archaeology, out of 18 lecturers, 15 were not interested, two were a bit iffy and just one willing" (teacher 5).

The cause for the skepticism is due to two factors in the discussants' opinion. Firstly, many of the teachers do not have a clear understanding of the objectives of the programme and these objectives are often misunderstood. Thus, for instance, teacher 2 pointed out the belief among some of his colleagues that the MP is designed for foreign students and "since there are very few students in the BAC, there is no point in teaching in a foreign language." Secondly, teaching in a foreign language requires extra effort and many lecturers are not willing to put in the extra time required. In their own words, as quoted by the discussants: "To teach in English is too much of a mess" (teacher 1); or "Some of my colleagues say that they want to teach their subjects (either in Spanish or Basque) till they retire" (teacher 2).

The situation as depicted by the participants reveals an interesting paradox as stated by teacher 5 in the discussion group, namely, "while nobody questions the need to introduce the teaching of English from the age of 4 onwards, there are people who do not support English-medium instruction at university level." This reflection should be considered bearing in mind that 90% of Basque schools start teaching English at the age of four, which is why the participants find it paradoxical that their colleagues place so little importance on the use of English at tertiary level. This is in sharp contrast to overwhelming support for early teaching of English at school (Cenoz, 2009).

Finally, unlike the participants' more critical colleagues, the discussants coincide in pointing out that students regard the MP positively. However, two important issues are mentioned in the discussion group. Firstly, some students' misgivings regarding whether non-native speakers are adequately competent to teach in English as illustrated by the following short conversation between two students, which was overheard by teacher 5:

S1: "and you know, the student and the teacher started talking to each other ... in English!"

S2: "What for? If she (the teacher) were a native... oh, well, she may speak good English."

Secondly, the students' lack of confidence in their own English abilities, which prevented some good students (even those holding the Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English) from enrolling in the English-medium classes (i.e. CLIL² classes) or made them feel very insecure: "many students do not dare to take a course in English which is prerequisite for fear that they will fail it and will not be able to take the next course" (teacher 3); "many very good students enrolled in my class and yet, on the first day some of them told me that they did not dare to speak in English in front of the class, although they were able to understand everything" (teacher 5). The native-speaker issue and the students' language proficiency will be analyzed in more detail in the next research question.

RQ2: What pedagogical implications does English-medium instruction have?

From a pedagogical point of view, the MP affords the following benefits as mentioned by the participants:

- Personal gains: “it [the MP] is a challenge and very rewarding for us as teachers” (teacher 5). “I prepared my English-medium course. As a result of my teaching this course, my English has improved. In fact, I have recently taken an English proficiency test and have passed it” (teacher 2).
- Academic gains: the participants in this study state that it is much easier to find teaching materials, specialised references, etc. in English than in Basque, or even in Spanish. This is especially true for some of our participants’ colleagues in Pharmacy who teach in Basque. These teachers have very few references available to them in the minority language and have to coin new terms in Basque frequently (teachers 1, 3). Similarly, in the School of Engineering, the majority of the source materials used in subjects such as computer science is written in English, “hence the advantages of teaching in English rather than in Spanish or Basque are considerable” (teacher 4).
- Added benefits: (a) CLIL students are often better and more motivated than non-CLIL students; (b) motivation compensates some student’s lack of command of English as stated by teacher 2: “their low command of English is made up for by their high motivation. What’s more, I am sure that if these subjects were compulsory, the results would be catastrophic. Students are well aware of their shortcomings but are willing to make the extra effort required”; (c) the number of students in CLIL courses is smaller than in regular classes, attendance rate is very high and students in the MP have more support from the teaching staff.

Nevertheless, the teachers in the discussion group underline the need to address some important pedagogical issues pertaining to the MP, especially those related to (i) the lack of clear academic criteria in the introduction of CLIL subjects in the curricula and (ii) language proficiency issues.

Regarding the first point, the participants caution against the random introduction of CLIL subjects in degree courses, since it may condition the success of the programme and may also have a negative impact on their classes. The following are some of their thoughts on this issue: “There should be CLIL subjects in the first year. Even students themselves have asked me why there is no English option in the first year” (teacher 1); “there should be at least one CLIL subject every year throughout the degree. The implementation of the Multilingualism Programme is being rather slow” (teacher 5); “more courses should be added as students climb up the education ladder ... English should have greater presence at master’s level” (teacher 2). It follows from these statements that the participants are calling for improved CLIL curricula planning, with more effective and cohesive sequencing of the subjects throughout undergraduate and graduate levels.

As for language issues, the teachers complain about the students’ poor command of English and its detrimental effect on the students’ participation and academic

performance: “Some students told me that they had not taken the subject in English for fear of failing it, as they thought that learning in English would be more difficult” (teacher 3). The lack of English tuition at university is also underscored: “Some of our students had already passed the Cambridge Advanced exam, but after having spent the previous three years at university without any contact with English, their command was rather rusty. Consequently, they find it difficult to face a subject in English in the last year (fourth year) of their degree” (teacher 3). The proficiency level has also an indirect impact on tutorials or office hours: “Students come to my office more often than before, because they have doubts and want to make sure that they have understood correctly what has been explained in class” (teacher 4). Teacher 3 also points out that “the impact can also be observed in their emails which are written in English. Their messages often deal with clarification or terminology that they find difficult to grasp.”

Another consideration is differing English ability levels among students. This is a difficult hurdle to overcome according to the discussants and has teaching/learning implications. Teachers observe nationality contrasts in English fluency among international students, and between local students and international students. For instance, teachers note that Turkish students in general have a lower command of English than German or Austrian students; similarly, central and northern European students are more fluent than local students. Interestingly enough, while having such mixed groups in the classroom is not easy, teachers do not mention any hindrances in content learning.

The “native vs. non-native teacher” debate (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Llurda, 2005) came up once again: “When trying to motivate my students to do my subject in English, they started a discussion about the pros and cons of having native and non-native teachers. Some of them argued in favour of a native speaker, while others claimed that a good non-native teacher with a good command of English is a much better option.” The native-speaker standard (whatever that is) is still a deeply entrenched ideal in many students’ minds. Moreover, as Moussu and Llurda (2008: 316) put it, “with regard to the language teaching profession, however, the myth of the native speaker as the ideal teacher has been deconstructed through showing the lack of substantial evidence behind such a concept”, but this may not be the case among all university students, as our data indicate. In this regard, lecturers point out that sometimes their students understand the speech of non-natives better than the speech of natives. They also mention the fact that non-native teachers can resort to the co-official languages in tutorials, whereas this may not always be the case for non-native speakers.

RQ3: How does English-medium instruction affect the situation of the co-official languages, Basque and Spanish?

Two areas stand out in the discussants’ comments: (i) The effect English has had on official information provided by the university; and (ii) the linguistic strains that arise

as a result of introducing a foreign language in a bilingual university and how this affects the ecology of languages.

In the participants' opinion, the burgeoning presence of international and exchange students and the increasing presence of foreign languages require and should foster the use of English. Hence, using English in addition to Basque and Spanish to convey basic information at the university (e.g. web page, signs, brochures, syllabuses, etc.) is deemed to be necessary: "This is an important issue. All the information should also be in English besides Basque and Spanish" (Teacher 5). Teacher 4 brings this issue to the personal sphere: "In my case, I have my own web page only in Spanish, but it is my intention to work on it and include versions in English and Basque as well. I think this is completely necessary nowadays and the presence of the three languages should become the norm. The whole UBC's web page should also be in English." Therefore, the discussants support additive multilingualism, whereby English is not perceived as detrimental to the presence and development of the two co-official languages.

Regarding linguistic strains, our lecturers are in favour of instituting CLIL classes in English once the demand for compulsory classes in Spanish and Basque has been satisfied, as is the case, for example, in the Faculty of Pharmacy (where the teaching of subjects in Basque and Spanish is balanced). Should this not be the case, the lecturers foresee the rise of language-related conflicts. For example, in those Faculties where the teaching in Basque is not so widespread, the presence of English may be fraught with controversy. This may result in the categorization of English as an "invader", as illustrated by the following quote: "A student asked me why the subject was offered in English instead of Basque. He asked me: 'If I am interested in a subject that is only taught in English, why shouldn't I have the possibility of taking that particular course' (teacher 3)." Teacher 5 elaborates on this issue: "In our degree all compulsory subjects are delivered in Basque. But there is always a group of students who regard any innovation or novelty as potentially detrimental to the Basque language. But we make it clear to them that this is just an additional option. In fact, if they want to take the course in Basque, they can, because the Basque option is also available." Teacher 2 mentions that "I always tell them that the world speaks English and that it is important to remember that they have already learnt Basque for quite a few years."

In the same vein, the participants report that some teachers and students contend that normalization efforts for Basque are not enough and that the extension of teaching in Basque should be a priority. It is in these situations where the ecology of languages in a multilingual university comes to the fore and may bring about linguistic conflict.

Conclusions

The new multilingual context demands that, in bilingual universities such as the UBC, efforts have to be made to maintain the indigenous languages and cultures while at the same time implementing language policies to reap the benefits of the use of English as the main language of communication. Many authors such as Canagarajah

(2006), Jenkins (2006), and Seidlhofer (2004) deem that nowadays it is very difficult to accommodate all the complexities inherent to global English, the findings here reported being a very good case in point.

With 5% of its courses imparted in a foreign language at present, the UBC has a lower degree of implementation of English-medium instruction than other universities in Europe (Airey and Linder, 2008; Graddol, 2006; Wilkinson and Zegers, 2006). There are manifold explanations for this situation. Firstly, while in many European contexts English has reached the status of an L2, in the BAC (and in Spain as a whole) it is still perceived as a foreign language (Jessner, 2006). Secondly, the MP has only recently been implemented and it needs time to grow and be consolidated. Thirdly, the students' low proficiency in English conditions the success of the programme. Fourthly, the teachers' misgivings and false assumptions regarding the MP may also hinder its development. Fifthly, the organizational problems that may arise with the introduction of multilingual programmes are magnified in a bi/trilingual university of more than 45,000 students and three campuses in three different provinces such as the UBC. And, finally, there is a need for more resources to hire substitute lecturers so that participants in the programme are not condemned to teach beyond their teaching loads.

It follows from the discussion group with the teachers that, in order for the programme to be successful and meet higher quality standards:

- (i) The academic community needs to address the teachers' misgivings and tackle their false assumptions regarding the MP. It also needs to resolve paradoxical standpoints, such as a generalized support to the early teaching of English (as early as the age of 4), but not being so supportive about its presence at tertiary level.
- (ii) Careful planning of the introduction of CLIL subjects in degree courses has to be considered. The distribution of CLIL subjects has to be balanced in the early years of the degree and should be sustained up to postgraduate level.
- (iii) In a study carried out by the European Commission (2008) it was observed that the internationalisation of the curriculum is hindered by the low motivation of lecturers to conduct courses delivered in English. Our results bear out this trend, as the participants highlight that their colleagues are not willing to make the effort required to organise and deliver their teaching in English. Incentives seem to spring to mind when this situation is considered, such as promotion in their professional career or a lighter teaching load.
- (iv) University authorities need to articulate a clear language policy whose primary goal is to find a balance with the co-official languages. This will be the only way to overcome the Basque loyalists' misgivings, and to prevent CLIL from being perceived as a hurdle for the normalisation of minority languages. Undoubtedly, one of the challenges of the CLIL approach is to achieve an ecology of languages in a multilingual institution. In order to assist this, administrators at the UBC need to promote a debate among the members of the academic community and develop strategies designed to

smooth any tensions likely to arise. Ideally students and teachers should learn to come to terms with a third language in their academic life and to accept multilingualism as an asset rather than a threat to their identities.

- (v) Foreign language barriers, which still inhibit participation in English-medium courses, need to be overcome. The internationalisation process requires an intermediate to advanced level of English that allows students to complete the courses taught in English without their learning being hindered by linguistic hurdles. The Basque Government has been promoting the introduction of multilingualism (Basque, Spanish, English, and French) in the education system since 1999. In fact, experimental programmes are being carried out with promising linguistic and attitudinal outcomes (Lasagabaster, 2011). The extension and improvement of CLIL programmes in secondary education would quickly result in undergraduates being much more proficient in English.
- (vi) The effect of English-medium instruction on content learning has to be researched so that well-informed decisions can be made regarding its implementation. There is no doubt that more stringent research is needed to have a clearer picture of the effects of this approach on content learning (Airey and Linder, 2008; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Seikkula-Leino, 2007). The real challenge is to conduct well-designed research on how best to organize, implement and assess CLIL (Wilkinson, 2004).

In spite of the problems, tensions and misgivings that have been mentioned in this paper, there is no doubt that the MP at the UBC is being consolidated and has become stronger as revealed by the growing number of student enrolments in CLIL classes. This has in fact doubled since its implementation: in 2005/06 there was an average of 6 students per course, in 2008/09 the average increased to 13, and currently some CLIL classes have over 30 students. In view of these facts, and as one of the participants bluntly put it, the MP could be described as a hurdle race: "Once it has started, there is no turning back."

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Notes

¹ Provided they meet some requirements, students may receive a double degree in some exceptional cases. For the records, there were 482 international *mobility* undergraduates at the UBC in 2008/09.

² CLIL is the English acronym for *Content and Language Integrated Learning*, an approach in which non-linguistic subjects are taught through a foreign language and attention is paid to both language and content.

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