



2nd International Conference on Higher Education Advances, HEAd'16, 21-23 June 2016,  
València, Spain

## Facing challenges in English Medium Instruction through engaging in an innovation project

Elvira Barrios<sup>a\*</sup>, Aurora López-Gutiérrez<sup>a</sup>, Clotilde Lechuga<sup>a</sup>

*Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Campus de Teatinos, Universidad de Málaga, Málaga, 29071, Spain*

---

### Abstract

This paper presents both the challenges faced by the introduction of subjects taught through the medium of English in one group of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education at the University of Málaga and the design of an innovation project aimed at responding to such challenges. Firstly, the paper acknowledges the growing trend towards English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education and explains the defining characteristics of the institutional context in which the aforementioned degree course was offered. Secondly, the conclusions of the evaluation of the first year of the implementation of this partially English-taught programme revealing difficulties and improvement areas pertaining to teachers, learners and resources will be discussed. Thirdly, objectives and concrete actions of the innovation project that a group of teachers is currently implementing will be outlined; the project lies emphasis on collaborative work, language support, collective training in aspects related to, and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the experience. The paper concludes with a reflection on the need to assure the quality of programmes that are completely or partially taught through the medium of English and on interdisciplinary innovation projects as potential interventions intended to face challenges posed by them.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of HEAd'16

*Keywords: English Medium Instruction; Higher Education; Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education; innovation project*

---

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: 952 13 10 00  
E-mail address: [elvira.barrios@uma.es](mailto:elvira.barrios@uma.es)

## 1. Introduction

In the last 15 years there has been a growing trend across universities in Europe towards English Medium Instruction (EMI). In the early stages this movement affected Master's degree programmes mainly, although it has progressively extended to bachelor's programmes more recently (Wächter & Maiworm, 2008).

EMI has become commonplace in many tertiary institutions –not only in Europe but also elsewhere–, mainly as a reaction to globalisation, and it currently lies at the centre of the strategy of internationalisation of many tertiary institutions around the globe (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Gustafsson & Jacobs, 2013; Wilkinson, 2013). Factors such as the promotion of job mobility, employability, staff and student exchanges and joint- and double-degrees substantiate the case for English-taught degree courses (Fortanet, 2008).

EMI at the University of Málaga is a relatively new phenomenon. In the specific case of the Faculty of Education, a group in the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education at the Faculty of Education is partly taught through the medium of English since the academic year 2014-2015. The evaluation of the experience both by students and teachers revealed areas of improvement and challenges that a group of teachers set to address by implementing an interdisciplinary innovation project.

This paper aims at presenting and discussing the most relevant challenges facing EMI in our context, and outlining the main features of the innovation project that is currently being implemented as a collaborative initiative.

## 2. The Partially English-taught Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education (University of Málaga)

Primarily as a response to the Bilingual School Programme in the Andalusian School System, the Faculty of Education at the University of Málaga decided to partially teach in English one of the six groups of the Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education. According to university regulations, no differentiated entry requirements can be established to apply to this particular group although potential students were informed that a minimum Common European Framework for Reference (CEF) B1 English level was strongly advisable.

Although in the first academic year of the implementation of the innovation only 2 (12 ECTS credit points) (out of the 8 subjects in the first year curriculum) were taught in English, they will eventually complete 50% of the total degree credits with subjects taught in English. The information collected from the students at the beginning of the school year indicates that they choose this option because of their expectations to finish the degree with a higher level of English and have better teaching job opportunities.

Neither institutional language integrated support nor any other specific language support is currently provided by the programme. This runs counter to experts' opinion who claim the need of such a plan: "The English-taught degree programme requires a language plan of its own, which will be complementary to the larger university policy and plan... it is a necessity for ensuring a smooth and collaborative transition into English medium" (Marsh, Pavón-Vázquez, & Frigols-Martín, 2013, p. 15).

The teachers volunteered to participate in the experience and no language proficiency entry requirements were established; all the participating teachers so far self-assess their level as at least a CEF B2 although it might have probably been the case, as it has been found in other contexts (Marsh et al., 2013), that one of them overestimated her English competence to teach in English.

## 3. Evaluation of the first year implementation experience

At the end of the academic year students were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire to evaluate the experience and get information on their perceptions about it. The following conclusions could be drawn from it:

- Students perceived that their expectations had not been fulfilled in terms of English language use in the subjects that were supposed to have been taught in English. Many of them considered that the level of English proficiency of a particular teacher was not high enough to teach in English and, consequently, Spanish was used more often than English in her lessons. Besides, they were not compelled to do all their written assignments in English. Some of them even complaint about not being forced to use English more frequently. Besides, they did not feel that their level of English competence had significantly increased as a result of belonging to the group in which

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1107142>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1107142>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)