

## English Medium Instruction: Support for students and professors in Social Sciences Education

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### Abstract

This paper presents specific reference tools (Barrios, López-Gutiérrez & Lechuga, 2016) where we found that neither institutional language integrated support nor a specific language plan was being provided by the bilingual programme. This runs counter to experts' opinion who claim the need of such a plan.... While studies show the importance of language support in bilingual instruction, they rarely address specific content professors' needs tending to remain distant from real teaching contexts. The educational Innovation Project provides professional development for subjects taught through the medium of English....

The title "Support for students and professors" means moving into the reality of the classrooms to address specific needs of this specific academic scenario. We examine how language support has a dual focus that includes both students and instructors....(Griffith, 2012). The paper concludes with a reflection on interdisciplinary innovation projects that provide professors with the tools to ensure the quality of bilingual programmes.

**Keywords:** English Medium Instruction, Higher Education, Social Sciences Education, Gender art

### Introduction

This paper presents specific reference tools which continues the line started on the article published last year in 2nd International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAD '16) (Barrios, López-Gutiérrez & Lechuga, 2016), where we found that neither institutional language integrated support nor a specific language plan was being provided by the bilingual programme. This runs counter to experts' opinion calling for 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 et al., 2013, p. 15). While studies show the importance of language support in bilingual instruction, they rarely address specific content professors' needs, tending to remain distant from real teaching contexts. The educational Innovation Project (PIE 15-100) provides professional development for subjects like Gender Art (as Clotilde Lechuga is a member of international I+D project HAR2016-75662-P *Subjectivity Practices in the Contemporary Arts. Critic Reception and Identity Fiction from Gender Perspective* at Malaga University) which are included in Social Sciences Education taught through the medium of English in the Primary Education degree at the University of Málaga.

The title "Support for students and professors" means moving into the reality of the classrooms to address specific needs of this unique academic scenario. Firstly, the paper acknowledges a trend towards English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education while at the same time distinguishes EMI from adjunct CLIL (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 2011) suggesting that more explicit language integration is needed. With this in mind, we present a professional development project for instructors which we will call the CLIL eye (Griffith, 2015). Secondly, we examine how language support has a dual focus that includes both students and instructors. Outlining these actions, the innovation project focuses on collaborative work, language support, and collective training in aspects related to a systematic monitoring of the experience. Finally, we will use a case study in which a glossary is integrated into a lecture and an external observer will provide assessment for the instructor on ways to improve discourse. The results indicate how, with this task design, language is supported as not only the language of learning, and as language through learning (Coyle, et al., 2010), but more specifically as the language for teaching. The paper concludes with a reflection on interdisciplinary innovation projects that provide professors with the tools they need to ensure the quality of bilingual programmes.

The background of any discussion on plurilingualism in higher education in Europe begins with convergence. In Paris in 1998, European universities highlighted the need to create greater

plurilingualism in Europe (Sorbonne Joint Declaration, Paris, 25/5/1998). After about a decade, Smit and Dafouz (2012) have reported “English medium university {EMI} courses all over continental Europe have tripled” (p.2). In Spain, Dafouz and Nuñez (2009) have cited more than thirty higher educational institutions offering bilingual degrees. Our study takes place at the University of Málaga in southern Spain and explores how a language specialist can assist content professors teaching through a second language.

In our search for usefulness, and in order to be as concrete as possible, we will share our initial prediction and research purpose. “Most teachers have not yet acquired the teaching competencies and abilities that are peculiar to CLIL {Content and Language Integrated Learning}. They have been unable to do so because broadly speaking suitable Teacher Education (TED) in CLIL is not offered in a systematic fashion” (Horrillo, 2012, p. 4). We predict university professors outside language areas could benefit from a CLIL/EMI practicum; and we will explore how to do this from multiple perspectives. Exploratory does not mean without purpose or without direction, rather what it means is that the project tends to work inductively from the bottom up rather than deductively.

Linguists find it easy to believe in bilingualism, but content professors find themselves uncomfortable in this new found role of language expert (Hynninen, 2012). We insist that, through a facilitative collaboration, professional development can impact teaching practice in higher education. Collaboration gives all involved a unique opportunity to learn from the other. Thus, our inquiry began by establishing a dialogue between a language specialist and a content specialist. In the next section we will point to the context, clarify terminology and in turn, reveal the research focus that surged out of the study.

This paper discusses relevant challenges facing bilingual instruction in our specific context. This collaborative initiative allows the content instructor to discover ways to improve teaching first by directing student discourse what Coyle et al, (2010) identify as the ‘language of learning’ and next by directing instructional discourse with what we describe as the ‘language for teaching’.

## Context

English Medium Instruction (EMI) has been a growing trend across universities in Europe in the last 15 years. This movement was first introduced in Master’s degree programmes although it has progressively extended to bachelor’s programmes (Wächter & Maiworm, 2008). Not only is EMI a direct result of globalisation in Europe and elsewhere, but it also currently lies at the center of internationalisation strategies of many tertiary institutions around the globe (Doiz *et al.*, 2013; Gustafsson & Jacobs, 2013; Wilkinson, 2013). Many factors contribute to this need 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).

However, the first challenge is in the definition of EMI. EMI in its strictest definition, implies that language learning is implicit and not explicit. John Airey (2012) goes so far as to insist that he is “not an English teacher” while lecturing on Physics through the medium of English. So perhaps a clarification in terminology is in order. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2011) have identified three types of CLIL in higher education. First, *theme based CLIL* where language instructors explicitly focus language by using contents. In the past this has been identified as English for Specific purposes (ESP) or a topic based approach. Second, these authors point to *sheltered CLIL*, where a focused content approach allows for only implicit language learning. This is indeed EMI across Europe particularly in higher education. And finally *adjunct CLIL*, which allows for a content focus as well as integrating language. Given this clarification, our approach clearly takes the adjunct approach in that language support is explicitly provided to both students as well as to instructors.

After clarifying EMI and the adjunct CLIL approach and in line with authors such as Wilkinson (e.g., 2008) and Gustafsson and Jacobs (2013), many authors chose to use the term Integrated Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) over the umbrella term Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) since, as Gustafsson and Jacobs (2013) argue, this latter term is originally linked to school –rather than to university- contexts and “there are issues peculiar to higher education, such as disciplinarity, which make this CLIL approach distinctly different in the higher education context” (p. iii). For the purposes of this paper, we will use them interchangeably, but clearly point to the higher educational context as being specific to our research.

In the case of the Faculty of Education, at the University of Málaga a group in the Bachelor’s Degree in Primary Education has been partly taught through the medium of English since the academic year 2014-2015. On the whole, the evaluation of the experience by students and teachers has uncovered new challenges that have been addressed by an interdisciplinary innovation project with the goal of constantly improving the teaching/learning experience. After the first year, the assessment revealed that both students and instructors needed to improve language performance. How to tackle this dilemma will be the focus of this article.

During 2016-2017 course an innovative approach is taking place. Language support is being addressed in two directions and we will call this multi-perspective approach “developing the CLIL eye”. For students, an integrated glossary is offered as a tool to explicitly focus technical art terms during a lecture given by a guest professor who belongs to the bilingual team, in the subject Artistic and Visual Education, while for the instructor, an external observer evaluates instructor discourse and effectively offers vital feedback to improve teaching discourse which we will deem the language for teaching.