

# REDES COLABORATIVAS EN TORNO A LA DOCENCIA UNIVERSITARIA

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# The International Week as motivation of EMI courses and international mobility actions

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the celebration of an International Week that took place during the first week of April. International Week, implemented for students of the Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences, was conducted entirely in English. This annual event brings together university lecturers from different countries with the aim of globalizing and sharing teaching experiences with other colleagues and students of the Faculty. This pioneering research aims to analyze the perception of the International Week by its participants (both students and professors). Moreover, the following research endeavors to examine whether this event could be considered as a motivator for the inclusion of students in Bachelor courses taught in English and/or if it calls for an increasing number of students to engage in international mobility. Results indicate that the main motivation of lecturers for teaching in English is the international visibility of their work and that a relationship exists between attending courses using EMI and international mobility.

**KEYWORDS:** Linguistic and communication competences. International Week. Internationalization. EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction). Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Research question

The situation of higher education is changing and several aspects, such as growing internationalization, require deeper reflection. Existing policies, such as the development of bilingual education, that universities implement to promote their international profile (Lasagabaster, 2012) are gaining increasing importance in parallel with the globalization of education and the proliferation of the number of international relations between universities. The importance of transversal competences shared by most undergraduates, such as the acquisition of linguistic and communication competences (Soler, 2011, Santiago and Schachter, 2007), has also increased. Therefore, the analysis of English Mediated Instruction (EMI), regarded as a tool to adapt higher education to this transformation, is fundamental. EMI is defined as the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in those countries or

jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is English (Dearden, 2014).

According to Morell et al. (2015), the internationalization of Spanish universities has required a larger offer of courses in English with the objective of adapting the teaching to a more global context. Hence, international students are given a chance to obtain academic recognition necessary once they go back to their home universities. This aforementioned offer facilitates signing a higher number of agreements for international exchanges, which consequently expands the range of mobility options for Spanish students who aim to internationalize their studies. This is especially important, because the globalization of certain professional areas demands specific competences and knowledge of foreign languages from graduates.

The following study proposes educational options for encouraging students to enroll in both international mobility and courses taught in English. It also investigates the impact of International Week, an educational activity conducted entirely in English, on students' motivations on those decisions. We begin with a brief review of the academic literature related mainly to the use of EMI in relation to both students and lecturers. Further subsections discuss the methodology chosen for the study and analyze the data collected from the perspective of both parties. We finish with the main conclusions that can be drawn from the work and their implications for management.

## **1.2. Literature review**

Universities are becoming aware that they must provide their students not only with a deep and accurate knowledge in specific fields, but also in cross-curricular skills such as multi linguistic communications and intercultural competences that can greatly enhance their academic and professional profile (Lorenzo, Trujillo and Vez, 2011). Specifically, the University of Alicante is immersed in a bilingual context with a growing diversity of languages and undertaking the process of internationalization. Both linguistic policies and internationalization go hand in hand in promoting mobility around the world and facilitating the academic opportunities of university staff and students (Morell, et al., 2014).

Given that English as a Lingua Franca is becoming increasingly important in the Spanish university context (Hontoria et al., 2013), universities have implemented strategies such as teaching content subjects in English through the use of EMI programs and/or activities. In this line, Coleman (2006) affirms that European universities are heading towards EMI due to seven factors: i) CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), term referring to those situations where courses, or part of them, are taught through a foreign language with dual focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language (Marsh, 2000), ii) increasing internationalization, iii) student mobility, iv) teaching and research materials, v) staff mobility, vi) the employability of graduates, and vii) the growing market of international students. Therefore, applied research in EMI is a fundamental tool in the current university environment lacking political strategies at a national level.

These proposals, which could be referred to as bilingual programs, seek to develop linguistic competences in English through the increase of credits taught in this foreign language, the imple-

mentation of Spanish-English bachelors or even the design of bachelors taught exclusively in English (Puerto and Vázquez, 2015). Several previous studies aimed to measure lecturers' and students' perception of EMI in these bilingual bachelor programs. No articles, however, have analyzed this perception when the use of EMI refers to other activities than bilingual programs, such as the celebration of an International Week. Moreover, the majority of those studies have analyzed the perception of EMI for either lecturers or students. The following paper focuses on analyzing the implementation of EMI in specific activities for both groups simultaneously.

As for the lecturers, there is a consensus amongst academics that their continuous learning and staff training are key to the successful implementation of bilingual education (Dafouz et al., 2007, Coyle et al., 2010, Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012, Fortanet-Gómez, 2012; Martín del Pozo, 2015). Professional training should improve their linguistic (level of general English) and methodological (tools and skills for teaching in a non-native language) preparation. Thus, several studies suggest that postgraduate lecturers present significant deficiencies in terms of general English (Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012; Fortanet-Gómez, 2012) and specific knowledge and skills related to the implementation of university education (Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012; Rea Rizzo and Carbajosa Palmero, 2014; Martín del Pozo, 2015). Other studies, in turn, focus on analyzing lecturers' satisfaction and their perception of students' results in courses taught in English (Fernández-Costales and González-Riaño, 2015; Hernández-Nanclares and Jiménez-Muñoz, 2015).

On the other hand, previous literature focused on different factors motivating or discouraging university students from enrolling in courses taught in English. Several papers assess the importance of individual factors such as the self-perceived level of English (Fernández Lanvin and Suárez, 2009, Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012, Hernández-Nanclares and Jiménez-Muñoz, 2015), the main characteristics of lecturers and these courses taught in English and the students' satisfaction with these courses (Fernández Lanvin and Suárez, 2009, Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012).

## **2. OBJECTIVE**

In the context of the review above, this paper aims to analyze the perception of both students and lecturers participating in a specific educational event, the International Week 2017, conducted exclusively in English for national and international students of the Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences. Specifically, we analyze several aspects related to this activity, such as sociodemographic characteristics, motivations regarding education in English, satisfaction with this additional activity in English, and its potential impact on the international mobility of both lecturers and students. Its influence on the decision of students to enroll in undergraduate courses taught in English (greater use of EMI) has also been analyzed.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Description of the activity and participants**

The present work focuses on the celebration of the International Week, the contents of which were taught in English. This activity brings together university lecturers from various countries (Slo-

vakia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, United States, United Kingdom, Poland, Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands) with the aim of globalizing and sharing teaching experiences with other colleagues and students. The lecturers were prepared and workshops led in English on numerous subjects, related to their fields of education. Lectures were given from a wide variety of faculties including economy, organization, strategy, sociology, finance, accounting, marketing, tourism, and business. With regards to the students, 108 was the final number of students participating in this edition of International Week, although more than 150 online registrations were primarily received.

### **3.2. Instruments and procedures**

The development of this research involved the design of two different questionnaires for each group participating in the event: lecturers and students. The purpose of these questionnaires was to collect quantitative data that allows us to measure several factors: a) the opinions and perceptions about the International Week of the participants (students and lecturers); b) to what extent this event acts as a motivation for students to be enrolled in courses taught in English, and c) if these kinds of activities implemented in English represented a stimulus for student international mobility actions. Moreover, qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions asked to both groups in order to incorporate their opinions not initially considered in questionnaires.

The first block of the questionnaire distributed among the lecturers includes questions regarding sociodemographic variables (age, gender, country of origin and main field of expertise in their teaching activity). The second block includes questions about the organization and development of International Week (reasons, overall satisfaction, etc.). Finally, the third block is addressed only to those lecturers whose mother tongue is not English and contains some questions related to teaching in English. In this block, the measurement of the self-perceived level of English is implemented in order to observe the basic linguistic competences drawn from Fortanet-Gómez (2012). The motivations associated with teaching in English were adapted from the measures proposed by Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012), completing them with items from Fernández Lanvin and Suárez (2009). In terms of satisfaction with teaching bachelor courses in English, some scales adapted from Fernández-Coscales and González-Riaño (2015) were also used. Finally, the importance of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) was measured through items proposed by Fortanet-Gómez (2012).

The structure of the questionnaire distributed among the attending students was similar. It included the first block with sociodemographic variables (age, gender, country of birth and academic field). The second block included questions about the organization and development of International Week. The third block focused on international mobility. Finally, the fourth block contained an introductory question about the students' level of English and a set of questions related to teaching in English for those students who were attending courses in English. The motivations associated with teaching in English were adapted from the items proposed by Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) and Fernández Lanvin and Suárez (2009).

Finally, data was collected anonymously in the form of questionnaires distributed in classrooms where the International Week was taking place. Lecturers were given questionnaires after each

session. Data collection was conducted during the first week of April, 2017.

## 4. RESULTS

This section is structured as follows: first, a descriptive analysis of the two target groups of this research (students and teachers) is presented; second most important findings are described in order to discuss their relationship with the main educational objectives of the research.

### 4.1. Descriptive analysis of target groups

Regarding students, an overall number of 109 questionnaires was been collected. The youngest student participating in the research was 18 years old and the oldest 34, with an average age of 22. Many of the students taking part in this research were female (74%) and 27 nationalities were represented in this International Week. While more than 50% of students were international, Spanish students came from different bachelor degrees: Advertising and Public Relations (34%), Tourism and Business (28%), Business (26%), Economics (6%), Sociology (2%), Masters of the Faculty (2%) and from other Faculties (2%). Finally, worthy of note is that the self-perceived level of English of non-native English speaking students attending to the International Week was high, as only 18.4% of them had B1 or less. The table below (See: Table 1) shows the distribution of students according to their different levels of English.

Table 1. English proficiency of non-native English speaking students attending International Week

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
A2	6	6.1	6.1
B1	12	12.2	18.4
B1+	22	22.4	40.8
B2	32	32.7	73.5
C1	19	19.4	92.9
C2	7	7.1	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

Regarding the lecturers, an overall number of 27 questionnaires were collected. The youngest lecturer was 30 years old while the oldest was 76, with an average age of 44. Males had a larger representation -17 (63%)- than females – 10 (37%). The main nationality represented in this International Week was Polish with 11 lecturers, followed by 5 German lecturers. Regarding their main field of expertise, 11 lecturers (41%) were specialized in Business, 9 lecturers (33%) were economists, 5 lecturers (19%) were experts in Advertising and Public Relations, and 2 lecturers (7%) were sociologists.

### 4.2. Main findings from the lecturers' group survey

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with six statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) in order to analyze their experience teaching in English. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2. Lecturers' experience teaching in English

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.

My pronunciation and intonation are appropriate to teach in English	24	3.00	5.00	4.45	.658
My technical vocabulary in English is appropriate for the subject I teach	24	3.00	5.00	4.75	.531
My general vocabulary, speech, colloquialisms, etc. are appropriate	24	3.00	5.00	4.41	.653
My English proficiency allows me explaining difficult concepts	24	3.00	5.00	4.37	.710
My English proficiency is appropriate to answer questions and interact with students	24	4.00	5.00	4.79	.414
The students' marks from courses taught in English are worse than those from the same courses taught in their native language	16	1.00	5.00	3.25	1.653
My teaching techniques can be adapted to the communicative uses of English during a lecture	21	3.00	5.00	4.66	.658

The data's analysis indicates that lecturers feel most confident about their abilities to interact with students ( $M=4.79$ ) and use technical vocabulary appropriate for their academic field ( $M=4.75$ ). As shown, all questions regarding their abilities to use English for academic purposes were scored with a minimum of 3 on the given scale. This demonstrates, arguably, a rather high confidence rate of lecturers. One item, however, did not obtain such high scores. Participants were asked whether they thought that students' marks from courses taught in English were worse than those from the same course taught in their native language. Results showed that some respondents did not agree with the statement, as indicated by the minimum score 1 on the given scale and lower mean ( $M=3.25$ ) and high variety of answers ( $SD=1.65$ ).

Table 3 shows different motivations for teaching in English. Results indicate that improvement of international visibility was the highest motivation for lecturers ( $M=4.56$ ,  $SD=0.59$ ), while they did not regard teaching better prepared students as one, which is justified by a lower mean ( $M=3.90$ ).

Table 3. Motivations for teaching in English

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Improve my international visibility	23	3.00	5.00	4.56	.589
Teach better prepared students	21	1.00	5.00	3.90	1.220
Improve my professional status	21	1.00	5.00	4.28	1.055

Regarding the level of importance of some tools for teaching in English, Table 4 shows that the most preferable was the case discussion in class ( $M=4.54$ ) and lectures ( $M=4.36$ ). The least preferable one was students' presentation, as indicated by the lower mean ( $M=4.09$ ). None of the instrument scored a mean lower than 4; therefore, all were regarded important or very important.

Table 4. Instruments for teaching in English

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Lectures	22	2.00	5.00	4.36	.847
Case discussion in class	22	3.00	5.00	4.54	.670
Students' presentations	22	2.00	5.00	4.09	.971
Students' team work	22	1.00	5.00	4.13	.990

Finally, regarding the importance of EMI for non-native English speaking lecturers, Table 5 shows varied responses. Participants were unsure whether given statements were not important or

important in relation to English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). This is justified by relatively high standard deviations and means on a level of 3 in all questions.

Table 5. Importance of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Courses taught in English must include goals related with the improvement of the English level of the students	21	1.00	5.00	3.76	1.261
Specific instruction for lecturers is needed for lecturers teaching in English	21	1.00	5.00	3.47	1.123
Coordination between lecturers of contents (Business, Economics, etc.) and lecturers of languages is important	21	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.359

### 4.3. Main findings from the students' group survey

From the results observed in Table 6, it can be inferred that students participating in an educational international event like this are strongly motivated for studying abroad in a close future.

Table 6. Relationship between attending International Week and international mobility

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
1.00 (Very unlikely)	5	4.9	4.9
2.00	8	7.8	12.7
3.00	19	18.6	31.4
4.00	15	14.7	46.1
5.00 (Very likely)	55	53.9	100.0
Total	102		

As shown in Table 6, 68.6% of the students were likely or very likely to consider taking advantage of an international mobility program while only 18.6% of students were neither likely nor unlikely. The rest of them (12.7%) were not considering this possibility (unlikely or very unlikely). Students indicated that learning and improving the foreign language was the main benefit of studying abroad while costs were the main difficulty.

We now described conclusions of the analysis of the impact of enrolling in courses taught in English. A total of 49% of students were attending these courses at the Faculty of Economics and 51% were not. Following answers to this question, only those attending these courses were asked about their motivation for planning international mobility. As it can be observed in Table 7, there was a relationship between attending these courses taught in English and international mobility. 67.3% of students found that attending bachelor courses taught in English led to increased motivation to make plans to study abroad.

Table 7. Impact of attending courses taught in English on international mobility

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
No answer given	3	5.8	5.8
Yes, they motivated me to plan international mobility	35	67.3	73.1
No, I had already planned my international mobility	9	17.3	90.4
No, I did not plan and I am still not planning any international mobility	5	9.6	100.0

Total	52	100.0	
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Regarding the main students' motivations for attending bachelor courses taught in English, Table 8 shows that, although all the motivations had a similar importance for students, the higher value is given to the one related with improving their vocabulary.

Table 8. Motivations for attending bachelor courses taught in English

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Improving my vocabulary	47	4.40	1.191
Improving my speaking	47	4.23	1.288
Improving my understanding	47	4.36	1.292
Improving my writing	46	4.08	1.330
Meeting students from other countries	45	3.97	1.233
Having international experience at the UA	46	4.23	1.078
Preparing for future international mobility	46	4.02	1.324

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This research analyses the impact of the International Week on the perceptions of lecturers and students about EMI and international mobility. This event brings together university lecturers from different countries with the aim of globalizing and sharing teaching experiences with other colleagues and with students.

This work is regarded as innovative as it analyzes the complementarity of an additional educational activity taught in English with regular and official undergraduate courses. The International Week is a teaching forum in English, so results will be able to complement other studies on the perception of students and lecturers of bachelor courses taught in English.

Results show that international visibility is the highest motivation of lecturers for teaching in English. From the students' perspective, there is a relationship between attending courses taught in English and international mobility, as more than 67% of students regarded the courses taught in English as motivating for planning an international academic mobility. These results may help university managers to know if these exceptional and optional activities are effective as a motivation for the university students to enroll in courses taught in English and whether to apply for international mobility initiatives.

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