

# Main Challenges of EMI at the UCLM: Teachers' Perceptions on Language Proficiency, Training and Incentives

Esther NIETO MORENO DE DIEZMAS & Alicia FERNÁNDEZ BARRERA

## Authors:

Esther Nieto Moreno de Diezmas  
Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, Spain  
[esther.nieto@uclm.es](mailto:esther.nieto@uclm.es)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8753-5857>

Alicia Fernández Barrera  
Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, Spain  
[alicia.fbarraera@uclm.es](mailto:alicia.fbarraera@uclm.es)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6949-1934>

Date of reception: 16/06/2020

Date of acceptance: 19/10/2020

## Citation:

Nieto Moreno de Diezmas, Esther and Alicia Fernández Barrera. 2021. "Main Challenges of EMI at the UCLM: Teachers' Perceptions on Language Proficiency, Training and Incentives." *Alicante Journal of English Studies*. 39-61.  
<https://doi.org/10.14198/raei.2021.34.02>

© 2021 Esther Nieto Moreno de Diezmas & Alicia Fernández Barrera

Licence: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).



## Abstract:

English-medium instruction (EMI) has become commonplace in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Spain and in many other countries, being implemented as a strategy to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of universities at the international level. The present article investigates the stances of lecturers involved in various internationalization programmes in regard to the challenges that EMI inception and implementation entails, such as language and content integration, English proficiency of teachers and students, teachers' drives, teacher training needs and institutional support, among other issues. To gain a more comprehensive insight into the development of EMI, data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews with three separate groups of lecturers: (i) EMI practitioners, (ii) lecturers interested in EMI and (iii) lecturers from the Department of Modern Languages, experts in second language acquisition (SLA) and bilingual education. The results showed that the implementation of EMI at the University of Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM) is still in its infancy and there are several areas for improvement such as (i) the approval of a multilingual language policy that includes a specific and legally-binding protocol for lecturer recruitment and commitment in the programme, and (ii) the design of a more comprehensive teacher training plan offering accreditation to enter EMI and supporting effective implementation by means of in-service courses.

**Keywords:** EMI; bilingual education; Higher Education; internationalization; teacher training.

## 1. Introduction

Pressed by global demands to make Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) internationally competitive, English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programmes have increased dramatically since 2001 (Wächter and Maiworm 2014) in European Universities, thus spreading “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro et al. 2018, 37).

The popularity of EMI in Europe mostly stems from the recommendations included in the internationalization agenda of the Bologna Declaration (1999), where the teaching of university courses in English is promoted as an essential means to increase the international competitiveness and excellence of European Universities. In this vein, instruction in English at HEIs is considered to be a catalyst for a vast number of benefits linked to internationalization and excellence—including internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum (Leask 2015)—such as attracting international students and staff, increasing graduate employability, the expansion of international research networks and the university’s international reputation, improving foreign language proficiency and the development of intercultural competences, among others.

In contrast to the exponential growth of EMI in most European countries, Spain has been “a relative latecomer to this trend” (González-Alvárez 2020, 11). Spanish HEIs have had to face the challenge of transforming teaching practices, in a country with a long tradition of teaching and learning in the first language (L1), and a “precarious language teaching and learning situation” (Sánchez Pérez and Salaberri Ramiro 2017, 142). As a consequence, internationalization/multilingual plans have been urgently drawn up to facilitate the implementation of bilingual degrees where English is used as the medium of instruction for subject-specific contents.

This is an unprecedentedly challenging task, and some universities are struggling to enhance and extend the number and range of bilingual Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes they offer. This is particularly the case for the University of Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM, Spain). Although a set of strategies are currently being implemented to increase the number of courses taught in English, only bilingual programmes for two Bachelor’s and five Master’s degrees are currently offered.

The main aim of this study is to carefully look into the main obstacles and difficulties that lecturers at UCLM have to face at two separate stages: (i) when considering their participation in the bilingual programme, and (ii) once they have started teaching their courses in English. The challenges EMI entails

are multifaceted and pertain not only to teacher training—that is, providing lecturers with opportunities to improve their language proficiency and learn appropriate teaching methodologies—but also to bilingual teacher recruitment, language accreditation and teacher incentives. This study is potentially useful for regional university administrators and makes a contribution to identifying areas of improvement related to the implementation of EMI programmes.

This paper is organised in six sections. After framing the study against the backdrop of previous research on the major issues with regard to EMI programme implementation for lecturers and HEIs (Section 2), the objectives and research questions are stated (Section 3). The article will then go on to explain the research methodology employed, including the context of the study and a description of the main internationalization programmes at the UCLM (Section 4). The next sections are devoted to presenting and discussing the most important results (Section 5), and the main conclusions of the investigation along with a reflection on recommendations for future areas of improvement (Section 6).

## 2. Background

Universities throughout the world are promoting the implementation of EMI courses as a way to extend their global presence and improve their positions in university rankings, against the backdrop of a highly competitive market. While the benefits for HEIs are, thus, quite self-evident, it is necessary to gain more insight into the reasons and motivations which drive lecturers to leave their comfort zone and teach in another language. In this vein, to fully understand the conjoint effort lecturers and universities have to make to successfully implement EMI, it is necessary to look into the main challenges practitioners have to face, and the role HEIs play in organizing and supporting the whole process.

### 2.1. Challenges for EMI lecturers

Undoubtedly, teaching in English “makes the learning process more arduous and demanding” (Doiz and Lasagabaster 2018, 659), and requires an additional effort for non-native English-speaking lecturers in terms of the elaboration of classroom materials, the preparation of lessons, and the creation and implementation of assessment tools, not to mention the “personal investment” (Doiz and Lasagabaster 2018) and time commitment necessary to keep their English proficiency up-to-date (reading, watching films in English, stays abroad, etc.).

Similarly, lecturers are confronted with a new teaching scenario, one in which they have the handicap of their own incomplete command of the language of instruction. In this vein, the study conducted by Doiz et al. (2019)

concluded that lecturers attributed to teaching in a foreign language a number of negative consequences, such as a decrease in the degree of detail and depth of their explanations, a reduction in their communicative skills to paraphrase and make the message clear, and a significant reduction in the vocabulary they use—a shortcoming also detected in previous studies (Bolton and Kuteeva 2012; Pecorari et al. 2011).

As a consequence, EMI lecturers feel more tense and stressed, need to concentrate harder during their classes, and experience feelings of insecurity and disempowerment (Doiz and Lasagabaster 2018). Teachers observe that teaching in English reduces their capacity to improvise and their spontaneity, thereby negatively affecting the emotional links and good rapport they are used to establishing with their students when teaching in their mother tongue (Doiz et al. 2019).

## *2.2. Challenges in EMI programme design*

English instruction involves significant costs for lecturers compared to teaching in their mother tongue. Therefore, if HEIs want to extend the number of EMI courses they offer, they cannot rely exclusively on lecturers' intrinsic motivation—such as improving their own language competence and professional development opportunities, among others (Dafouz 2018)—and instead need to incorporate in their internationalization plans a system of incentives that is attractive enough to stimulate lecturers' participation. In this respect, O'Dowd (2018, 6) recommends developing “specific language policy documents and programmes”, and Drlja a and Vodopija-Krstanovi (2015, 43) consider that “financial support, workload modification, and language assistance” are essential prerequisites that institutions should provide to EMI lecturers. Gröblinger (2017) adds further needs to be addressed to the list, such as proof-reading of materials in English created by lecturers, supervised feedback, language training, and methodology courses.

To meet all these challenges, the design of a successful EMI programme requires the coordinate response of various university bodies, such as Vice-Rectorates, Faculties, Departments, and Language Centres. Although the Vice-Rectorate for International Relations is the primary entity responsible for launching internationalization plans including EMI, the implementation of English as a medium of instruction affects the Vice-Rectorate for Teaching Staff, which has to provide accredited lecturers, and guarantee them remaining in the programme, and also the Vice-Rectorates for Teaching, and for Finance and Planning. The fact that EMI is at the intersection of the competencies of these institutions—and therefore its smooth functioning relies on the contributions of all of them—is not an unproblematic area (González-Alvárez 2020, 15). The

lack of coordination between the different university bodies involved in EMI could lead to “fragmentation in the provision” and necessitate “renewed focus at policy level” (Dafouz et al. 2019, 1).

To complicate the scene even more, the agents responsible for EMI, also called EDs (Educational Developers), vary enormously from university to university in terms of backgrounds and areas of expertise, which affects their perspectives on the role of languages (Dafouz et al. 2019). This diversity in terms of the insight of EDs exerts an influence on the design of teacher training programmes, which may range from paying attention only to improving the language proficiency of lecturers to including training in more varied language awareness issues and providing pedagogical guidelines.

It cannot be denied that a sufficient command of English is a prerequisite to teach subject-specific contents in that language. Unfortunately, official reports and recommendations consistently identify the low level of English of the university community as a weakness for EMI implementation (e.g., Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, 2014), thereby pointing to improving English language proficiency as one of the most urgent needs (Bazo et al. 2017).

Nevertheless, it is paramount to note that language needs for EMI are not restricted to merely improving the general level of English of lecturers. Airey (2011), for example, argues that lecturers should bear in mind they need to transmit and teach the so called “disciplinary literacy” to allow their students “to appropriately participate in the communicative practices of a discipline” (Airey 2011, 3). Lecturers therefore have to consider what students’ language needs are to perform in three main contexts: society, the workplace, and the academy (Airey 2020), and have a sufficient command of technical, formal and informal language to adapt to different communicative situations, inside and outside the classroom. Macaro (2019), in turn, underscores the complex role of language in EMI, and suggests it would be beneficial for lecturers, to develop their applied linguistic competences. In fact, there are “communicative issues that already exist in monolingual L1 settings” (Airey 2020, 343), which all the more should be considered when teaching in a foreign language. Accordingly, some kind of tailored applied linguistic training would be useful for lecturers to deal with EMI challenges (Macaro 2019), particularly in terms of the analysis of language demands and establishing language goals for students.

However, and despite these recommendations, “the awareness of language issues among programme designers and teachers is not [...] strong” (Schmidt-Unterberger 2018, 2). The complex role of language is not only often disregarded in many teacher training programmes, but, in addition, some EMI lecturers consider that it is not their responsibility to teach language (Airey 2012)

indicating that “the shift from L1 to EMI is reduced to a change in the vehicle of communication” (Cots 2013, 117). At this point the controversial issue of the integration of content and language learning in HEIs arises.

While Content and Language Integrated learning (CLIL) has been widely embraced in primary and secondary school settings, university lecturers are typically reluctant to include language goals in their lessons (Doiz et al. 2019), since they consider “content is king” (Airey 2020, 343), and they also have a “lack of training in language teaching” (Cots 2013, 117). It has to be taken into consideration that CLIL has been considered the most suitable approach to meet the European ideal of plurilingual competence for European Union (EU) citizens (Dearden 2014) objectified in the mother tongue + 2 languages strategy. Thus, “the main rationale behind CLIL provisions is to improve proficiency in second languages” (Nieto Moreno de Diezmas 2020, 384), while the overriding goal for EMI programmes in tertiary education is to contribute to meeting the internationalization goals of universities (Doiz and Lasagabaster 2020), and not specifically to attain language learning goals.

Exploring the connotations of CLIL, which is linked to language learning in bilingual programmes at non-university levels, it is necessary to adopt a specific approach for EMI in HE, and the acronym ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education) seems to be gaining momentum in recent years. ICLHE is also based on the concept of integration of content and language, and therefore includes in its methodology language awareness principles and applied linguistic strategies, contextualised in the specific needs of HE. Nonetheless, ICLHE acknowledges teaching in English is not the same as teaching in the mother tongue and includes methodological challenges beyond the shift of the language for instruction. To train lecturers in methodological approaches for EMI is not only crucial for successful bilingual practice (Cots 2013), but is also a demand made by EMI lecturers themselves (Sánchez Pérez and Salaberri Ramiro 2017), who often feel unsupported by their university (Dafouz et al. 2019) and that they have to build up their instructional practice “basically in a ‘trial and error’ fashion” (Farrell 2019, 1).

All in all, the challenges that EMI lecturers have to confront are multiple and complex, and, against this backdrop, it is not surprising that many universities, such as the UCLM, struggle to find enough lecturers interested in participating in EMI programmes. Similarly, HEIs have to deal with considerable number of challenges, such as to define their EMI plans, establish incentives and procedures for teacher recruitment, and create a pre-service and in-service teacher training (i.e. prior to their involvement in the EMI programme and during the development of EMI courses) aimed at providing lecturers with linguistic and methodological competences for HE EMI classrooms.

### 3. Main Objectives of the Study and Research Questions

As mentioned before, the focus of this investigation is on understanding the difficulties lecturers and HEIs encounter in extending the number of bilingual Bachelor's and Master's degrees they offer. The study is set at the UCLM and aims to identify the causes for the low number of bilingual courses offered there by delving into lecturers' motivations, fears and stances towards the EMI plan of their institution.

The research questions this study addresses are as follows: i) What motivates lecturers to participate in the EMI programme? ii) What are the main challenges lecturers have to face in order to implement EMI? iii) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the EMI plan at the UCLM according to lecturers? iv) What suggestions do lecturers have to improve the EMI plan at the UCLM?

To gain a more comprehensive insight into the development and prospects of EMI at the UCLM, data was collected, via semi-structured interviews, not only with respect to the views of lecturers already delivering their subjects in English, but also the insights of lecturers interested in EMI, and SLA experts.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research context

This study was undertaken at the UCLM, a young multicampus university located in central Spain with faculties on six separate campuses. The UCLM offers around one hundred and seventy-five degrees, including Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees, with around thirty thousand students, and two thousand two hundred lecturers.

Having to compete among other national and international universities, the Vice-Rectorate of International Relations endeavours to meet global ranking standards and to promote staff and student mobility, with the aim of making UCLM more attractive to prospective students and lecturers, and making students more employable in the future job market. Within this framework, expanding the number of EMI courses and implementing bilingual degrees are two of the most complex challenges, taken into account that to date, as mentioned earlier, there are only two bilingual Bachelor's degrees and five bilingual Master's degrees.

As a result, it is true that English instruction is in its early days at the UCLM, and unlike other Spanish universities with more developed EMI programmes, there is not a published protocol or a specific linguistic policy plan related to the implementation of English as a language of instruction. However, the Vice-Rectorate of International Relations of the UCLM established a set

of requirements and support measure in the process of creating the current bilingual Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

The EMI initiative at the UCLM intends to offer bilingual branches within their existing degrees, parallel to the current non-bilingual studies. This way, students who choose a particular degree could voluntarily enroll either in the bilingual modality (where it is offered) or in the ordinary L1 version.

Degrees can be designated as bilingual when it is guaranteed that at least 40% of the credits of their study plan are taught in English, and consequently the use of EMI cannot be an initiative undertaken by an isolated lecturer, but rather has to be integrated in the context of a bilingual degree. To teach on a bilingual degree, the language requirement for lecturers is to have at least a B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). A wide range of exams provided by both public and private institutions are recognised, and the Centre for Languages of the UCLM also provides training and accreditation to this end. In the event that lecturers have the communication competence required but they do not possess official certifications, the Department of Modern Languages can validate lecturers' language level after examining evidence presented by the candidate, such as articles written in English, participation in international conferences and research, and teaching stays abroad.

In sum, the access of lecturers to EMI is not very demanding in terms of language proficiency, bearing in mind that the tendency in bilingual education, both for HEIs and non-university centres, is for teachers to hold a qualification at C1 of the CEFR. Likewise, at UCLM, lecturers are not required to commit to teaching their subject in English for a specified period. This can be interpreted as a way to facilitate the recruitment of staff to teach in English. Similarly, there is no mandatory EMI course that lecturers need to complete before starting to teach through English, which implies teachers are not provided with pedagogical guidelines when they start implementing EMI. As for in-service training, some English language courses are offered via the Centre for Languages of the UCLM, mostly based on improving general English language proficiency, whereas methodological issues are effectively disregarded.

When starting to implement new bilingual degrees, the UCLM offered the support of a native-English-speaking language assistant to revise the teaching materials produced by EMI lecturers, as well as to resolve pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar issues when they were preparing their lectures. Furthermore, the challenge EMI lecturers face in terms of lesson preparation, elaboration of teaching materials and marking tests and projects is recognised with a one-third reduction in their overall teaching load.

Given that the number of bilingual degrees is insufficient to increase its attractiveness for incoming mobility, the UCLM is currently implementing an



additional strategy: cataloguing English Friendly subjects. On a yearly basis, lecturers can add the subjects they teach to this catalogue if they commit to: (i) providing some of the course materials in English, (ii) using English in oral and written communications with international students, and (iii) conducting the exams and projects of international students in English. In this way, English Friendly subjects, although they are not taught in English, might be considered to be a suitable **option** for international students, thereby contributing to improving the international offer. Additionally, the English Friendly programme could act as a stimulus for lecturers to practice and improve their English proficiency, since they have to use English with their international students. As a matter of fact, most teachers of English Friendly subjects possess a B2 qualification or have a similar level of English, and while they are interested in EMI, they cannot implement it because they are teaching in non-bilingual degrees which do not have enough teachers with the required language expertise who are willing to launch a bilingual branch.

#### *4.2. Qualitative Research Data Collection*

This study uses qualitative research methods and empirical data collection with a total of twenty participants. Interview extracts have been examined through an ethnographic lens (Copland and Creese 2015) with the aim of exploring, interpreting and analysing different stakeholders' perspectives towards EMI. In this regard, ethnographies in qualitative research "allow us to see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people's lives, to discover how and why language matters to people in their own terms, and to watch processes unfold over time" (Heller 2008, 250). Although this approach has traditionally focused on language use, for the purpose of this article, the ethnographic approach is adopted in terms of methodological tools for data collection (i.e. interviews and interviewers' notes). The aim is to critically reflect upon emerging issues in localised EMI contexts as well as to describe in detail everyday life events that would make sense in relation to the institutionalization of EMI taking into account stakeholders' perspectives.

For this study, ethnographic data include informal discussions, EMI teaching material and institutional artifacts about the implementation of EMI at the UCLM, as well as a corpus of audiotaped semi-structured interviews with EMI practitioners, English Friendly lecturers, and EMI/CLIL researchers/SLA lecturers from different areas of expertise, schools and UCLM campuses. Interviews were conducted in Spanish; however, for the purpose of this article, extracts have been directly translated into English.

The interviews were conducted in small groups where participants had similar professional backgrounds and teaching profiles (see Table 1): i) EMI practitioners (EMIP, hereafter) in various fields (Computer and Civil Engineering, Psychology, Mathematics, Geography, Physics and Pharmacy); ii) lecturers interested in English instruction but who had no EMI experience (English Friendly lecturers; henceforth, EFRL); and iii) SLA specialists and EMI/CLIL researchers from the Department of Modern Languages (DML), including experts in language accreditation (Centre for Languages), all belonging to different schools and campuses. These semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of twenty participants during the second term (March-April 2020). The table below provides more detailed information about the participants' backgrounds and the campus where they are located in order to obtain a broader perspective as a whole regional institution. For the purpose of this article, all participants have been coded (i.e., as P1, P2, and so on), as have the different campuses (C1, C2, etc.) in order to maintain participants' anonymity.

TABLE 1. Participants' professional background

PARTICIPANTS (P)	TEACHING PROFILE	AREA OF EXPERTISE	CAMPUS (C)
<b>i) EMI practitioners (EMIP)</b>			
P1	Computer Engineering	Bilingual Degree	C1
P2	Computer Engineering	Bilingual Degree	C1
P3	Civil Engineering	Bilingual Final Master's projects	C1
<b>ii) English Friendly Lecturers (EFRL)</b>			
P4	Psychology	English Friendly	C1
P5	Psychology	English Friendly	C2
P6	Mathematics	English Friendly	C2
P7	Mathematics	English Friendly	C1
P8	Geography	English Friendly	C1
P9	Physics	English Friendly	C2
P10	Pharmacy	English Friendly	C3
<b>iii) Department of Modern Languages (DML)</b>			
P11	SLA	Centre for L.	C1
P12	SLA	Centre for L.	C1
P13	SLA	Arts & Humanities	C1
P14	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Faculty of Educ.	C1
P15	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Faculty of Educ.	C1
P16	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Faculty of Educ.	C1

P17	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Faculty of Educ.	C1
P18	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Faculty of Educ.	C1
P19	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Centre for L./ Faculty of Educ.	C2
P20	Researcher in Bilingual Education	Faculty of Educ.	C2

Interviews were conducted in line with our research questions (see Section 3), which addressed lecturers' motivation, fears and stance towards the EMI plan at the UCLM. In this regard, data collection has been crucial for the achievement of the main goal of this project as stakeholders' discourses about EMI have provided insightful accounts of how it is being implemented in real contexts and what the implications are for future areas of improvement.

## 5. Results and discussion

For the purpose of this paper, the data discussed have been examined according to the most dominant discourses emerging in the interviews regarding the ways in which EMI is being approached in very specific domains. As such, the aim was to explore the existing challenges and viable areas for improvement from different teachers' perspectives. Specifically, this data analysis focuses on the following key issues: 1) motivations and benefits; 2) language proficiency; 3) methodology and teacher training; and 4) teacher provision and commitment.

### 5.1. Motivations and benefits

"I don't want to be left behind." (P8)

Given that several internationalization initiatives such as EMI programmes are in vogue at most Spanish universities these days, it is perhaps not surprising that the idea of not being "left behind" was acknowledged by one EMIP and all EFRL interviewees (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10). Against this backdrop, the existing number of EMI plans at the UCLM has raised awareness within lecturers, thus becoming more engaged with the EMI initiative. As a matter of fact, according to some EMIPs, these programmes have become "a really good bet for our university" (P1) in terms of prestige in world university rankings.

However, there is no gain without pain, and both EMIPs and EFRLs consider that EMI demands more time to prepare lectures and correct student tasks (P2, P6, P8). This extra effort is acknowledged in the EMI programme of the UCLM with, as mentioned earlier, a reduction in teaching load of a third, which might seem to be a highly appealing incentive. From a more critical stance, EMIPs P1

and P2 argued that this significant portion of teaching reduction might not in fact correspond to the amount of work that lecturers actually had to do, while EFRLs P3 and P4 complained that this reduction in teaching hours was detrimental to their professional career, making it more difficult to be promoted to Senior Lecturer or Full Professor, which requires a higher number of teaching hours to be accredited.

“I want to learn more and better English.” (P2)

Despite the possible downside for promotion, some EFRLs highlighted the importance of improving their language level as one of the main incentives to participate in the programme (P4, P5, P9, and P10). In this regard, P2 particularly emphasised the potential expansion of their vocabulary to manage classroom discussions. The fact of having to communicate and interact in English, as well as to deal with content-related issues and specific terminology, led many lecturers to sign up for English courses in language schools or at the UCLM’s own Centre for Languages with the aim of obtaining official accreditation. In P5’s words, “it [EMI] implies professional development and personal motivation”.

“Bilingual students get better academic results and the advantage is that it [the bilingual group] is a small group, which makes them come together and the average level is higher.” (P2)

According to EMIPs (P1 and P2) teaching bilingual groups guarantees more committed students, which makes teachers’ work easier and more motivating. The bilingual class is more “select” because learning in English involves an additional challenge that students voluntarily accept when they enroll on EMI courses. In the interview, P1 categorised these students as “little Spartans”, highlighting the extra effort they have to make while being immersed in a bilingual degree such as Computer Engineering.

Another significant motivation for EMIPs is that bilingual groups tend to be less crowded because the number of the bilingual students is reduced compared to non-bilingual branches, which reduces teachers’ workload, favours cohesion among students and the achievement of higher average academic results. As a matter of fact, some EMIPs (P1 and P2) confessed that their bilingual students are in general by far more mature, more intellectually demanding and much more engaged in becoming excellent future engineers than their non-bilingual peers. In contrast, (P1 and P2) explained non-bilingual students are generally less committed to hard work. Consequently, the learning pace and classroom management within these bilingual groups play an important role in lecturers’ personal motivations towards English-medium instruction.

“It promotes a positive image of our university.” (P2)

Zooming out to the faculty/school level, EMI programmes currently carry a symbolic value of prestige, thus attracting an increasingly higher number of students than in previous years. According to these EMIPs, internationalization initiatives such as EMI programmes promote a positive image of the school at both international and national levels (P1 and P2). Nevertheless, according to some of the interviewees, the possible stress caused by learning in a foreign language at HEIs may initially detract from its potential attractiveness. Despite that, students facing EMI programmes also have the opportunity to overcome their fears and “break out of their comfort zone” (P2).

“It [EMI] increases the number of international students and enables the local students to learn languages.” (P19)

Taking into account that most primary and secondary schools in the region have already implemented bilingual education programmes, implementing EMI modules at the UCLM would guarantee the continuity of language learning as part of the students' training in more specific fields of knowledge. According to some SLA experts from the DML, not only does EMI enhance the establishment of international networks due to the increasing number of Erasmus students attracted by EMI programmes, but it also positively benefits local students in terms of language learning (“internationalization at home”).

From the point of view of EMIPs, the effects of the implementation of EMI at the UCLM may lead to international quality accreditations that would result in higher scores in competitive rankings. Additionally, a wider range of EMI courses would be useful not only to attain international purposes but also to comply with the aforementioned “internationalization at home”, as SLA experts stated in the interview (P19 and P20), which would also promote language learning for local and regional students.

## 5.2. *Language proficiency*

“There are two types of lecturers: those who have lost their fear of English and those who haven't.” (P6)

At the UCLM lecturers seem to have varying perceptions regarding the necessary language awareness and language proficiency required for lecturers to access EMI programmes. This is why it is crucial to integrate the three perspectives adopted in this study: EMIPs, EFRLs, and SLA experts.

In terms of language mastery, the challenges that EMI programmes entail provoke fear, anxiety and uncertainty among EFRLs. According to P3, “it is necessary to take fear out of people”. It seems that lecturers are beginning to lose these negative feelings towards the English language thanks to the implementation of such EMI plans.

On the one hand, EFRLs find the language issue both a challenge and an obstacle. In most cases, personal investment in language learning entails an extra emotional cost, which drives lecturers to increasing feelings of insecurity and disempowerment. Although most EFRLs are officially accredited (B1 or B2), many claimed that they lacked specific content language. They therefore felt that they would need training before starting EMI in terms of material preparation and proof-reading and in-service feedback on their practice by an EMI expert (P3). In this regard, the English Friendly initiative is likely to be “the first step to gradually implement subjects in English” (P6), thus supporting lecturers to lose their fear of the English language.

“It is not important to make phonetic mistakes.” (P1)

On the other hand, whereas EFRLs are aware of their language limitations, EMIPs do not consider that the language issue is a fundamental obstacle for instruction through English. EMIPs often openly acknowledged that their command of the language of instruction “is not perfect English” (P1) because they are not language experts. Consequently, “it is accepted to make mistakes and correct them” (P2), meaning that subject expert lecturers in EMI are generally not particularly concerned about making pronunciation or grammar mistakes in their oral communication. Their objective is not to teach English; “We are not language teachers” (P1) and “students do not wish to learn English” (P1) either, but only to be able to understand the content delivered in English. According to these EMIPs, what is important is to be able to communicate in an effective way using disciplinary discourse. This shared conception of what being an EMI lecturer entails in terms of language expertise puts having a native-like command of English into a second place in terms of teaching practice.

However, EMIPs are worried in terms of accuracy when dealing with written language, where errors are less ephemeral. They consider it crucial to have their teaching materials revised and corrected by a native-English speaking language assistant. Similarly, they explicitly stated that they expect high levels of accuracy from their students in written tasks. As a result, a focus on form is more typical in written material, whereas a focus on meaning is the main strategy for oral explanations and interactions.

"I don't know how to transmit the same empathy in English as I do in Spanish."  
(P2)

P1 and P2 declared they have made a great investment in obtaining the English language official accreditation. After a three-year-period devoted to learning English on different courses, P1 said they felt more self-confident when delivering their lectures. Taking a more critical stance, these EMIPs are well aware of the fact that a lack of fluency and poor command of the language affects not only their teaching performance, but also the emotional connection with their students. As they stated in the interview, they tend to rely on disruptive discourse strategies such as using humour (i.e. telling jokes) in their Spanish lectures to create empathy with their students. In contrast, P2 barely uses such techniques in English due to their English level. In this way, EMI reduces their spontaneity, and their emotional links with students (Doiz et al. 2019).

"Students do not feel they have a high enough level of English." (P8)

Whereas EMIPs claimed that students' comprehension problems derived from content-related issues rather than insufficient language proficiency, the experience of EFRLs differs significantly. According to them, one of the most dominant obstacles to implementing bilingual degrees in their faculties was the low English level of students. According to P9, only around 5%-7% of the total number of their students can deal with instruction in English and the majority "are not motivated to learn in English." Similarly, P5 declared that "students find it difficult to read academic texts even in Spanish." In both cases (P9 and P5), their attempts to start including some of the content materials in English were considered fruitless given their students' poor language skills and low motivation towards English language learning.

### *5.3. Methodology and teacher training*

"It is not all about translating the whole subject into English; it is important to adapt the methodology and, to do so, training is needed." (P7)

One of the most controversial issues that emerged in the interviews was the lack of teacher training and methodology to adequately deliver EMI lectures. According to Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018), using English (as a second language) for instruction involves a more demanding learning process, and EFRLs unanimously shared the same opinion about the pedagogical needs that EMI entails and the importance of teacher training actions.

On the one hand, P7 stated that the most complex part of teaching in English is not material preparation but how to use materials and to assess content knowledge; “it is important to change the methodology and that is why we need training”, they claimed. On the other hand, P3 suggested that it would be good to have a supervisor with previous EMI experience to train novice lecturers during their first year as EMI staff. These EMI supervisors would provide beginners with feedback about their teaching materials and suggest pedagogical strategies to use in the classroom, which may well function as a reflective practice process. By contrast, EFRLs (P8 and P7) claimed that implementing EMI in their subjects (Geography and Mathematics) would imply restructuring their subjects completely, for which they would need to change the methodology used, and to receive continuous training including personalised tutorials.

“It would be a real mess to teach in English.” (P10)

In addition, EFRLs consider that teaching their subject in English would be unfeasible in terms of student-teacher ratio and linguistic training. According to P10, the main requirements to facilitate teaching through English are reducing the number of students per group and being provided with an English expert assistant who can help “to practise pronunciation.” In this regard, these EFRLs find native-English-speaking language assistants a very useful resource in the classroom. Interestingly, in terms of oral language accuracy, EFRLs’ insecurities contrast with EMIPs’ self-confidence regardless of the language limitations or competence that each person has. In addition, EFRLs complained that, apart from methodology training (both with respect to techniques, resources and materials), what they also need is their school administration’s approval and support to assist and guide them in successfully implementing EMI programmes.

“There is no difference between the Spanish and the English model.” (P1)

Unlike EFRLs, EMIPs’ conception about using English for instruction considers that it does not differ much from the traditional methodology used in mainstream courses. The two of the EMI lecturers interviewed claimed that “there are no special changes regarding the natural process taking place when dealing with the task of teaching a new subject” (P1). In fact, according to them, teaching preparation and academic results are no different in EMI and non-EMI classes.

More often than not these lecturers say they use English resources to prepare their teaching material in the field of Computer Engineering. Paradoxically, in the bilingual subjects, they may have to translate into English information previously translated from English into Spanish. As a consequence, “EMI



becomes something natural” (P1) and requires much less effort on the part of both lecturers and students, who are used to working in English.

“The initial effort to prepare content subjects is huge, but later it is only necessary to update the materials or make new tests.” (P2)

When asked about the difficulties of teaching content through English, EMIPs confessed that the only problems that may arise are content-related ones, in which case Spanish is used to clarify confusing concepts. In this regard, translanguaging is used as a scaffolding strategy, and reveals a degree of methodological awareness on the part of these lecturers in terms of the challenges of EMI.

Showing a critical stance towards their own teaching practice in terms of methodology, P2 emphasised that the courses they received at the Centre for Languages of the UCLM helped them linguistically only in general terms and lacked a pedagogical dimension. In this regard, as language schools and the UCLM's Centre for Languages were the only resources for teacher training, the relevant bodies within the UCLM decided to provide lecturers with native-English-speaker language assistants as a support for novice EMI teachers, particularly to help with the preparation of materials and the pronunciation of key language.

“Language assistants have not been a useful tool.” (P1)

Despite being supported by native-English-speaking language assistants, EMI lecturers did not consider this resource essential for their teaching practice: “English is secondary, so native assistants do not work; it would be necessary to train them” (P1). On the contrary, P2 assessed this resource positively in the first two years after they started their EMI lectures, since their materials were thoroughly checked by the language assistant taking into account language-related issues. However, as the interviewee stated, “from the third year onwards, the materials had very few changes” (P2), which led to the language assistant providing conversation sessions with students. What they both emphasised in the interview is that, although they consider themselves proficient enough in the second language, their English lacks classroom management discourse and subject-specific language. In this regard, P2 talked about the need for a link between three dimensions: content, language, and methodology. As an alternative to this proposal, P3 highlighted the importance of suitable training being provided by both the Department of Modern Languages and SLA experts in order to motivate teaching staff to engage in an EMI training programme. In the same vein, lecturers from the Department of Modern Languages emphasised the paramount importance of implementing methodological changes to effectively

teach and learn in a foreign language, and the evaluation process in EMI programmes was one of their particular concerns. They unanimously highlighted the importance of establishing specific criteria for both language and content.

In light of all the needs that both EMIPs and EFRLs asserted in the interviews, it was agreed that an EMI training action plan should be developed with the collaboration of the Centre for Languages and experts in bilingual education. This plan would therefore align with the global demands on internationalization programmes at HEIs and suit the current needs at the UCLM in terms of pedagogical support and specific language training.

#### *5.4. Teacher provision and commitment*

“There is a lack of permanent teaching staff at the beginning of the academic year and you cannot commit yourself.” (P7)

Along with the multiple challenges detected in terms of incentives, language and methodological issues, teacher provision emerged as a major concern. The lack of employment stability is detrimental to an effective EMI implementation, and “it would be necessary to count on really committed lecturers” (P11).

According to P7, the most effective measure to start implementing EMI in their faculty is to increase the number of teaching staff within the university in order to, on the one hand, reduce the ratio of students in classes—dividing a cohort of students on a course into two or more smaller groups—and, on the other, to allow EMI lecturers to commit themselves to the EMI programme well before the start of term in order to give them time to prepare their teaching. For these EFRLs, there was a strong feeling that “there is no support from the UCLM” (P8).

Most participants also agreed that what EMI implementation needs so as to be fully successful at the UCLM is commitment and engagement on the part of both the institution itself—providing a consistent framework with standardised guidelines—and the staff involved. In addition, these lecturers also called for recognition from the university and national agencies, including improving employment conditions for these teachers. Due to the paucity of institutional policies regulating the implementation of EMI at the UCLM, participants shared their concerns about teacher provision and, more specifically, the duration of a lecturer’s commitment to EMI. According to P1 and P2, based on their previous experience, since EMI lecturers are not obliged to teach within the programme for any specified time and can withdraw at any time, the continuity of these programmes therefore depends on lecturers’ personal and professional engagement with the “EMI cause”. As a consequence, the lack of a proper legal framework defining EMI implementation at the UCLM would, in their opinion, eventually put these programmes at risk.

These actions, along with the support of the different schools at UCLM including restructuring measures, would mean a further step towards improving the quality of the current internationalization attempts and help the UCLM in its quest to obtain higher ranking.

## 6. Conclusions and Pedagogical Recommendations

This study attempted to uncover lecturers' perspectives on the overriding challenges EMI entails, within the context of the UCLM. Participants' insights shed light on various aspects of EMI that could be of interest for policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

The development of EMI at the UCLM is still in its infancy, with only two bilingual Bachelor's and five bilingual Master's degrees. The results of the interviews conducted indicated a number of difficulties which have presumably hampered the more rapid growth of the bilingual approach. These drawbacks are mainly related to incentives for lecturers to join the bilingual programme, anxieties about their language proficiency, the perceived inadequacy of teacher training, teacher recruitment and commitment in the programme.

On the bright side, although institutional incentives are considered limited, and in spite of the personal investment EMI involves, lecturers feel EMI provides better teaching conditions in terms of access to students who are more motivated, have a more mature approach and are more proficient in their level of English. Interestingly, whereas subject lecturers interested in EMI (i.e., EFRLs) expressed multiple fears in regard to their training in language proficiency and methodological strategies, EMI practitioners felt more self-confident, particularly once their teaching materials had been revised by a native-English-speaker language assistant and they assume that their command of English is sufficient to communicate the contents of the subject being taught.

The first recommendation to be drawn from these results is that actions should be implemented to overcome the fears of lecturers who are interested in EMI, via a comprehensive teacher training plan. Indeed, this anxiety about having the language and pedagogic skills to make the transition into EMI appears to be the Achilles' heel of the EMI programme at the UCLM. There are no training courses to accredit lecturers' skills before starting to implement EMI and provide them with the necessary language and pedagogical tools. This fact negatively impacts the recruitment of potential EMI lecturers, as accreditation EMI courses might attract more teachers interested in this approach. The Centre for Languages of the UCLM provides general language courses, and even courses specifically designed for EMI, but its pedagogical input is incidental at best. This indicates that in-service teacher training is another area for improvement, in light

of the training needs highlighted by lecturers, who want specific EMI courses with training in technical language, classroom language, informal language and in bilingual teaching methodologies. Similarly, the implementation of a supervision plan, as suggested by some of the participants, could be an optimal solution provided that the supervisors are experts in language learning and in bilingual methodology, and not simply native English speakers.

In turn, EMI lecturer recruitment and commitment emerged as areas of concern for the success of the programme long term. There is a need for permanent teachers with a bilingual profile along with measures, which currently do not exist, to ensure they do not withdraw quickly or unexpectedly from EMI. Behind this lack of regulations, one of the main shortcomings to be overcome is the need to establish at the UCLM a Language/Multilingual Policy Plan which includes a specific protocol for EMI. This protocol should provide comprehensive guidelines related to teacher recruitment and commitment. Similarly, teaching EMI classes should be appropriately stimulated with effective incentives for teachers, as well as including an effective teacher training plan comprising an accreditation system to teach in English, and in-service support with a supervision scheme. This plan should be sufficiently promoted and disseminated via the university website and among the university community. In sum, all these multilingual actions along with the support of the various bodies of UCLM involved, along with restructuring measures, would be a great step towards improving the quality of current attempts of internationalization and UCLM obtaining a higher ranking.

### Works Cited

- AIREY, John. 2011. "The Disciplinary Literacy Discussion Matrix: A Heuristic Tool for Initiating Collaboration in Higher Education." *Across the Disciplines* 8 (3). Retrieved from: <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/clil/airey.cfm>. [Accessed online on June 5, 2020]
- . 2012. "I Don't Teach Language. The Linguistic Attitudes of Physics Lecturers in Sweden." *AILA Review* 25: 64-79. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.25.05air>
- . 2020. "The content lecturer and English-medium instruction (EMI): Epilogue to the special issue on EMI in higher education." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23(3): 340-346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1732290>
- BAZO, Plácido, Aurora Centellas, Emma Dafouz, Alberto Fernández, Dolores González and Víctor Pavón. 2017. Documento Marco de Política Lingüística para la Internacionalización del Sistema Universitario Español. CRUE Universidades Españolas.

- BOLOGNA DECLARATION. "The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education". Retrieved from [http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Ministerial\\_conferences/02/8/1999\\_Bologna\\_Declaration\\_English\\_553028.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Ministerial_conferences/02/8/1999_Bologna_Declaration_English_553028.pdf) [Accessed online on June 4, 2020]
- BOLTON, Kingsley and Maria Kuteeva. 2012. "English as an academic language at a Swedish university: Parallel language use and the 'threat' of English." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 33(5): 429-447. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2012.670241>
- COPLAND, Fiona and Angela Creese. 2015. *Linguistic ethnography: Collecting, analysing and presenting data*. London: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473910607>
- COTS, Josep Maria. 2013. "Introducing English-medium instruction at the University of Lleida, Spain: Intervention, beliefs and practices." In Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra, eds. 2013, 106-127. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698162-010>
- DAFOUZ, Emma. 2018. "English-medium instruction and teacher education programmes in Higher Education: Ideological forces and imagined identities at work". *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 21(5): 540–552. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1487926>
- DAFOUZ, Emma, Kevin Haines and Joanne Pagèze. 2019. "Supporting Educational Developers in the Era of Internationalised Higher Education: Insights from a European Project." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23(3): 326-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1651818>
- DEARDEN, Julie. 2014. *English as a medium of instruction-a growing global phenomenon*. British Council.
- DOIZ, Aintzane and David Lasagabaster. 2020. "Dealing with language issues in English-medium instruction at university: A comprehensive approach." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23(3): 257-262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1727409>
- . 2018. "Teachers' and students' second language motivational self system in English: Medium Instruction: A qualitative approach." *TESOL Quarterly* 52(3): 657-679. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.452>
- DOIZ, Aintzane, Lasagabaster, David and Pavón, Víctor. 2019. "The integration of language and content in English-medium instruction courses. Lecturers' beliefs and practices." *Ibérica: Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos* 38: 151-176.
- DOIZ, Aintzane, David Lasagabaster and Juan Manuel Sierra, eds. 2013. *English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges*. Bristol: Multilingual matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698162>
- DRLJAČA, Margić and Irena Vodopija-Krstanović. 2015. "Introducing EMI at a Croatian university: Can we bridge the gap between global emerging trends and local challenges?" In: Slobodanka, Hultgren and Jensen 2015, 43-60.

- FARREL, Thomas S. C. 2019. "Professional development through reflective practice for English-medium instruction (EMI) teachers." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23(3): 277-286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1612840>
- GÓMEZ-PARRA, María Elena and Cristina Aránzazu Huertas Abril, eds. 2020. *Handbook of Research on Bilingual and Intercultural Education*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI-Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-2588-3>
- GONZÁLEZ-ÁLVAREZ, Dolores. 2020. "Languages and internationalization. Strategies and policies". In González-Álvarez and Rama-Martínez 2020, 10-28.
- GONZÁLEZ-ÁLVAREZ, Dolores and Esperanza Rama-Martínez, eds. 2020. *Languages and the Internationalisation of Higher Education*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- GRÖBLINGER, Katharina. 2017. "What are the benefits and challenges of EMI in (international) study programs at UAS in Austria?" Paper presented at Forschungsforum Der Österreichischen Fachhochschulen: Research, Innovation, Value. University of Applied Sciences, April 2017. Austria: Forschungsforum der Österreichischen Fachhochschulen, [http://ffhoarep.fh-ooe.at/bitstream/123456789/956/1/Panel\\_114\\_ID\\_218.pdf](http://ffhoarep.fh-ooe.at/bitstream/123456789/956/1/Panel_114_ID_218.pdf) [Accessed online on June 1, 2020]
- HELLER, Monica. 2008. "Doing ethnography". In Wei and Moyer, 249-262. Oxford: Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444301120.ch14>
- LEASK, Betty. 2015. *Internationalizing the Curriculum*. Abingdon: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716954>
- MACARO, Ernesto. 2019. "Exploring the role of language in English medium instruction". *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 23(3): 263-276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1620678>
- MACARO, Ernesto, Samantha Curle, Jack Pun, Jiangsha An and Julie Dearden. 2018. "A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education." *Language Teaching* 51(1): 36-76. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350>
- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT (MECD). 2014. *Estrategia para la Internacionalización de las Universidades Españolas*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/dms/mecd/educacion-mecd/areas-educacion/universidades/politica-internacional/estrategia-internacionalizacion/EstrategiaInternacionalizaci-n-Final.pdf>. [Accessed on June 6, 2020]
- NIETO Moreno de Diezmas, Esther. 2020. "Literacy Development in L1 in Bilingual Education: Evidence from Research on CLIL in Primary School." In Gómez-Parra and Huertas Abril 2020, 383-407. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-2588-3.ch016>
- O'DOWD, Robert. 2018. "The training and accreditation of teachers for English medium instruction: An overview of practice in European universities." *International*

- Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 21(5): 553-563. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1491945>
- PECORARI, Diane, Philip Shaw, Aileen Irwin and Hans Malmström. 2011. "English for academic purposes at Swedish universities: Teachers' objectives and practices". *Ibérica: Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos* 22: 55-78.
- SÁNCHEZ Pérez, María del Mar and María Sagrario Salaberri Ramiro. 2017. "Implementing Plurilingualism in Higher Education: Teacher Training Needs and Plan Evaluation." *Porta Linguarum, Monográfico II 3-7*: 139-156. <https://doi.org/10.30827/Digibug.54118>
- SCHMIDT-UNTERBERG, Barbara. 2018. "The English-medium paradigm: A conceptualisation of English-medium teaching in higher education". *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 21(5): 527-539. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1491949>
- SLOBODANKA, Dimova, Hultgren, Anna Kristina Jensen, Christian, eds. 2015. *English-medium instruction in European higher education. English in Europe*. Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614515272>
- WÄCHTER, Bernd, and Friedhelm Maiworm, eds. 2014. *English-taught programmes in European higher education: The state of play in 2014*. Bonn: Lemmens Medien.
- WEI, Li, and Melissa G. Moyer, eds. 2009. *The Blackwell guide to research methods in bilingualism and multilingualism*. London: John Wiley & Sons.