Investigación en docencia universitaria
Diseñando el futuro a partir de la innovación educativa
Investigación en docencia universitaria. Diseñando el futuro a partir de la innovación educativa
Investigación en docencia universitaria. Diseñando el futuro a partir de la innovación educativa

EDICIÓN:
Rosabel Roig-Vila

Comité científico internacional
Prof. Dr. Julio Cabero Almenara, Universidad de Sevilla
Prof. Dr. Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, University of California at Santa Barbara
Profa. Dra. Floriana Falcinelli, Università degli Studi di Peruggia
Profa. Dra. Carolina Flores Lueg, Universidad del Bio-Bio
Profa. Dra. Chiara Maria Gemma, Università degli studi di Bari Aldo Moro
Prof. Manuel León Urrutia, University of Southampton
Prof. Dr. Gonzalo Lorenzo Lledó, Universidad de Alicante
Prof. Dr. Enric Mallorquí-Ruscalde, California State University-Fullerton
Prof. Dr. Santiago Mengual Andrés, Universitat de València
Prof. Dr. Fabrizio Manuel Sirignano, Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli

Comité técnico:
Jordi M. Antoli Martínez, Universidad de Alicante
Galdys Merma Molina, Universidad de Alicante

Revisión y maquetación: ICE de la Universidad de Alicante

Primera edición: octubre de 2017
© De la edición: Rosabel Roig-Vila
© Del texto: Las autoras y autores
© De esta edición:
Ediciones OCTAEDRO, S.L.
C/ Bailén, 5 – 08010 Barcelona
Tel.: 93 246 40 02 – Fax: 93 231 18 68
www.octaedro.com – octaedro@octaedro.com

Cualquier forma de reproducción, distribución, comunicación pública o transformación de esta obra solo puede ser realizada con la autorización de sus titulares, salvo excepción prevista por la ley. Diríjase a CEDRO (Centro Español de Derechos Reprográficos, www.cedro.org) si necesita fotocopiar o escanear algún fragmento de esta obra.

ISBN: 978-84-9921-935-6

Producción: Ediciones Octaedro

NOTA EDITORIAL: Las opiniones y contenidos de los textos publicados en esta obra son de responsabilidad exclusiva de los autores.
Teaching research of English level and general satisfaction on high academic achievement groups at the University of Alicante

Itziar Rubio-Astorga, Juan José Cordoba-Granados, Nuria Casado-Coy, Marc Terradas-Fernandez, Pablo Sanchez-Jerez and Carlos Sanz-Lazaro

Universidad de Alicante

RESUMEN

The Education, Culture and Sport agency of the region of Valencia “Conselleria d’Educació, Cultura i Esport” in Spain created the High academic performance (Alto Rendimiento Académico; ARA) groups in the academic year 2010/2011. This program was created with the main objective of boosting academic performance of the most outstanding students. This excellence program was set up in some bachelor degrees of all public universities in the region of Valencia, leading to valuable feedback to improve and promote the implementation and development of these types of groups. With this purpose, we conducted surveys at the University of Alicante where there is an ARA group in the bachelor degree of Biology. The surveys were aimed at professors and students of different degrees to know the opinions of people related and unrelated to the ARA groups. The surveys also aim to assess the degree of diffusion of ARA groups to potential students. Likewise surveys were aimed to assess the different English levels with the objective of evaluate differences between ARA and non ARA groups. Our results indicate that the level of English is better in ARA groups. People not related to these types of groups have a high level of disinformation about the ARA groups nor on their advantages nor on requirements to join. Therefore, improving the visibility and dissemination of ARA groups is recommended. In this way, potential students would have enough information to adequately consider enrolling in the ARA group.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ARA group, English, high academic performance, students, surveys.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays society is experiencing accelerated changes that involves all aspects of human life and education. Teaching needs to be flexible by adapting to these changes (Garay., 2012). There are differences among students in terms of ability, motivation and comprehension capability. Learning strategies involve the design, appreciation and adjustment of plans to task conditions that have the precise skills to successfully achieve the objective of an appropriate learning. (Rodriguez., et al 2007).

To improve the performance of students with good results, the Conselleria d’Educació, Cultura i Esport formed groups of students showing high academic performance (“Alto Rendimiento Académico”) called ARA groups. ARA groups are characterised by reduced numbers of students that may increase the learning ability of these students and by bilingual education in English. The European Higher Education Area has clearly influenced the implementation of English as Medium of Instruction, which is defined as the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English, at European universities. (European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process, 2017). Content and Language Integrated Learning presents an increasingly popular pedagogic program developed in order to the...
future purpose of plurilingual skills in Europe (Lorenzo., et al 2009). Through this process, countries, institutions and stakeholders of the European area are continuously adapting their higher education systems making them more compatible and strengthening their quality assurance mechanism.

In addition to these initiatives, the Conselleria d'Educació, Culture i Esport, created the ARA groups in the academic year 2010/2011. This program was created with the objective of promoting the potential of the most outstanding students so they could achieve their highest academic performance possible. This program was set up in some degrees at universities in the Region of Valencia: University of Valencia (UV), Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV), University of Miguel Hernández (UMH), University of Jaume I (UJI) and the University of Alicante (UA). High academic performance groups are expected to become more common in different European countries. Therefore, the universities of the Region of Valencia can give us valuable feedback to improve and promote the implementation and development of these types of groups. For this purpose, we conducted surveys at the faculty of sciences of the University of Alicante where there is an ARA group in the bachelor degree of biology. The surveys were addressed to professors and students who attended different degrees in this faculty, to gather their opinions, whether they were involved in ARA groups or not.

Due to the fact that ARA groups are relatively new, few studies have been carried out in these groups.

The main objective was to know the level of satisfaction of the students and professors regarding the ARA groups. To find out if there were an improvement in the quality of learning and in the skills of ARA groups we assessed the differences between the levels of English certification between ARA and non-ARA groups. Surveys were performed in order to evaluate the linguistic competences of the students and if teaching in English is a significant effect in learning following models (Ferreras et al., 2008). Additionally, the level of diffusion and existence of the ARA groups in the University of Alicante was assessed among students.

Our hypothesis was that the program had drawn a positive level of satisfaction and that its implementation was positive given the objectives of the Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura i Esport.

2. METHODS

2.1. Description of context and participants

We surveyed students and professors taking part in bachelor degrees of the Science Faculty of the University of Alicante. These degrees were: Biology, Mathematics and Marine Sciences.

2.2. Tools

Virtual surveys were carried out using Google Forms.

https://www.google.es/intl/es/forms/about/

Surveys were divided into 5 categories and each category had different questions (see annex):

- Students undertaking a degree without an ARA group: Marine Sciences and Bachelor of Mathematics.
- Students undertaking a degree with an ARA group, but attending another group: Bachelor of Biology.
- Students undertaking a degree with an ARA group, attending this group: Bachelor of Biology.
- Professors teaching an ARA group: Bachelor of Biology.
- Professors not teaching an ARA group: Bachelor of Biology.
2.3. Process
Once the answers were collected, they were processed and analysed through graphs and tables with excel and google forms. The surveys were collected during the second term of the academic year the months of March and April.

3. RESULTS
Regarding prior knowledge of the respondents of ARA groups, results show that almost half of the students did not know about ARA groups before choosing their degree, with the highest percentage of knowledge about ARA groups being found in the degree of Mathematics and the lowest in Marine Science.

![Graph showing knowledge of ARA groups](image1.png)

**Figura 1.** Survey on 124 teachers and students on the existence of ARA groups in the Faculty of Science at the University of Alicante.

![Graph showing level of satisfaction](image2.png)

**Figure 2** Survey on the level of satisfaction of 14 students from the biology ARA group.

In the case of assessing the importance of English, the Marine Science degree stood out with an average of 9 among all respondents, while in the case of mathematics, the average comes down to 7. However in general all students from science degrees acknowledge that the English was a must.
To assess the different levels of English in science, 124 students and teachers from the different degrees were surveyed on their linguistic qualifications, Marine Science degree and students undertaking a degree with an ARA group achieving the highest level, but those attending the other group showed similar outcomes. In Marine Sciences, with 45 students surveyed, the percentage of B1 accreditation, a prerequisite to enter the groups, was 35.6% of the students surveyed, 31.1% having a B2, 6.7% having a C1, and 26.7% with no accreditation. In non-ARA biology groups, 24 students were surveyed. Results show 41.7% of students with a B1, 20.8% with B2 and 33% with no accreditation. Results for the degree of Mathematics, with 15 students surveyed, were similar for level B1, but worthy of note is that a very high percentage of respondents had A C1 accreditation.
On the other hand, it was clear that the level of English in the high performance groups was higher. 14 students were surveyed with B2 being the lowest level of accreditation and C1 representing the largest segment of the respondents.

![Figure 5. Survey of professors.](image)

Results of the 15 professors surveyed show that the professors participating in the ARA program had a high level of English, with B2 being the minimum level with a percentage of 62% and 26% with a C1. On the other hand, teaching staff who did not participate in teaching ARA groups, showed a much lower linguistic education with the percentages of 36% for B2, 9.1% for B1 and 36.4% with no accreditation.

![Figure 6. Professors opinion on: a) the possibility that English may slow down the teaching of the subject. b) agree with advantages of teaching in English and c) the reduced number of students per class.](image)
The surveys to evaluate 15 professors’ opinions on A.R.A groups generally showed a good acceptance. A total of 100% of respondents responded yes to whether the greatest advantage of A.R.A groups was their small number of students. Likewise, 40% of the respondents answered yes to the question on whether teaching in English slowed the lessons down, compared to 60% who answered no. On the other hand, with regard to the same issue, that teaching in English can be an advantage, 53.5% answered yes and 47.5% answered no.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The interest of non-ARA groups in teaching in English was clear because of the advantages that this can offer not only for the degree, but also for future employment.

Regarding the objective of analysing the extent of dissemination of information on ARA groups, the results were not very positive. To improve this situation, measures should be taken such as informative talks in high schools explaining the advantages of studying in an ARA group. As to the degree of satisfaction, results indicate that ARA students are generally happy with the decision taken.

In many countries the educational infrastructure does not support quality English Medium Instruction (EMI) provision because there is a shortage of linguistically qualified teachers (Dearden 2015), as well as students at the university (Echezarreta et al. 2016a) and high school level (Linares et al. 2017) in the case of Spain. However our results shows that the English proficiency assessed by language certificates for the professors teaching in the ARA groups in the Faculty of Science in the University of Alicante is generally good. Additionally, most of the students are aware of the benefits of classes in English (Echezarreta et al. 2016b).

With regard to the level of implementation, one of the characteristics of the ARA groups according to the Conselleria d’Educació, Cultura i Esport is that all the students of this group should have a B2 accreditation in English, and as seen in figure 3, all students from the ARA group surveyed had B2 or C1 accreditation. Differences were also found in English levels between both groups, being ARA groups significantly superior, and therefore more likely prepared than non ARA groups. Likewise another characteristic of this group was the small number of students recognised by the professor group as a clear advantage for teaching.

REFERENCES


The questions for each category were:

- Students undertaking a degree without an ARA group
  1. Did you know about the existence of ARA groups before starting the degree?
  2. Do you know the advantages of studying in an ARA group?
  3. Do you consider that not having an ARA group in your degree is unfair?
  4. Would you be interested in studying in an ARA group if you have the choice?
  5. Do you think you have the right level of English to join an ARA group?
  6. Do you consider you have a lower level of education than ARA groups?
  7. Do you think your academic performance would be higher if you were part of an ARA group?
  8. Do you think the existing curricular advantages for ARA groups are fair?
  9. Do you know someone from an ARA group? Do you believe that the bilingual education that person has received gives him/her a better start than yours?
 10. Do you think your degree has potential on English teaching skills?
 11. Do you think your degree would benefit from teaching in English?
 12. Please rate the importance you think English has in your degree. (1 to 10)
 13. Would you say that there are teachers capable of teaching in English?
 14. Do you have an English language accreditation? Which one?
 15. Do you have any suggestions or proposals to make regarding ARA groups?

- Students undertaking a degree with an ARA group, but attending another group
  1. Did you know about the existence of ARA groups before starting the degree?
  2. Do you know the advantages of studying in an ARA group?
  3. Do you think the existing curricular advantages for ARA groups are fair?
  4. Do you think you have the right level of English to join an ARA group?
  5. Do you consider you have a lower level of educational preparation than ARA groups?
  6. Do you think your academic performance would be higher if you were part of an ARA group?
  7. Please explain the main reasons why you decided not to join the ARA group.
8. Do you have any English language accreditation? Which one?
9. Please rate the importance you think English has in your degree. (1 to 10)
10. Do you think your professors have the right level of English?
11. Would you study in an ARA group without all the advantages?
12. Do you have any suggestions or proposals to make regarding ARA groups?

- Students undertaking a degree with an ARA group, attending this group
  1. Do you know the advantages of studying in an ARA group?
  2. Do you think your professors have the right level of English?
  3. Do you think that the level of demand of the degree in relation to English is correct?
  4. Do you think you have improved your level of English with bilingual education?
  5. Which level of English language accreditation do you have?
  6. Please rate the importance you think English has in your degree. (1 to 10)
  7. Do you think you have a higher level of preparation than the non-ARA groups?
  8. Would you say in general that the required level of ARA groups is higher than the non-ARA groups?
  9. Have you ever had native professors?
10. Do you think the existing curricular advantages for ARA groups are fair?
11. How did you know about the existence of the ARA groups?
12. Has the ARA group fulfilled your expectations?
13. Rate 1 to 10 according to your level of satisfaction with the ARA group.
14. Do you have any suggestions or proposals to make regarding ARA groups?

- Professors teaching an ARA group
  1. Do you believe that the level of English of the students is in line with what high academic performance demands?
  2. Would you say that at some point teaching in English doesn’t confer any benefit to teaching?
  3. Do you think students in the ARA groups show a greater predisposition to learning than other groups?
  4. Would you say that class attendance in ARA groups is higher than the other groups?
  5. Do you consider that, apart from the language, the ARA groups have a higher level of teaching than non-ARA groups?
  6. Do you think that the curricular advantages ARA groups receive are fair?
  7. Would you consider that one of the biggest advantages of the ARA groups is the small number of students per class?
  8. Which level of English language accreditation do you have?
  9. How many years ago did you obtain your English language accreditation?
10. Do you feel as comfortable giving classes in English as in Spanish?
11. Do you think giving classes in English leads to a delay at some point?
12. Rate 1 to 10 according to your level of satisfaction with teaching in an ARA group.
13. If you had to choose between teaching an ARA group or a non-ARA group, which one would you choose?
14. Do you have any suggestions or proposals to make regarding ARA groups?
Professors not teaching an ARA group

1. Do you know what the ARA group consists of?
2. Do you know the advantages and benefits of teaching in an ARA group?
3. Would you consider that one of the biggest advantages of ARA groups is the small number of students per class?
4. Which level of English language accreditation do you have?
5. How many years ago did you obtain your English language accreditation?
6. Would you rather teach in ARA or non-ARA groups?
7. Why?
8. Do you think giving classes in English leads to some slow-down at some point?
9. Do you believe it would be appropriate for all degrees to have an ARA group?