Abstract
The implementation of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in Higher Education (HE) in its process of internationalisation entails new academic scenarios. This study analyses how interaction in this academic context occurs between local students and internationals in terms of frequency, among other aspects. Some variables such as provenance, type of accommodation, and level of English will be also explored to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon. Quantitative data was collected by means of two questionnaires designed specifically for these two groups of students. The analysis of a sample of more than 400 students from the different university centres enabled to draw relevant conclusions about the dynamics of interaction in EMI classes at the UA, as well as possible recommendations to promote linguistic, academic and cultural exchange within the classroom.

Thematic key words
Interaction, English as Medium of Instruction (EMI), Internationalisation of Higher Education (IoHE), Internationalisation at Home (IaH).

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1. Introduction

The implementation of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) has become a priority for many Higher Education Institutions worldwide in their process of internationalisation (Dearden, 2015; Hultgren, 2014; Knight, 2013). This phenomenon of internationalisation is defined by Knight (2004) as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”. Within the various functions of higher education (HE), the author highlights teaching and learning, research, and service to society (Knight, 2013). Thus, one of the main consequences of promoting an internationalised status is the Englishisation of Higher Education (Hultgren, 2014), that is, the institutionalisation of English as the Medium of Instruction.

Internationalisation of higher education (IoHE) has traditionally been identified with international mobility (Zolfaghari, Shatar, & Zolfaghari, 2009; Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 65). Nevertheless, considerations on what is known as Internationalisation at Home (IaH) are growing in scope. IaH differs from the traditional conception of internationalisation in the fact that it does not necessarily require cross-border mobility. It emphasises the importance of internationalising both the formal and informal curriculum so the non-mobile majority may acquire the global competences the mobile students learn in their experiences abroad. Hence, “Internationalization at Home does not require the presence of international students, although that can be a benefit” (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 64).

By formal curriculum it is understood any assessable activities within an established syllabus which are compulsory in a degree program (Leask, 2015, p. 8). On the other hand, the informal curriculum is referred to as “various support services and additional activities and options organized by the university that are not assessed and do not form part of the formal curriculum, although they may support learning within it.” (Leask,
Internationalising the formal curriculum may not be sufficient to reach that longed-for international status. That is to say, teaching contents which include a broader insight than just a national one, teaching those contents in English and assessing students in English may lack the necessary involvement and motivation the informal curriculum affords. For instance, international student associations such as ESN or AEGEE, and some Study Abroad providers (CIEE, USAC, CEA, ALI, etc.) allow for greater interaction between international and local students, resulting that way in a direct exchange of the ideas and values IoHE pursue. Beelen & Jones (2015, p. 69) summarise this idea in their definition of IaH: “it is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments”

Although including subjects in the formal curriculum in which English is the vehicular language does not directly transform a university into an internationalised institution (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 64), English is indeed a decisive requirement in the IoHE. This is why EMI has emerged as a common practice in tertiary education. Usually promoted by top-down policies, the implementation of EMI tends to aim for a higher position in international rankings and, thus, making the institution more competitive and more solvent in financial terms (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018). Being these the leading rationales for implementing EMI in HE, other important values and stakeholders are falling out of consideration by the administration. Knight (2013) warns about this problematic trend in the IoHE: “Particularly evident and troublesome is the gap between the values of collaboration and cooperation for mutual academic benefits and the realities of competition, commercialisation and self-interest status building”.
The working definition for EMI that will be followed in this research work is:

“The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (Dearden, 2015, p. 6)

This choice lies on the fact that the study conducted by Julie Dearden (2015) under the umbrella of the British Council is the only research to date that has analysed the EMI phenomenon at a global scale, as corroborated by Macaro et al. (2018). Moreover, this definition makes possible a clear distinction between EMI and content and language integrated in learning (CLIL); both terms being sometimes used interchangeably and, hence, resulting in a source of confusion and misunderstanding.

EMI includes in its own idiosyncrasy the language that will be used in the teaching, that is, English. CLIL, on the contrary, does not mention the language in which content will be delivered. From this first difference it derives a second one. CLIL is interested in both the acquisition of a language and broadening the knowledge on a subject, whereas EMI pays no attention to the assessment and improvement of the linguistic competences. Other differences stem from geographical and educational factors. While the term CLIL is clearly identified with the EU’s promotion of multilingualism, EMI is not particularly ascribed to any geographical context. Finally, the term EMI is applied in tertiary education, whereas CLIL is more often used in primary and secondary education. When CLIL is used in tertiary education, it is preferred the term ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education) (Smit & Dafouz, 2012).

In Spain, research in this field has experienced a remarkable growth within the last decade. In fact, it is the most prolific country in Europe when it comes to empirical studies of EMI in HE, as reported by Macaro et al. (2018, p. 45). The vast majority of this researching labour has been devoted to analysing language policies and the promotion of multilingualism in HE, students’ academic performance and their perception on EMI
courses, and teachers’ satisfaction and obstacles when teaching their subjects in English (Aguilar & Rodríguez, 2012; Aguilar & Muñoz, 2014; Fernández-Costales, 2017, p. 44; T. Morell et al., 2017; Rubio-Astorga et al., 2017).

In the University of Alicante, EMI subjects have been introduced since the High Academic Performance (Alto Rendimiento Académico; henceforth, ARA) groups were created in 2010/2011 (Rubio-Astorga et al., 2017). These groups target students with an outstanding academic record and, at least, a low-intermediate level of English. An English B1 level according to the Common European Framework Reference of Language is a prerequisite to apply for these courses since they are partially instructed in English. At the end of these courses, students are required to certify a B2 level of English. It may be concluded that ARA groups fulfil a double function: on the one hand, they allow local students to enhance their academic profile and employability prospects at a global scale; on the other hand, they attract international students and staff.

It is also possible to find some elective subjects in the last year of some degree programs which implement EMI in their classes. This policy responds to the fact that students need to certify a B1 level in a foreign language at the end of their studies. Having passed 12 credits in subjects taught in English fulfils this requirement.

1.1. Justification

Many authors around the world have discussed to what extent EMI classes have an actual improvement in students’ English level. Some of them go even further and argue whether the contents of the subjects are compromised because of them being taught in English. More increasingly researchers are spotlighting the need for analysing pragmatic aspects of EMI classes such as language interaction. It would be incongruous to promote international mobility and those values attached to it (for instance, global cooperation, intercultural understanding and mutual academic benefits) if actual interaction between local and international students involved in the same academic context is not similarly
encouraged. If students do not get to share their own insights and personal experiences, one of the main goals of IoHE would not be fulfilled.

Among the various recommendations Dearden (2015) puts forward, he urges the research community to address how class interaction changes “as the medium of instruction changes” and whether it becomes more interactive or not. He also puts forward the following research question: “What strategies are used by students in EMI classrooms in oral (...) comprehension tasks which are designed to facilitate their understanding of their academic subjects?” (Dearden, 2015). In the same vein, Macaro et al. (2018, p. 65) conclude that “there is a lack of research in classroom interaction in HE” compared to secondary education “and what there is provides only a fragmented picture”.

Regarding the university of Alicante, some studies have been conducted with the aim to analyse EMI classes in ARA groups (Rubio-Astorga et al., 2017 on the level of satisfaction of students and professors; Morell et al., 2017 on students' and teachers' linguistic competence and their needs; Belda-Medina et al., 2017 on Instant Messagery Apps as a tool for international students' integration and adaptation). Relevant as their contributions are, there still remains a gap when it comes to the dynamics of interaction in these subjects, as well as a more comprehensive approach to the different faculties that integrate the campus.

1.2. Objectives
This study is guided by the following research question: To what extend does interaction between local and international students occur in EMI classes at the UA? In attempting to provide an answer to this question, the following main objectives have been established:

1. To analyse the current situation as regards frequency of interaction in English.
2. To examine if language and cultural affinity enables international students to move from their primary group and, thus, interact with other internationals and locals.

In relation to the previous main objectives, different variables must be taken into consideration when analysing this phenomenon. These variables, which might apply to locals, internationals, or both, may be formulated as specific objectives. Hence, in relation to all students, either international or local, this research work aims:

- To determine if the variable ‘gender’ has an influence in the frequency of interaction.
- To determine if the variable ‘age’ has an influence in the interaction.
- To discern if the variable ‘level of English’ influences to what extend students interact with other students.
- To establish whether membership in any international student associations has a direct impact on interaction.

Nevertheless, some variables are only applicable to a specific group of students due to their genuine situation and background. As far as local students are concerned, this project has as its specific goals:

- To observe if the variable ‘accommodation’ leads to a variation in local students’ willingness to interact with international students.
- To shed some light on the relation between previous study abroad experience and openness to interact with international students.

On the other hand, international students’ special situation makes it necessary to consider other variables such as their mother tongue, the country of their home university and their level of Spanish. Thus, some specific objectives stem from these particularities. These aims are:
• To determine if students’ linguistic background has a direct impact on their interaction with locals.
• To verify if their level of Spanish (before arrival or acquired in a Spanish language course at the UA) makes it easier to interact with locals.

2. Methodology

Before collecting quantitative data by means of a questionnaire, a selection of the subjects that would take part in the study was established. Since this research project took place in the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019, only subjects offered in the spring term were considered. Moreover, these subjects had to be instructed in English, but the English language should not be the target.

Having excluded those subjects, 93 subjects were offered in the second semester according to the UA website (https://web.ua.es/es/vr-ric/cursos-en-ingles.html). Out of these 93 subjects, 53 professors in charge of them were contacted requesting their collaboration in the project. Not only did this figure represent more than 50% of the total subjects in English, but they were also selected to represent the larger part of each faculty. After this first contact, 36 professors replied giving their consent about their students taking part in the research.

They were contacted again in order to arrange a date for the questionnaires being delivered among their students. In this second phase, 29 professors confirmed their commitment. This number decreased in comparison to the first phase due to various reasons. Some of them simply did not reply, and others had some issues with the groups in English, being lack of enrolment of international students the primary cause. Particularly, this was the case of three subjects in Chemistry.

Initially, a single questionnaire was devised for all students. Nonetheless, it became apparent that two different questionnaires would be required in order to cover each
group’s specific variables: one in Spanish for local students (labelled as Q1) and the other one in English for international students (henceforth referred to as Q2). The majority of questions are the same in both questionnaires so that it be possible to compare results, except for certain items that attend to each group’s quirks. It is possible to find Q1 in Appendix 1 as well as Q2 in Appendix 2. Google Forms was used to design and administer the questionnaires.

Both questionnaires were structured following the same pattern, though some items differed from Q1 to Q2. The first section focused on demographic data such as gender, age, type of accommodation, faculty of their degree, and other variables already mentioned in section 1.2. For instance, the possibility that enrollment in international student associations may promote interaction between locals and internationals, as discussed by Robson, Almeida, & Schartner (2017, p. 29), was explored in question 9 (Q1) and 12 (Q2). The second section of both questionnaires was devoted to the analysis of interaction in linguistic terms. Likewise, this section approached the phenomenon of interaction from three different perspectives. Firstly, it was sought to determine students’ attitude and motivation towards a multicultural and international academic context. Thus, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2007) was introduced in first place for local students in an abbreviated version of four items. In a second step of the analysis, questions aimed to study interaction itself: its frequency, the groups it occurred the most, the language used, and class activities that promoted interaction. In the case of frequency, a Likert scale was used providing seven options with a variation of 20% in frequency from one option to another. Moreover, a distinction was established between interaction on campus and outside of campus in Q2, since international students’ social life might be considered more active in an informal setting (outside of campus), and some relevant data would be missing if they were not asked about that social sphere. The last set of questions aimed to spot those barriers for interaction that
students had found so far. Q2 also included a question about students’ satisfaction in relation to their interaction with locals. A Likert scale was also used to grade their responses in this respect. Finally, an optional open question was introduced to let respondents write any comments or suggestions about their own experience.

The questionnaires were administered to both local and international students who took part in the selected subjects. This process of data-gathering was carried out in the span of one month, from February 13th, 2019 to March 12th, 2019. After a brief presentation of the project, two QR codes (one for Q1 and another one for Q2) were screened in the class to let respondents scan it with their mobile phones and, thus, access the questionnaire in a quicker way.

3. Results

3.1. Sample identification
The final sample gathers data from 408 respondents distributed in 23 different subjects. 307 out of the total are local students, whereas the remaining 101 are international students. For the local students’ questionnaire, female participants outnumber male (54.7% to 44%). In the case of the international students, the statistical difference is even more apparent (67.3% female vs. 31.7% male). This result reflects the current situation of tertiary education, in which there are more women than men. As far as age spans are concerned, 67.8% of local students and 61.4% of international students are between 18 and 21 years old, which is the average age for students who undertake a degree program right after graduating in high school.

In regards to local students, Figure 1 shown in the next page represents the percentage of respondents in relation to the faculty their degree program belongs to. It is important to bear in mind that the figures do not represent the totality of EMI subjects offered at the University of Alicante, nor the wholeness of students attending these classes. Nonetheless, the sample allows to draw conclusions in terms of
representativeness. The majority of respondents (86) are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities (28%). The Faculty of Science is represented by 81 students in EMI classes (26%). 77 students responding the questionnaire are undertaking their studies in the Polytechnic School, that is, 25% of respondents. The following Centre in terms of representation is the Faculty of Economic & Business Sciences (11%), with 34 students having filled in the questionnaire. Finally, the Faculty of Health Sciences represents 6% (18 respondents) and the Faculty of Law, 4% (11 respondents). The Faculty of Education has no representation in this research work, even though Faculty members of the four EMI classes were contacted in the first phase of this project.

*Figure 1. University Centres*

![Pie chart showing the distribution of respondents across different faculties.]

A detailed identification of the number of local students (LS) is provided in Appendix 3, according to their degree program, the EMI subjects and their year as undergraduates. The number of international students (IS) attending these subjects is also included in this chart.
As far as international students are concerned, the majority of them are American (being 20 in total), followed by German (8), British (7), Finnish (7), Polish (6), French (5) and Dutch (5). Notwithstanding the fact that the vast majority of international students are either from America or Europe, the sample includes participants from all over the world. Therefore, this multicultural environment results in the miscellany of more than 25 languages in the campus of the University of Alicante. Table 1 shows detailed information about the nationality of international students.

Table 1. Identification of international students

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<td>Belarussian</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Belgian</td>
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<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Peruvian</td>
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<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Polish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Russian</td>
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<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
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<td>Ukrainian</td>
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<td>Colombian</td>
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<td>Latvian</td>
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3.2. Motivation & openness towards interaction

Before analysing the actual interaction between students in EMI classes, it should be determined whether local students were inclined to interact with international students, and vice versa. As stated in Section 2, local students were enquired about their attitude towards intercultural exchange. This factor was measured by means of an adapted version of the International Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2007).
As noticeable in Figure 2, the majority of respondents are neutral or favourable when it comes to interact with people from different cultures. Nevertheless, 68 respondents out of 307 (22%) confess that they do not know what to say in this type of situations. Something similar occurs when they were enquired whether they can be as sociable as they desire when they are interacting with people from a different cultural background. Most of respondents have a positive attitude towards this statement, although 66 local students disagree or strongly disagree with it. This trend is completely opposite when the statements imply a negative connotation as it may be getting discouraged or not being willing to discuss with international students. The vast majority of polled local students strongly disagree with these utterances. Only 34 and 43 respondents, respectively, admit feeling discouraged to a certain extend when they get involved with people from different cultures or not being willing to take part in a group discussion with them. All in all, Figure 2 shows local students have a partially positive attitude towards interacting with international students.
On the international students’ side, their prime motivation to enrol in subjects taught in English was their lack of knowledge of Spanish (41.6% of respondents) and the consequences there stem from this fact. That is, they choose classes in English because they find them easier (37.6%), they are worried about their final grades if taking the classes in Spanish (30.7%), and they feel unable to speak or understand Spanish in an academic setting (20.8%). Therefore, the leading rationale for international students to undertake subjects in English corresponds to a lack of confidence in their skills in the Spanish language. But, indeed, an education institution in its process of internationalisation cannot expect all international students to apply for subjects in Spanish. That is why the implementation of EMI classes is so important. Some of the benefits about offering a wider range of subjects in English is that international students can more easily transfer credits to their home university (being this the motivation of 29.7% of international students when applying to EMI classes) and it may also let them improve their English skills (20.8%) in the process.

3.3. Linguistic interaction

As it could be expected, more than half of the local students never or rarely interact in English with other local students or international students whose mother tongue is Spanish. However, when it comes to interact with international students with a different linguistic background, the scenario differs greatly: 14% of respondents never interact with non-English native speakers and neither do 11% of respondents with English natives. In the third and fourth graph, the frequency of interaction is distributed more evenly among the different ranges, as opposed to the first and second graph, in which the lowest figures outbalance the highest. It is a foregone conclusion that local students prefer to speak Spanish to those with whom they share the same mother tongue, even though the linguistic context is meant to be in English. Yet, this linguistic preference varies when they are to interact with students from a different linguistic provenance.
In the following section, a more detailed explanation of the causes of this variation will be provided attending to several variables such as accommodation or previous sojourn experience.

The analysis of international students’ frequency of interaction differs in some aspects from that of local students. Internationals have a more active social life and, therefore, it is more likely that interaction occurs in a greater degree in informal settings rather than in an academic context. Hence, students were asked about the frequency of interaction on campus and outside of campus. Although this study aims to analyse the frequency of interaction in EMI classes, it is essential to take into consideration the whole social sphere so that a holistic understanding of this phenomenon may be reached. In fact, their level of integration in an informal setting may convey a direct impact on their interaction on campus.
As it may be learnt from Figure 4, the majority of international students interact with other peer students from their own country on over 70% of the occasions when that interaction occurs on campus. On the other hand, 17 international students out of 101 (16.8%) assure that they never interact with their primary group on campus, being the main reason that none of their classmates are from their own country. This same trend does not vary greatly from the interaction outside of campus, except from the fact that in the latter there is a slight increase in the number of students who always interact with people with their same nationality (20 vs. 24).

The highest frequency of interaction on campus occurs among international students from different nationalities: 27.7% of international students frequently interact with other international students, 22.7% usually do so, and 10.8% always. However, this situation changes outside of campus, where there is a more equal balance between
interaction with students from their own country and students from different nationalities.

In regards to their interaction with local students, the level of frequency decreases drastically. Despite sharing their lessons with local classmates, 60.3% of the polled international students rarely or occasionally interact with locals. Only 3.9% affirms always interacting with locals in their classes. Outside of campus, where internationals do not necessarily have direct contact with local students, the amount of respondents who never interact with locals rises up to 11.8%.

In this last type of interactions, the language that most international students use is English, although some Spanish is also introduced (49.5%). About one third of respondents (30.7%) speak mostly in Spanish with locals, resorting to English on some occasions. 14.5% use only Spanish and 13.9% only English.

3.3.1. General variables

Once the respondents and their motivations and attitudes have been identified, alongside the frequency of interaction among them, some variables influencing the linguistic exchange will be analysed. Both, local and international students, were asked about their level of English as well as if they were members of any international student associations with the aim of determining the relation between these variables and the frequency of interaction.

Local students’ level of English is relatively lower than internationals’ as attested by themselves. Their level of English is as follows: A1 (1.3%), A2 (10.7%), B1 (20.5%), B2 (42.7%), C1 (18.9%), C2 (5.9%). To verify the reliability of their responses, polled students were required to state whether they had obtained any official certificates that could confirm their level of English. 31.9% of local students could not certify their level
of English, whereas the majority of the remaining respondents were in possession of a Cambridge certificate (KET, 10.7%; PET, 24.1%; FIRST, 25.4%; CAE, 7.5%; CPE, 3.3%).

The majority of international students affirms having an advanced level or C1 (34.7%). 17.8% have an upper-intermediate level (B2); 5%, a low-intermediate level (B1); 3%, an A2 level; and 1%, an A1. Even though only 6.9% of internationals state having a C2 level, it is important to bear in mind that 31.7% are English native speakers. Hence, it is conceivable that over half of respondents (58.4%) do not have any Diploma or Certificate of their level of English.

Since local students never or rarely interact in English with other locals or internationals from Latin America (see Figure 3), the variability in interaction according to their level of English will be only applied to that occurring with non-native Spanish international students. In a similar line, international students tend to speak their mother tongue rather than English with peer students from their own country. Therefore, this type of interaction will be excluded in this analysis.

As it may be deduced from Figure 5, there is a direct relation between frequency of interaction and the level of English only in the case of locals’ interaction with international students. The tendency of interaction of local students with an A1, A2 or B1 level decreases as it implies major interaction. On the other hand, students with a C1 or C2 level show a rising tendency. Between these two groups, B2 students fluctuate in the frequency of their interaction with internationals. These statistics reflect that this group of students (B2) is the one it should be paid more attention to, for they are in the threshold of increasing their interaction or remaining unsociable towards internationals.
In the case of local students, the more proficient they are in English, the more they interact with internationals. Contrary to this trend, international students’ mastery of English does not lead to a greater interaction with other internationals or locals. Other variables will be explored in Section 3.3.3 so that it may be spotted what factors favour interaction with other students beyond their primary group.

Regarding ‘membership in an international student association or Study Abroad provider’, it is not possible to conclude that it has a direct impact on the frequency of interaction of its members. Even more interesting than the relation between this variable and frequency of interaction is the fact that 65.8% of locals are not members of any of them because they do not know about them. A more effective promotion of this sort of association could be beneficial for all parts involved: locals, internationals, and associations themselves. International students seem to be more aware of this kind of
organisations since only 15.8% ignore their existence. However, in spite of knowing about them, 39.6% of internationals are not a member of any of them. Among the various choices international students can make, Erasmus Student Network and its Buddy Program are the preferred ones (39.6%). Local participants opt for AEGEE (5.2%).

**Figure 6. Frequency of interaction depending on membership in International Student Association**

![Graph showing frequency of interaction](image)

3.3.2. **Specific variables for local students**

Some features in local students’ routine and experiences may lead to a variation in their willingness to interact with international students. This study will take into consideration the lodgement locals dwell in during the academic year, for it may explain why students remain close to their acquaintances and do not interact with people out of their primary group. Likewise, the fact of having been on a mobility program may make
students more sensitive to international students’ situation and, therefore, given to interact with them to a greater extend.

Since Spanish universities tend to recruit undergraduates in a regional or even provincial scale, the vast majority of local students live at home with their families (70.4%). The other housing options are sharing a flat with other locals (19.9%) or with locals and internationals (1.6%), renting a dormitory in a student residence (2.9%) or living on their own in an apartment (2.6%).

Figure 7. Local students’ frequency of interaction depending on accommodation

Figure 7 proves that local students follow the same pattern when interacting with internationals regardless of their place of lodgement. Analysing the figures in detail, the highest ranges of interaction of students who live in their family homes oscillate between ‘rarely’ and ‘occasionally’. However, there are almost as many respondents in this category who always interact with internationals (17.1%) as those who occasionally do (17.8%). The different types of accommodation show the same trend as those who
dwell in their family homes, being students who live on their own the ones whose rate of interaction in relative terms is the highest (‘always’, 37.5%).

As mentioned above, previous sojourn experience may lead students to be more open to interaction with other internationals. Out of the 307 polled local students in Q1, 265 (86.3%) have never undertaken any studies abroad. Such high percentage could be expected since 54.7% of respondents do not fulfil the requirements to apply for a mobility program in their degrees because they are still in their first or second year as undergraduates (a minimum of 60 ECTS before applying is mandatory). Nevertheless, a non-mobile majority still remains that could not get to contact international students if the University of Alicante did not host them.

**Figure 8. Local students’ interaction depending on previous sojourn experience**

![Graph showing interaction levels](image)

It is worth of note a slight increase in interaction when local students have studied abroad thanks to a mobility program, especially those who undertook an Erasmus+ mobility program (29.5% of students having taken part on an Erasmus+ program always interact with internationals). Nonetheless, the results are not conclusive enough to
determine if previous sojourn experience may influence local students’ frequency of interaction. For instance, 20.7% of the non-mobile locals rarely interact with internationals, whereas 17.1% of this group of students always does.

3.3.3. Specific variables for international students

It is necessary to consider different variables that may provide an explanation to the factors that encourage international students to interact with other international and local students. Some of these variables are the cultural affinity internationals may share with the target group and their level of Spanish, so it enables them to establish a fluid conversation with locals.

Among the great variety of international students reported in this study, it may happen that there is only one student from a specific nationality. Although it would be misleading to establish a single case as something paradigmatic, it is possible to assemble international students’ cultural and linguistic background in different groups, such as Eastern European countries, Western European countries, Asian countries, English-speaking countries, Hispanic countries, etc. In doing so, some relevant conclusions may be drawn.

The groups of international students who interact the most, both on campus and outside of it, with peer students from their own country are European respondents from Greece (‘always’, 100%), Norway (‘always’, 50%; ‘usually’, 50%), and the Netherlands (‘always’, 40%); and American respondents (‘always’, 38%). Regarding internationals who interact to a lesser extend with students from their same country, it is troublesome to determine whether their low frequency of interaction occurs willingly or it is due to the fact that they are the only ones from those countries. These are the nationalities of the students who stand in the lowest ranges of interaction: Nigerian (‘never’, 100%), Bulgarian (‘never’, 66%) and Brazilian (‘never’, 33%)
It is likely that the type of interaction that occurs to a greater extend is that among international students from different nationalities. Within this category, Austrian and Norwegian respondents are placed on top in terms of frequency of interaction among European countries. Nations from the American continent such as Canada, Peru and Brazil are also among those who interact the most with other international students. Finally, Japan stands out among Asian countries in this respect. As previously presented in Figure 4, the amount of internationals who never interact with other internationals on campus is barely 3% of the total. Nevertheless, that number increases outside of campus. In deed, 100% of respondents from Iceland, Belgium, Russia, Nigeria, Palestine and China never interact with other international students out of the academic context.

Notwithstanding the fact that internationals rarely or occasionally interact with locals, there are some students from certain countries that stand over the average as far as frequency on campus is concerned. These students come from Palestine (‘always’, 100%), Peru (‘usually’, 100%), Greece (‘usually’, 50%), the Netherlands (‘usually’, 40%), and Brazil (‘usually’, 33%). On the opposite side of the spectrum, 57% of British students rarely interact with locals on campus, 50% of students from Ukraine rarely do, and 28% of Finnish.

After analysing the frequency of interaction in relation to the provenance of each international student, it seems problematic to identify a specific tendency in a group of students with similar cultural and linguistic background. Contrary to what it could be expected, respondents whose mother tongue is related to Spanish, such as Portuguese, Italian or French, do not interact more frequently with locals than others from a more distant background.

International students’ level of Spanish may be the key factor when it comes to establishing contact with locals. Although there is no linguistic requirement in Spanish when applying for a mobility program to the University of Alicante, several
internationals have a basic knowledge of the language before arrival. While 11.9% of polled internationals admit having no notion of the language (level A0, beginners), 17.8% of students affirm having an A1 level, 20.8% of them an elementary level (A2), 15.8% a B1, 20.8% an upper-intermediate level (B2), 5% have a C1 and the remaining 7.9% states being native or close to it (C2).

Once international students arrive in Alicante, they have the chance to undertake a course in the Spanish language along other international students. However, 25.7% of respondents chose not to enrol in any of these courses. On the other hand, about a tenth of internationals (11.9%) applied for an A1-level course, most of them belonging to that 11.9% of beginners in Spanish, but also students who had affirmed having an A1 before arriving in Spain. The most demanded course is the A2 level (21.8%), followed by the next level in the CEFR (‘B1’, 18.8%). The higher their level of Spanish is, the less students apply for courses of that language. Only 9.9% are taking a B2 course and 3% a C1-level course.

Figure 9. International students’ interaction depending on level of Spanish
Figure 9 shows the relation between international students’ level of Spanish and their frequency of interaction with locals. Scarce as this interaction may be, a good domain of the local language, that is, having a B2 or C1 level, does not guarantee an increased interaction with them.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

The research findings show that local students never or rarely interact in English with Spanish native speakers, even though the linguistic situation demands using English. However, when it comes to interacting with international students, a wider range of interaction can be found. One of the factors directly influencing this type of interaction is the level of English of local students. A better domain in this language results in a higher frequency of interaction with internationals. Special attention should be paid to home students with a B2 level in English, since this group remains in the boundaries of interacting in a greater extend. Contrary to their level of English, the housing option of local students does not have a direct impact on interaction, not even when they share a flat with internationals or live in a student residence with other internationals.

The results also make clear that there is a non-mobile majority who do not participate in any mobility program. Thus, policies implementing the Internationalisation at Home should be promoted. One of these policies could be the promotion of International Students Associations on campus, to which the vast majority of locals (65.8%) remain quite oblivious at the present time.

The highest frequency of interaction from the international students’ side occurs among internationals from different nationalities. Interaction with local students has been proved to be scarce, 60.3% of polled international students rarely or occasionally interacting with them. The variables explored in this study to determine the factors influencing this interaction have not resulted relevant. Thus, neither language and
cultural affinity, nor a higher level of Spanish, have a connection with the frequency they interact with locals on and outside of campus.

Further research exploring different variables could be beneficial to better understand what factors motivate interaction. Other limitations this project has faced had been time and resources. Only a selection of subjects offered in the spring semester has been included. A more holistic research with institutional support that might comprehend the totality of EMI subjects at the UA could result in a guide of recommendations to implement interaction among students in this academic context. In doing so, surveys or semi-structured interviews designed to gather teaching staff’s insight would contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon.
References


Appendixes

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for local students (Q1)

Cuestionario para estudiantes locales

A. PREGUNTAS SOCIODEMOGRÁFICAS

1. Sexo
   a. Hombre
   b. Mujer
   c. Otro/a

2. Edad
   a. 18-21 años
   b. 22-25 años
   c. 26-30 años
   d. +30 años

3. Tipo de alojamiento durante el curso académico
   a. En mi hogar familiar
   b. En residencia cerca del campus (habitación individual o compartida con estudiantes españoles)
   c. En residencia cerca del campus (habitación compartida con estudiante internacional)
   d. En estudio o piso yo solo/a
   e. En piso compartido con otros estudiantes españoles
   f. En piso compartido con otros estudiantes internacionales
   g. En piso compartido con otros estudiantes españoles e internacionales
   h. Otro:

4. Facultad
   a. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
   b. Escuela Politécnica Superior
   c. Facultad de Educación
   d. Facultad Cc. Económicas y Empresariales
   e. Facultad de Ciencias
   f. Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud
   g. Facultad de Derecho

5. Grado que está cursando actualmente:

6. Curso
   a. 1º
   b. 2º
   c. 3º
   d. 4º
   e. 5º

7. ¿Qué nivel de inglés crees que tienes según el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas?
   a. Principiante (A1)
   b. Básico (A2)
c. Intermedio bajo (B1)
d. Intermedio alto (B2)
e. Avanzado (C1)
f. Nativo o casi nativo (C2)

8. **Indica si tienes alguno de los siguientes certificados de inglés:**
   - No tengo ningún certificado oficial de inglés
   - KET
   - PET
   - FIRST
   - CAE
   - CPE
   - BULATS
   - IELTS
   - TOEFL
   - Titulo de la Escuela Oficial de Idiomas
   - Otro/s:

9. **Indica si formas parte de alguna de las siguientes asociaciones estudiantiles internacionales o programas de intercambio lingüístico en la UA:**
   - No formo parte de ninguna pero las conozco
   - No formo parte de ninguna porque no las conozco
   - ESN
   - AEGEE
   - CIEE
   - ALI
   - USAC
   - CCS Spanish Studies Abroad
   - CEA
   - Language Tandem – CSI
   - Otra/s:

10. **¿Has participado en algún programa de movilidad para estudiar en el extranjero?**
    - No, en ninguno
    - Sí, en un programa Erasmus+ (países Unión Europea)
    - Sí, en un programa de Movilidad Global (movilidad No Europea: Asia, América, etc.)
    - Sí, en el programa Iberoamérica Santander (países de Hispanoamérica)
    - Sí, en programas afiliados a la UA (USAC, CIEE, etc.)
    - Sí, otros:

B. **INTERACCIÓN LINGÜÍSTICA EN LA UA:**

11. **Indica en qué medida estás de acuerdo con estas afirmaciones, siendo (1) totalmente en desacuerdo, (2) parcialmente en desacuerdo, (3) neutral, (4) parcialmente de acuerdo, (5) totalmente de acuerdo.**
    a. Siempre sé qué decir cuando interactúo con gente de otras culturas
    b. Puedo ser tan sociable como quiera cuando interactúo con gente de otras culturas
    c. A menudo me siento desmotivado cuando interactúo con gente de otras culturas
d. No estoy dispuesto a unirme a un debate grupal con gente de otras culturas

12. Indica con qué frecuencia te relacionas en lengua inglesa con las siguientes personas:
   a. Estudiantes locales (estudiantes no internacionales)
   b. Estudiantes internacionales (nativos de inglés)
   c. Estudiantes internacionales (nativos de español)
   d. Estudiantes internacionales (nativos de otras lenguas)

   a) Nunca
   b) Raramente (10%)
   c) Ocasionadamente (30%)
   d) La mitad de las veces (50%)
   e) Frecuentemente (70%)
   f) A menudo (90%)
   g) Siempre

13. Indica si has participado o participas en algún trabajo de clase en inglés con estudiantes internacionales (más de una opción es posible)

   o NO he participado en grupo en inglés con estudiantes internacionales en clase
   o He participado en grupo en inglés con estudiantes internacionales para PRESENTACIONES
   o He participado en grupo en inglés con estudiantes internacionales en TRABAJOS ESCRITOS
   o He participado en grupo en inglés con estudiantes internacionales en ACTIVIDADES DE CLASE (ejercicios, juegos, etc.)
   o He participado en grupo en inglés con estudiantes internacionales en OTRAS SITUACIONES

14. En tu opinión, ¿en las clases impartidas en inglés qué motivos te llevan en ocasiones a emplear el castellano/valenciano en lugar del inglés? Puedes marcar más de una opción.

   o La mayoría en clase somos españoles/valencianos, por lo que la mayoría me va a entender
   o Me da vergüenza hablar en inglés en público
   o Las actividades de clase no fomentan que nos comuniquemos en inglés
   o Si el profesor se dirige a mí en castellano/valenciano, yo contesto en la misma lengua
   o Me resulta un poco difícil hablar en inglés porque a veces no sé cómo decir lo que pienso
   o Me resulta extraño hablar en inglés con compañeras/os que conozco porque siempre hablamos en castellano/valenciano; es la costumbre.
   o Por otras razones:

15. En tu opinión, ¿qué barreras has encontrado a la hora de conocer e interactuar con estudiantes internacionales? Puedes marcar más de una opción.

   o El entendimiento es difícil debido a mi bajo nivel de inglés y/o su bajo nivel de español
   o Los estudiantes internacionales no parecen estar abiertos a conocer estudiantes locales
   o No ha habido muchas ocasiones de interactuar en clase
   o No suelo asistir a las clases con estudiantes internacionales
   o Soy una persona tímida
   o El entendimiento es difícil debido al bajo nivel de español de los internacionales
   o Suelo relacionarme con los mismos compañeros en clase por costumbre desde inicio de carrera
   o Otras

16. Por favor, escribe algún comentario, idea o sugerencia respecto a la interacción entre estudiantes españoles e internacionales en el campus desde tu experiencia (pregunta opcional)
Appendix 2. Questionnaire for international students (Q2)

International Students’ Questionnaire

A. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS
1. Sex
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other
2. Age
   a. 18-21 years old
   b. 22-25 years old
   c. 26-30 years old
   d. +30 years old
3. Nationality:
4. Country of home university
5. Mother tongue/s (bilinguals from birth can tick more than one option):
6. What is your Mobility program (international program)?
   a. Erasmus+ (exchange EU students)
   b. Non-Erasmus program (exchange students from America, Asia, Africa, Australia & New Zealand)
   c. Affiliated programs (visiting students: USAC, CIEE, Spanish Studies Abroad, CEA, ALI, CSI, etc.)
   d. Free-movers
   e. Other mobility programs:
7. Name of the course(s) taken in English at the UA:
8. Check your English level before arrival at the UA
   a. A0 (Beginners)
   b. A1 (Basic)
   c. A2 (Elementary)
   d. B1 (Low-intermediate)
   e. B2 (Upper-intermediate)
   f. C1 (Advanced)
   g. C2 (Proficiency)
   h. English native speaker
9. Check your Spanish level before arrival at the UA
   a. A0 (Beginners)
   b. A1 (Basic)
   c. A2 (Elementary)
   d. B1 (Low-intermediate)
   e. B2 (Upper-intermediate)
   f. C1 (Advanced)
   g. C2 (Proficiency)
   h. Spanish native speaker
10. Do you have any official Diploma or Certificate of English? (You may tick more than one option):
   a. KET
   b. PET
   c. FCE
   d. CAE
   e. CPE
   f. IELTS
   g. TOEFL
   h. TOEIC
   i. BEC
   j. BULATS
   k. Other:
      l. I do NOT have any Diplomas or Certificates of Competence in English

11. Are you taking a Spanish language course at the UA (CSI)? What level?
   a. No because I am a Spanish native speaker
   b. No but I am NOT a Spanish native speaker
   c. A1
   d. A2
   e. B1
   f. B2
   g. C1

12. Please, indicate if you are a member of any of the following student associations or language exchange programs (you may tick more than one option):
   a. ESN (Erasmus Student Network) - Buddy Program
   b. AEGEE
   c. USAC
   d. CIEE
   e. Spanish Study Abroad
   f. ALI
   g. CSI - Language Tandem
   h. Other:
      i. I am NOT a member of any of them, but I know of their existence
      j. I am NOT a member of any of them because I don't know about them

B. LANGUAGE INTERACTION AT THE UA
13. Which was your motivation to choose your class/es in English at the UA? (You may tick more than one option):
   a. I cannot speak or understand Spanish (starters)
   b. My Spanish skills are not strong enough to take a complete course (classes, exams, etc)
   c. I was worried about my final grade/s if I took my classes in Spanish
   d. I find it easier to take my class/es here in English rather than in Spanish
   e. This class and credits transfer to my home university
   f. I get certified a specific level of English by taking this course in English
   g. I am interested in the contents of this class in English
h. I want to improve my English skills
i. My home coordinator recommended me to choose this class in English
j. My UA coordinator recommended me to choose this class in English
k. I liked the timetable of my class/es in English
l. Other motivations:

14. How often do you interact with the following students ON campus (in class, cafeteria, breaks, etc.)?
   a. Peer students from your own country (same or different universities)  
      1) Never
      2) Rarely (10%)
      3) Occasionally (30%)
   b. Other international students from different countries
      4) Sometimes (50%)
      5) Frequently (70%)
   c. Local students (Spanish)
      6) Usually (90%)
      7) Always

15. How often do you interact with the following students OUTSIDE of campus (city, bars, cinema, sports, etc.)?
   a. Peer students from your own country (same or different universities)  
      1) Never
      2) Rarely (10%)
      3) Occasionally (30%)
   b. Other international students from different countries
      4) Sometimes (50%)
      5) Frequently (70%)
   c. Local students (Spanish)
      6) Usually (90%)
      7) Always

16. Which language do you mostly use when you speak with Spanish students? (you may tick more than one option):
   a. Only English
   b. Only Spanish
   c. Mostly English but some Spanish
   d. Mostly Spanish but some English
   e. Other language/s
   f. I do not interact with Spanish students

17. In your classes, do you work together with local students in assignments such as papers, oral presentations or class activities?
   a. I had no group presentations or papers in my class/es
   b. I only worked with peer students from my own country
   c. I worked mostly with other international students from different countries (not with Spanish students)
   d. I worked in groups only with Spanish students
   e. I worked in groups with Spanish and also with international students
18. In your opinion, what barriers did you encounter to meet and interact (more) with local students at the UA? (you may tick more than one option):
   a. Understanding was difficult because of my low level of Spanish
   b. Understanding was difficult because of their low level of English
   c. Local students do not seem to be very open to meet international students
   d. I am a shy person
   e. Not many chances were provided to meet local students in my classes
   f. I am more interested in interacting with other international students
   g. I do not usually attend class/es with Spanish students
   h. Other:

19. Are you satisfied with the interaction (on and outside of campus) with local students at the UA?
   a. Not at all satisfied
   b. Slightly satisfied
   c. Moderately satisfied
   d. Very satisfied
   e. Extremely satisfied

20. Please, feel free to make any comment or suggestion about interaction between local and international students at the UA from your own experience. This question is optional

Appendix 3. Detailed information about number of students in EMI subjects
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<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
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<th>Subject</th>
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<td>Archeology of ancient societies</td>
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<td>3</td>
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