

# The spread of multilingualism in higher education and its repercussions for language for specific purposes

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## Abstract

At a time when multilingualism is spreading across university contexts all over the world, this article focuses on the major repercussions that the coexistence of different languages has on language for specific purposes (LSP). After analysing the interface between LSP and multilingualism, the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU is put forward as a very good case in point of how multilingual universities are endeavouring to face the many challenges that the multilingual turn entails. The article underscores the need to foster collaboration not only between content and LSP specialists, but also between LSP practitioners in different languages.

## Resumen

*La expansión del multilingüismo en la educación superior y sus repercusiones en las lenguas para fines específicos*

Nos encontramos en un momento histórico en el que el multilingüismo se está convirtiendo en una característica intrínseca de las universidades a lo largo y ancho del planeta, por lo que este artículo aborda las importantes repercusiones que la coexistencia de diferentes lenguas conlleva para la enseñanza de lenguas para fines específicos (LFE). Tras analizar la interacción entre LFE y multilingüismo, el artículo se centra en el caso de la Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU) a modo de ejemplo de cómo las universidades multilingües tratan de hacer frente a los diversos retos que este multilingüismo plantea. El artículo defiende la necesidad de fomentar la colaboración no solo entre especialistas de contenido y lengua, sino también entre el profesorado de LFE de diferentes lenguas.

## Introduction

Multilingualism has become a buzzword in education in general and in applied linguistics in particular in the last two decades and, albeit at a slower pace than at pre-university levels, its impact has also reached higher education. This can be illustrated by the increasing use of the term EMEMUS (English Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings), which has recently been popularized by Dafouz and Smit (2020), led by an unprecedented rise of multilingualism at tertiary level.

From a European perspective, European institutions have played a paramount role in the importance attached to multilingual learning, as they have bent over backwards to promote multilingualism in the continent since 1995, the year when the *White Paper on Education and Training* was published (European Commission, 1995). This initiative aimed at fostering the use of additional languages as means of instruction for future generations of students with a view to bolstering mobility, strengthening the internationalisation process and European identity among the younger generation, while linguistic diversity in Europe was underpinned. One of the main lines of action included in this document set forth the objective that all European citizens should develop proficiency in three European languages, in an attempt to stop foreign language learning from being a possibility only available to an elite. In the following years, the Commission of the European Communities (2008), in a document entitled *Multilingualism: An asset for Europe and a shared commitment*, invited “Member States and the other EU institutions to endorse the crosscutting policy framework for multilingualism” (p. 15). Universities in particular were asked to “equip students with strong language skills regardless of their fields of specialisation” (p. 10), because multilingualism enables university students to gain opportunities for landing a job and helps them build multilingual capital to enhance their careers.

When referring to the term multilingualism, the first stumbling block that needs to be overcome has to do with its multiple status and the many different meanings attributed to it (Franceschini, 2011). In this paper multilingualism is defined as the active use of more than two languages, a definition that is based on three main reasons. First, although a quick review of the literature in the field would confirm that the umbrella term “multilingualism” habitually includes “bilingualism”, the Latin prefixes “bi” and “multi” literally mean “two” and “many” respectively, which would lead

us to conclude that both terms should not be used interchangeably. Second, whereas it is rather habitual to use two languages equally well, this similar level of proficiency is more complex to achieve when three or more languages are involved. And third, researchers who delve into multilingualism and multiple language learning (Cenoz, 2013; De Angelis, 2007; Dewaele, 2010; Fox et al., 2019; Jessner, 2006) have recurrently underscored that there are significant differences between the learning of a second language and the learning of third or additional languages. In this vein, Jessner (2006: 13) bluntly concludes that “nowadays it is known that learning a second language differs in many respects from learning a third language.” Researchers also concur that bilinguals benefit from some advantages over monolinguals when it comes to learning an additional language, due to their wider experience as language learners and their more developed learning strategies based on their L2 learning practice, on which they rely to learn the L3.

At a time when multilingual practices are advancing across university contexts all over the world, this article aims to analyse how the spread of multilingualism at university affects language for specific purposes (LSP) by paying particular attention to a multilingual (albeit officially bilingual) university located in Spain. The main goal of this article is thus to underscore the benefits of building stronger ties between LSP professionals of different languages in multilingual university contexts.

## **The interface between multilingualism and LSP**

LSP is one of the many fields that are subsumed under the applied linguistics umbrella term. This research field that “originated in a need to teach academic reading and writing skills to undergraduates in different fields” (Mauranen, 2022, p. 7) has significantly expanded in recent decades and currently tackles many other communicative aspects alongside their psychological and sociological dimensions, ranging from the understanding of lectures to the development of oral presentation skills, to name but two. LSP explicitly connects learning the language in the classroom with using it in the academic and working spheres and the professions. The aforementioned spread of multilingualism entails different challenges that still are far from having been met in most higher education institutions. As Siemund (2023, p. 244) puts it, “Most of the world currently appears to be

converging on some bilingual or trilingual model in which English plays a crucial role.” The strong presence of English in many education systems all over the world has substantially contributed to this multilingual situation, and this has clear repercussions for LSP teaching, as future professionals need to develop some form of multilingual repertoire to remain competitive and functional in our current globalised world.

As a result of multilingual language policies, graduate and undergraduate students find themselves needing to get acquainted with the specific language of each of the different languages used as medium of instruction in their institutions. However, since its inception in the 1960s the LSP field of research has tended to be mainly constrained to English, to the extent that it was first established as a discipline as English for specific purposes (ESP) (Hall, 2013; Sánchez-López, 2013). The titles of two of the most prestigious journals in the field (*English for Specific Purposes* and *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*) also seem to attest to this and, in fact, they have set the course for the LSP research field irrespective of the language concerned. Although languages other than English (LOTEs) are also used in LSP courses, such as German (see Byrnes, 2013) and Spanish (Pastor Cesteros, 2022; Sánchez-López, 2013) courses delivered in colleges and universities in the United States and Spain, there is little doubt that English remains hegemonic in the LSP field of practice and research.

Against this Anglocentric approach to LSP, the current multilingual universities demand a much larger language scope and the LSP domain ought to include LOTEs. Moreover, new approaches to language teaching propose pedagogical practices that regard students’ linguistic repertoires as a resource rather than a problem. Different authors (Hibbert & van der Walt, 2014; García & Wei, 2014; Lasagabaster & García, 2014) defend the need to discard the traditional view of multilingualism where the different languages in contact become separate entities. Conversely, they propose a more open and flexible view aimed at fostering the synergies of the languages in contact, rather than avoiding their simultaneous use. The different languages of instruction should thus not be seen as competing but rather as a complement to each other, which is why LSP practitioners should foster the continuous flow between languages by designing tasks in which all the languages are seen as an asset. But translanguaging practices should not be limited to the movement among linguistic repertoires and should also include multilingual and multimodal sign-making practices to scaffold content learning in multilingual classrooms (Tai, 2022). An additional asset

can be found in the fact that research indicates that translanguageing often becomes an essential component of content teaching rather than simply a practice reserved for socio-affective purposes (such as establishing rapport) or classroom management (Genc et al., 2023).

LSP students have to become acquainted with the specialised language and norms of each disciplinary culture, so that they become able to produce spoken and written products that comply with the discipline concerned. The need to scaffold the transition from everyday to scientific language requires students to be exposed to many examples of the typical discourse of each discipline in their different languages, so that they eventually succeed in participating effectively in multilingual academic or professional communities.

With this in mind, the officially bilingual Spanish higher education institutions merit attention, as they are a very good case in point of the efforts exerted to provide LSP not only in English but also in LOTEs.

## **The Spanish context**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the end of Franco's dictatorial regime (1939-1975) led to the 1978 Constitution which, apart from being the basis of a return to democracy, acknowledged all the minority languages spoken in Spain that had traditionally played second fiddle or none at all in many social spheres, including education. The advent of democracy facilitated autonomous governance of different regions, which was accompanied by the launch of campaigns for literacy in regional languages in order to reverse the language shift. Since the main minority languages (Basque, Catalan and Galician) acquired co-official status with Spanish in 1978, efforts to revive these languages have been made, as well as to design language planning to counteract minority language loss.

Not only have European institutions been concerned about the development of foreign languages during the last three decades, but they have also worked for the protection of minority languages. In fact, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages came into force in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to promote historical minority and regional languages (although the decision to consider a language regional or minority lies in the hands of the national states). Despite the fact that the Charter has changed basic conditions for the better for several minority languages, some

voices consider that these initiatives have mainly been limited to paying lip service to European minority-language diversity while visible results are conspicuous by their absence. It is evident that the situation has improved in the last few decades, but in many European countries there is still a lack of appreciation of their internal linguistic and cultural diversity. We could take France as an example, since it signed the Charter in 1999, but it has not yet ratified it and, therefore, it has never come into effect because the French Constitutional Council decided to censor part of the Molac Law on the protection and promotion of regional languages. This rejection was based on the grounds that the teaching of regional languages through immersion is unconstitutional, as the French Constitution reads that the language of the Republic is French, which implies its exclusive use in education. Other countries such as Spain, however, have boosted the normalisation of minority languages to a greater degree, which has resulted in decentralised educational systems at both pre-university and university levels in which multilingualism has become the norm rather than the exception. In fact, minoritised language-medium education is seen as a lynchpin in language revitalisation strategies.

The co-official status of minority languages has led to their use as a means of instruction at university. In addition, and as a result of the rapid spread of English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes, universities have seen the proliferation of a multilingual curriculum in which different languages (the minority language, Spanish and English) are used to teach content. These bilingual regions have also included other foreign languages (e.g. French and German) to a lesser extent and have ended up putting together multilingual policies (Cots et al., 2014; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013). The internationalisation process has thus forced these bilingual universities to strike a balance between the reverse language shift process and the need to be part of the globalised higher education environment and to respond to its linguistic pressures (Cots et al., 2016).

From an international perspective, the multilingual situation in Spain will help to inform LSP, as most studies in the field tend to focus on English while disregarding minority languages. Spain's multilingual language policies may thus contribute to opening new research agendas in LSP, since the types of academic multiliteracies that these multilingual university settings have implemented are well worth looking into. To take a couple of examples outside Europe, let us briefly focus on the tips of the African continent. Morocco is a multilingual nation in which Arabic and Tamazight are official

languages, while the languages of the university system are French and Arabic. However, Moroccans use the Moroccan variety of Arabic (known as Darija) in their everyday life and the local student body is also made up of speakers of Tamazight and Spanish (particularly in the northern regions closer to Spain). An increasing number of students are also taking EMI courses, as in recent years there has been wide support for replacing French with English (R'boul, 2022). In South Africa, many universities implement dual instruction in Afrikaans and English, while they also develop materials in local African languages for study support (van der Walt, 2013); in the same way, students at the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona use Catalan to clarify English concepts, their plurilingual repertoires acting as a resource in classroom interaction (Moore & Dooly, 2010). These are very good examples of how widespread multilingualism is at tertiary level, although all too often it remains hidden and underresearched.

A multilingual person possesses different languages in their linguistic repertoire, some of them being more active whereas others are less often used. The term *Dominant Language Constellation* (DLC) was coined and discussed by various authors (Aronin & Singleton, 2012; Lo Bianco & Aronin, 2020) to make reference to the particular languages which are sufficient to live in a multilingual environment during a particular period of time (Aronin, 2022). Although the linguistic repertoire of a multilingual speaker may include skills in many different languages, a DLC encompasses only those that are most active, which tend to be “typically three languages that together ensure the performance of the functions of human language. These would often be a local language, a country’s official language and an international language” (Aronin 2022, p. 160). The DLC concept, therefore, nicely fits in with contexts such as Spain in general, and the case of teachers and students at the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU in particular.

## **The Basque context**

In this part of the paper I will focus on the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC henceforth), because its situation clearly determines the reading for the Basque speaking community as a whole. It has to be considered that, with the exception of a few courses at the Université du Pau et des Pays de l’Adour, Basque is hardly present in French universities, and

its presence in the two universities in Navarre is much smaller than is the case in the universities located in the BAC.

The Basque language has historically been characterised by its minority status, surrounded by the two powerful and international languages Spanish and French. In the last 40 years the education system has played a paramount role in the process of making people Basque-speaking, and Basque universities have become key actors in the recovery of the minority language. Although they are the source of the next generation of Basque-speaking professionals, very little has been published in English about their linguistic situation, since most of the papers published in international journals and books zoom in on pre-university levels (Cenoz, 2008). Basque higher education institutions obviously have a role of paramount importance in the normalisation of the minority language, since they have to face the Basquisition of their different degrees with a view to providing society with Basque-speaking graduates ready and prepared to use the language in all social spheres.

There are three universities in the BAC, all of which are officially bilingual in Basque and Spanish, having in addition striven to foster EMI programmes. The three universities are: the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU, Deusto University, and Mondragon University. The UPV/EHU is the largest of the three and the main research institution in the BAC, which is why special heed will be paid to this institution in order to analyse the links between LSP and multilingualism.

## **A case study: The University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU**

The UPV/EHU is the only public university in the BAC and currently has over 45,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and 5,600 lecturers and researchers, more than 60% of whom are qualified bilingual teachers in Basque and Spanish, while 1,330 are accredited to teach in a foreign language. The UPV/EHU has played a paramount role in the standardisation of the Basque language, a process that involved the unification of a small but dialectically very diverse language, resulting in a standard form that was rapidly embraced by Basque society in a short period of time compared to many other standardisation processes (Salaburu, 2015). As a result of this commitment to bolster Basque language and culture, 98%

of compulsory subjects at the BA level are offered in Basque and, in 2020, 64 PhD dissertations were written and defended in Basque.

LSP courses in Basque are available in many degrees and teachers receive the support of the *Institute for the Basque Language* (*Euskarako Institutoa/Instituto de Euskara*), which was founded in 1996. The Institute's main objectives include the development of lexicon and scientific terminology while helping to spread the use of Basque in the professions, since future professionals should be able to carry out their jobs in the two official languages. Among many other tasks, the Institute is also responsible for the following open access resources:

- The Basque Grammar Online: An open access grammar that is continuously updated.
- The Corpus of Contemporary Basque: It contains more than 355 million words drawn from books and newspaper articles published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- The Observatory of Linguistic Calques, which encompasses semantic, lexical-syntactic, morphological, morphosyntactic, discursive level, phraseological and other types of calques.
- The Comparative Corpus: This is a corpus made up of texts translated into four languages: Basque, Spanish, English and French. It includes 171 books totalling more than 51 million words.
- The “Classic of Thoughts” Corpus: It consists of 130 books totalling 10.7 million words.
- Zio Corpus: A collection of texts published by the UPV/EHU that contains some of the most important scientific texts of the world translated into Basque and aimed at standardizing scientific language in Basque. This collection covers many fields of knowledge and the translations are meant to serve not only the academic community but also anyone interested in science. This application offers the public both the original language versions of these texts and their Basque translation in order to enable any user to access scientific terms in their original contexts.
- Legal Corpus: This is a specialised corpus based on legal and academic texts which contains 7.2 million words collected in 595 documents. It is updated every year.

- Patterns of Frequency in the Basque Lexicon: This online application offers the public the opportunity to search for the frequency of structural patterns in the Basque lexicon.
- Dictionaries: Among others, this tool provides open access to dictionaries such as the dictionary of contemporary Basque, a Spanish-Basque dictionary, a legal dictionary, and the dictionary of Basque literature.
- Online teaching materials: Through this tool, teaching materials in a wide variety of different degrees are available online and specialised terms can be found in their context of use.

Alongside the courses in Basque and Spanish, the UPV/EHU launched its so-called Multilingualism Programme (MP) in 2005. The main objective of this programme is to enable students to take subjects in English (only a few courses are taught in French). Among the goals of this programme, I would like to highlight the one that makes reference to the need to improve local students' English proficiency while providing them with *specialised language and access to research in the foreign language*. It is also worth mentioning that EMI teachers are required to hold a C1 level on the European Framework of Reference for Languages. The implementation of this multilingual language policy results in some core subjects having three groups (one in each language) from which students can choose the language in which they wish to take a specific subject in. Nowadays, more than 800 subjects are taught in English and 21 master's programmes are entirely or partially delivered in English. Some 340 courses (called *English friendly courses*) delivered in Spanish also include their teaching guide and programme outline in English, and office hours and exams (among other activities) can also be completed in English. These courses are aimed at international students taking part in exchange programmes who have some command of Spanish, but prefer to use English in some particular situations, such as an exam, because they do not feel proficient enough to carry it out successfully in Spanish. The UPV/EHU has also designed a plan to offer EMI subjects in various degrees amounting to 30 credits so that students have the necessary number of courses to earn an EMI mention in their specialisation.

The UPV/EHU currently offers 107 degrees in 20 faculties, the range of degrees being very varied and comprehensive. When it comes to LSP, the presence of Basque for specific purposes (BSP) and ESP/EAP courses varies significantly depending on the degree under consideration. For

example, there are several BSP courses in the Journalism degree, three in the Law degree, two in a few degrees (i.e. Architecture, Biology), one in quite a few degrees (e.g. Psychology, Geology, Creation and Design, in different degrees in the field of Engineering, Philosophy, Business Management, or Nautical and Maritime Transport), and none in many others (such as Dentistry, Chemistry, Medicine, Pharmacy, Sociology, Physiotherapy, or Food Science and Technology). Although the majority of the BSP courses in Journalism are compulsory, this is exceptional because in all the other degrees they are optional.

The same variability can be observed with regards to ESP/EAP, albeit with a smaller presence in most faculties, as the degrees range from one course (e.g. Architecture, History, and Nautical or Maritime Transport) to none (e.g. Biology, Business Administration, Chemistry, Geology, Psychology, Food Science and Technology, Labour Relations and Social Work, Medicine, Philosophy, or Sociology). In the case of ESP/EAP, all the courses are optional except for the ESP course in History. It is interesting to note that the degrees with the highest number of EMI courses are the ones where there is a lower number of ESP/EAP courses, with the exception of the degrees in the field of Engineering, where ESP/EAP courses are common (but just a single course). This lack of LSP is especially significant in the field of Business and Economics. Last but not least, the only degree entirely taught in English (Double Bachelor's degree in Business and Economics) offers neither BSP nor ESP/EAP courses. A second degree (Biomedical Engineering) entirely taught in English will be launched in the 2024/25 academic year, but nor does it contemplate offering any ESP/EAP course. The conclusion to be drawn is therefore that the spread of EMI has pushed LSP out.

## **LSP and the multilingual challenge**

One of the risks that the rapid spread of EMI entails is that university authorities and those in charge of designing the different degrees believe that, by simply exposing students to EMI courses, LSP will be learnt by osmosis. Research has recurrently shown that EMI lecturers focus their classroom discourse almost exclusively on content, while episodes on language are conspicuous by their absence (Airey, 2020; Arnó-Maciá & Mancho-Barés, 2015; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2022) and tend to be related to

comprehension breakdowns (Lasagabaster, 2022a). As a result of this widespread teaching practice, EMI students receive little LSP support and are usually left to work out the rules of the subject discourse by themselves. Nevertheless, EMI stakeholders assume that through EMI their English proficiency improves (especially subject-specific English) without having any significant detrimental effect on content learning, but this is just an impressionistic feeling (Arnó-Maciá & Aguilar-Pérez, 2021). This has even led institutions to doubt the necessity of ESP professionals: EMI programmes are seen as fierce competitors that challenge their function and relevance in this new context (Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019; Dafouz, 2021), in which exposure to English is augmented via content courses.

The discussion about whether English should be taught by ESP/EAP specialists or by subject specialists has often been put on the table (Basturkmen, 2019; Belcher, 2009). Interestingly, both EMI lecturers and students tend to believe that language issues should not be dealt with in content classes (Airey, 2020; Doiz et al., 2018 and 2019), while EMI teachers feel apologetic when tackling language issues (Martinez et al., 2021). Similarly, many researchers tend to “reject the notion that EMI should be regarded as CLIL [content and language integrated learning], because most of the practitioners find this impossible to imagine” (Breeze & Sancho Guinda, 2022, p. 189). Since the belief that language teaching falls outside the remit of EMI lecturers is deep-seated, LSP courses become fundamental to provide students with the linguistic support they need and demand.

But in order to achieve these aims, collaboration should reach LSP professionals and content teachers of the different languages. It is a truism that all content teachers are language teachers, irrespective of whether they are teaching in their L1, L2, L3 or LX. However, although “the role of content lecturers is to create disciplinary literate graduates” (Airey, 2020, p. 344), they reject viewing themselves as teachers of disciplinary discourse. It should be remembered that both EMI and LSP “have their *raison d’être* in disciplinary content, inextricably linked with their associated discourses and genres (which are seldom taught by content teachers)” (Sancho Guinda, 2023, p. 149).

This is the reason why the LSP teachers’ role becomes paramount, as they could support content lecturers when it comes to mobilising various linguistic and non-linguistic resources to make discipline-specific knowledge

accessible. Content teachers should rely on multilingual and semiotic resources and this requires collaboration and training. Doiz, Lasagabaster and Pavón (2018) found that EMI students would welcome assistance with technical vocabulary and demanded the support of language specialists not only with vocabulary but also with writing activities that they usually find challenging. In fact, they reported that when they had received such LSP support, the positive impact on their language output had been immediate. In particular, EMI students requested LSP professionals to help them with academic language in their compositions, pronunciation and preparation of oral presentations. They also saw this collaboration between content and LSP specialists as a motivational boost. LSP is characterised by its focus on students' needs (Basturkmen, 2023; Bocanegra-Valle, 2016), to the extent that Belcher (2009, p. 3) labels it as “a learner needs-based approach.” Its objective should thus be to work on the tasks and activities that students will carry out in the language concerned and, particularly, on those that students find more complex and demanding in their study settings (Flowerdew, 2019) and that will allow them to bridge the gap between current and target competencies.

## **Collaboration between LSP specialists in different languages**

Language plays a key role in shaping discipline specific knowledge and identity (Bond, 2020). The multilingual turn in education should also reach higher education and help to overcome the predominant parallel monolingualism that rules over language policies, norms and classroom practices, as in Nordic university settings examined in Kuteeva, Kaufhold and Hynninen (2020). On too many occasions the monolingual mindset permeates policies and documents, as can be seen in the document entitled *Competency Framework for Teachers of EAP* of the British Association of Lectures in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP, 2008), which does not include a single reference to multilingualism or multilingual resources in its taxonomy of EAP teacher competencies.

This is just an example of the dire need to promote collaboration not only between LSP and content teachers, but also between LSP practitioners in different languages. In her call to challenge cross-disciplinary boundaries, Dafouz (2021) stressed the need to build stronger bridges between EMI and

ESP/EAP, as I have just done in the previous section, but in this paper I would like to go a step beyond and underscore the benefits of cementing closer ties between LSP professionals of different languages if multilingualism is to be fostered. The affordances that such collaboration could bring to LSP professionals and learners should not be ruled out, because the learning of academic language and disciplinary literacies should include all the languages used in each context, that is, all the languages that are active in the DLC of a particular university setting. This holistic approach argues against only-one-language ideologies that research studies have unearthed in different university settings, be it in minority-language-medium instruction (Serna-Bermejo & Lasagabaster, 2022) or EMI (Breeze & Roothoof, 2021; Kim & Tatar, 2017; Sahan & Rose, 2021), while it calls for resistance against monolingual educational practices. As van der Walt (2013) points out, it is the dominant paradigms of foreign language teaching that are to be held responsible for the tradition of keeping languages apart.

This trend to stick to the language of instruction and maintain other languages outside the classroom is driven by the widespread belief that only immersive settings can help to fulfil language learning aims. The study by Serna-Bermejo and Lasagabaster (2022) in the UPV/EHU reveals that this monolingual mindset is found even in universities in which three languages are used as means of instruction, a context in which we might believe that multilingual teaching practices may be more likely to be accepted by stakeholders. However, research shows that not only are language policies based on a monoglossic lens unrealistic and potentially harmful, but they are also far from reflecting the realities of multilingual classes in the ever more internationalised university classrooms (see Paulsrud et al., 2021). Whereas the switch from one language to another is the natural behaviour in multilingual settings, it is frowned upon in formal contexts such as the university classroom, due to the top-down language policies that foster monolingual ideologies. In response to such linguistic constraints, translanguaging “proffers an ontological, epistemological and axiological shift in thinking about language use and bilingualism in the classroom” (Sahan & Rose, 2021, p. 3). In addition, this inter-language collaboration would help to make LSP teachers more aware of multilingual developments and more attuned to linguistic diversity and differences between languages.

This brings us to the *Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning* (PTDL) model proposed by Coyle and Meyer (2021). These authors state that, in order to achieve deeper learning across languages, there is a need to focus on the

development of disciplinary specific literacies. In this model deeper learning is defined as the successful internalisation of conceptual content knowledge and the automatization of subject specific strategies, procedures and skills, a process that rests on learner's acquisition of disciplinary literacies. According to these authors, pluriliteracies (defined as the promotion of disciplinary or subject specific literacies in more than one language) help to foster the development of a deeper conceptual understanding through the specific contents of the subject matter. In EMEMUS settings the successful implementation of such model demands the collaboration of the different language specialists, since learning cannot be separated from the different languages that make up students' linguistic repertoires. In multilingual universities, students' progression should be manifested via their ability not only to demonstrate understanding, but also to communicate knowledge in the university's different working languages, that is to say, their ability to tackle the DLC needed to succeed in their academic multilingual environment by promoting subject literacy development. As a matter of fact, although there is a lack of research in multilingual university contexts (Mazak & Carroll, 2017), studies seem to indicate that the adoption of plurilingual pedagogies brings ESP gains (e.g., Llanes & Cots, 2022).

LSP professionals thus need to adapt their teaching and materials to capture the particularities of each discipline in each language (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022; Kuteeva & Airey, 2014; Mu et al., 2015), despite their lack of training in materials development (Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019). This demands a turn toward multilingual and multiliteracy language tutoring (Gustaffson & Ganobcsik-Williams, 2016) which will help teaching staff and students to "value diverse language resources and academic experiences and thus echo discourses of democratisation and diversification" (Kaufhold & Yencken, 2021, p. 8). Unfortunately LSP teachers "may not be able to depend on the existing course designs and ready-made instructional materials in the same way that their colleagues" teaching the general language concerned may be able to do (Basturkmen, 2023, p. 3). More often than not, LSP teachers have to adapt materials or develop their own materials because they may find the available materials of little relevance to their students. Whereas there are many high quality available materials for ESP, teachers often have to supplement or adapt these materials due to the specialized nature of courses (Charles & Pecorari, 2015) and to increase authenticity and specificity (Belcher, 2009), a situation that is aggravated in the case of minority languages. Multilingual materials development becomes thus an

impending need. This is a complex task, as LSP professionals have to negotiate between students and subject specialists in different languages. That is why, ideally, LSP professionals should be competent in the different languages used as means of instruction in their institution and multilingual competence should be regarded as a merit when recruiting teaching staff.

Teacher collaboration could in any case help to overcome the multilingual hurdles stemming from the coexistence of different languages. However, Bocanegra-Valle and Basturkmen (2019) found that Spanish ESP teachers usually work on their own, they are frequently the only teacher for a particular subject (this is the case in the UPV/EHU, where there is only one ESP teacher in each faculty) and they miss the opportunity to talk to colleagues and share experiences, beliefs, drawbacks, achievements and challenges with them. In the UPV/EHU, if language barriers were eliminated, there is no reason why the ESP/EAP teacher could not engage in exchanges with the BSP teacher (who is usually also on their own in each faculty), as they will have many issues in common, while such collaboration would also help them to overcome feelings of isolation.

From an international perspective, ESP/EAP teachers could collaborate with LSP colleagues in other languages within their own institution, which would allow them to place greater emphasis on the use of multilingual teaching practices as a pedagogical resource. This inter-language collaboration could take the form of discussion sessions between LSP teachers in different languages in which they could reflect on ways of collaboration and make suggestions for joint work and how multilingual teaching practices could be modelled and implemented. It is worth noting that, as Breeze and Sancho Guinda (2022) point out, the fact of not belonging to the same department may even become an advantage rather than a hurdle: “If those people are not from their immediate department/area, this is sometimes better, because the deep rivalries that sometimes exist between close colleagues can hinder productive professional exchange” (p. 193).

In the case of students, they could easily become aware of the benefits of such multilingual teaching practices by making them reflect on the habitual multilingual demands in many (if not all) professions. In this vein, Duarte (2022) observed at a Dutch university that students’ attitudes towards using plurilingual approaches were positive, while the participants also believed that the affordances of plurilingual teaching practices outweighed the

constraints. We should not forget that an increasing number of students themselves come from multilingual contexts, that is, contexts in which more than two languages are spoken. This multilingual approach should be complemented by multimodal practices, as “everyday workplace literacies are complexly and jointly mediated by a complex array of languages, genres, actors, tropes, objects, media, and modes” (Fraiberg, 2018, p. 66).

Another possible course of action to bolster inter-language collaboration could be to rely on corpus research experts, who could work on different languages and try to provide support to LSP teachers. Therefore, research projects should encompass not only the ubiquitous English, but also other languages such as minority languages, which would enormously benefit from such collaboration. Multilingual glossaries would be the first need to spring to mind. The dictionaries available at the UPV/EHU and mentioned above only involve two languages and they are either Basque-Spanish or English-Spanish dictionaries, but none of them includes the three working languages at the institution. Although the current Basque-Spanish version must have been most welcome, there is no doubt that law students at the UPV/EHU would find it very useful to have the three languages in the legal dictionary at their disposal on the university’s website (Alberdi et al., 2022), since EMI courses are also part of their degree.

Multilingual universities should thus decide on what type of research is needed to develop the necessary multilingual materials for their students. At initial stages this ideal will obviously only be realised in small experiences, but with clear-cut mid-term and long-term objectives that should progressively move towards an increasing number of disciplines and materials. These small steps would undoubtedly help in the quest for linguistic democratisation, the institutional support for language ecologies and language diversity, and the achievement of language policies that would approach international and national languages (including the minoritised ones) on an equal basis.

## Conclusions

In this article I have tried to take LSP outside its Anglo-centric comfort zone, as multilingualism is becoming an ever more inherent feature of universities worldwide (Kuteeva et al., 2020). Nowadays one of the biggest challenges of higher education institutions is to tackle the coexistence of different languages and the place of all these languages in their linguistic ecosystem. But

multilingualism is not only about how to achieve a smooth coexistence of languages: it should also be about how to boost multilingual teaching practices. And LSP practitioners have a vital role to play in this respect.

Although there is scarce research focusing on the extent to which students' understanding of disciplinary concepts is influenced by minority-language-medium instruction and EMI, research does clearly indicate that language matters are not paid the attention they deserve (Airey, 2020; Lasagabaster, 2022a). This leads us to conclude that LSP courses, far from being redundant, are of the utmost importance, since the lack of training in the necessary specialist discourse can negatively affect students' learning of content matter.

Although the LSP field of research has traditionally been too often constrained to English or ESP/EAP, multilingualism represents nowadays not only a robust area of investigation but also an objective aimed at by both European institutions and universities. However, it is evident that there is the risk that the hegemonic position of English be camouflaged “behind a call for multilingualism” (Dafouz & Smit, 2020, p. 54). If our current undergraduates are to function effectively in academic and professional contexts, they must be enabled to carry out diverse tasks in the different languages required by their context. At university level, teaching staff usually work on their own and collaboration (whenever it exists) tends to be limited to the same language (Lasagabaster, 2018), but it is high time to take action. The multilingual turn demands collaboration from LSP professionals working in different languages, while LSP materials should also reflect the multilingual world we live and work in, rather than provide a monolingual approach to languages in which they seem to develop in watertight compartments. At a time when universities are becoming increasingly multilingual, attempts to impose monolingual practices “can only be seen as relics of a bygone era” (Hibbert & van der Walt, 2014, p. 4).

The big challenge ahead is therefore to cater for LSP in the national language, the minority language, English as the global lingua franca, and (if viable) in an additional foreign language. Although the languages to be included in *Dominant Language Constellations* (DLCs) (Aronin & Singleton, 2012; Lo Bianco & Aronin, 2020) will spark debates in many contexts, it seems beyond doubt that this is an issue that needs to be tackled by higher education institutions. Since English enjoys a higher status than the local languages in many fields, heated debates can be expected, as stakeholders

may feel that universities' language ecology is being jeopardized. In some contexts, as highlighted by R'boul (2022, p. 3), EMI is seen as a threat to the current "efforts for the decolonisation of the university in postcolonial contexts in the Global South", and this may also be the case in other contexts with minority languages in the Global North. A multilingual approach and the implementation of models such as the *Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning* (PTDL) (Coyle & Meyer, 2021) can help to smooth and defuse linguistic tensions, while societal and individual multilingualism is not ignored anymore. This balance between the local and the global poses one of the major challenges for universities, as multilingual students are still "seen mostly in deficit terms" (van der Walt, 2013, p. 130) in many universities around the globe.

The UPV/EHU has made a huge investment in developing Basque for Specific Purposes (BSP) and has enormously contributed to overcoming the perception that minority languages are not suitable for academic purposes, but the next step to be taken should consist in underpinning LSP from a multilingual approach. This is a task that all multilingual universities should embark on, as future graduate students will inextricably need such multilingual training. Multilingualism is here to stay and, at the micro-level, LSP professionals should start to take the multilingual bull by the horns and demand support from their institutions. At the macro-level, universities should produce multilingual speakers and writers who are able to rely on their multilingual resources in their future academic and professional endeavours. But this requires both pre-service and in-service professional development courses that boost the development of flexible multilingual pedagogies; however, most universities provide few or no teaching training courses whatsoever (Lasagabaster, 2022b). In fact, surveys reveal that LSP teacher training provision is very limited irrespective of the language concerned, whether it be the L1, L2 or L3 (Basturkmen, 2019; Ding & Champion, 2016), but if higher education institutions really aim at multilingual development, they could start by reversing this situation.

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