The integration of language and content in English-medium instruction courses: Lecturers' beliefs and practices

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Abstract

This paper investigates the challenges lecturers face in English-medium instruction (EMI) programs and explores their beliefs concerning possible collaboration with language specialists through team-teaching, an option which would offer linguistic support to teachers and students. We used data gathered from discussion groups involving lecturers at two Spanish universities. Results show that the main challenges EMI lecturers have to deal with relate to the specificities of teaching in a foreign language. EMI lecturers acknowledge that the benefits of collaborating with language lecturers could prove to be a valuable asset, its value outweighing any initial misgivings.

Keywords: EMI, content teachers, language teachers, team teaching, teachers' beliefs.

Resumen

La integración de lengua y contenido en los cursos de contenido en inglés: un análisis de las creencias y prácticas del profesorado

Este trabajo investiga los retos a los que se enfrentan los profesores que imparten clases de contenido en inglés y analiza las creencias de estos profesores sobre la colaboración con especialistas de lengua para proporcionar soporte lingüístico tanto al profesorado como al alumnado. Para abordar estas cuestiones se analizan datos recogidos por medio de grupos de discusión con profesorado de dos universidades españolas. Los resultados muestran que los retos a los que se enfrentan los profesores están ligados a las particularidades de la enseñanza en una lengua extranjera. Asimismo, el profesorado de contenido reconoce los

beneficios de la colaboración con profesorado de lengua, al tiempo que supera sus reticencias iniciales.

Palabras clave: programas en inglés, profesores de contenido, profesores de lengua, enseñanza en equipo, creencias de los profesores.

Introduction

English-medium instruction (EMI henceforth) could be defined as "The use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro, 2018: 19). EMI programs are spreading all over the world, a trend that is reaching even those countries which have traditionally been characterized by their monolingual language policies. This is, for example, the case of Japan, where over a third of the country's nearly 800 universities offer undergraduate EMI courses that largely serve "the needs of domestic Japanese students" (Brown, 2017: 151). The impact of the EMI tsunami is particularly noticeable in Europe, where the number of higher education institutions involved in EMI programs has been steadily increasing (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014; Valcke & Wilkinson, 2017). It is striking, however, that most European higher education institutions do not have any official EMI policy (an exception being found for example in Nordic countries; see Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012), and language requirements are not unified even in universities located in the same country (Lasagabaster, 2019; Weimberg & Symon, 2017). In a study carried out in Spain, Halbach and Lázaro (2015) observed an increase in the number of EMI courses offered, but the authors were also taken aback by the fact that only 1 out of 4 higher education institutions imposed a C1 level as a requisite for the lecturers involved in EMI and that very few universities provided methodological courses. This situation has consequently left many EMI practitioners with no option but to complain about the lack of institutional support (see Valcke & Wilkinson, 2017). The situation started to change in Spain after the publication of the Framework Document of Language Policy for the internationalization of Universities by the Board of Rectors of Spanish Universities (Bazo et al., 2017), where a linguistic accreditation for lecturers, students and administration staff is recommended, and a language program for these three sectors is delineated, but there is still a long way ahead.

Research studies reveal that the vast majority of EMI lecturers are concerned about content but not language (Dafouz, 2011; Airey, 2012; Costa, 2012; Aguilar, 2017; Lasagabaster, 2018) and do not consider language learning to be their responsibility (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013), while they also believe that language learning takes place in an incidental way in EMI contexts (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Pecorari et al., 2011; Lo, 2015; Weimberg & Symon, 2017). And this widespread belief is held despite the fact that one of the main concerns of EMI lecturers in Spain, the context of our study, has to do with EMI students' limited English proficiency (Dearden, 2014; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2014). Paradoxically, as Weinberg and Symon (2017: 136) point out, "whilst the teaching of courses in English seems to focus on content, the majority of EMI research tends to be initiated by language specialists exploring how to improve English proficiency in EMI frameworks, rather than by content experts", a clear indication of the fact that EMI simply implies a change in the language of instruction for most EMI content lecturers.

With this context in mind, the collaboration between language and content university lecturers comes to the fore as a possible solution to foster content lecturers' reflection on the role that language actually plays in their classes. Researchers concur that there is compelling need to foster collaboration between language and content specialists (Lyster, 2007, 2017) and that team-teaching will help to face the challenges of integrating content and language in higher education. In this vein, authors such as Lyster (2007) and Llinares, Morton, and Whittaker (2012), among many others, claim that content and language objectives should hold a complementary status by adopting a counterbalanced approach in which students' and lecturers' attention should be drawn to both content and language forms. Although team-teaching fosters lecturers' motivation and helps them to focus and reflect on their pedagogical practices (Hanusch, Obiojofor & Volcic, 2009; Lester & Evans, 2009; Trent, 2010; Baeten & Simons, 2014), it is not a widespread pedagogical practice and the number of studies available on this topic remains negligible.

The collaboration between language and content instructors has been a success at pre-university level (Pavón et al., 2014), but it is very hard to find at tertiary level (Carpenter, Crawford & Walden, 2007; Valcke & Wilkinson, 2017). In fact, in higher education institutions interdisciplinary lecturer communication has traditionally been scarce, as both language and content specialists are inevitably influenced by their disciplinary culture (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014; Brown, 2017) and tend to live in two worlds apart.

Research questions

With this complex university setting in mind, in this research study we strove to delve into content lecturers' beliefs about the implementation of a team-teaching experience. Our objective was twofold; firstly, we intended to gather information about the main problems EMI lecturers face in their everyday teaching practice and, secondly, to unveil their opinions about team-teaching. These objectives led us to the following specific research questions:

> Research question 1: What are the main challenges that lecturers involved in EMI programs have to confront?

> Research question 2: What are EMI lecturers' attitudes towards the implementation of a team-teaching program aimed at fostering language and content lecturers' collaboration?

The study

The context

This study was undertaken in two Spanish universities that have taken the plunge and decided to foster EMI: the University of the Basque Country (UBC) and the University of Córdoba (UCO). The UBC is a medium-sized university located in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) and in which both Basque and Spanish have been official languages since its inception in 1980. In an attempt to boost its internationalization process, the UBC launched the so-called Multilingualism Program (MP) in 2005. The MP is aimed at continuing at university level the trilingual programs already in place at pre-university level (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2011), so that local students' proficiency in a foreign language and their work and career prospects are improved. It is also designed to facilitate students' pursuit of postgraduate degrees abroad and to attract foreign students and teaching staff.

In the MP students can choose to study compulsory subjects in Basque, Spanish or a foreign language (e.g. English, French). Due to the leading role of English as a lingua franca and the characteristics of the Basque educational context, English reigns supreme on the MP and in fact 97% of the courses are delivered in English, while only 3% are taught in French. The program has been growing very rapidly since its inception and it currently encompasses around 1 300 students and over 400 qualified teaching staff

who had the necessary official language qualifications to teach on the program (C1 proficiency level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

The UCO is one of the nine public universities to be found in Andalusia. It is an officially monolingual university and it can be regarded as a small university: 18 000 students, 1 400 lecturers and 750 administration personnel. The UCO fostered the implementation of EMI programs in the 2014/15 academic year with a view to strengthening the internationalization process. The program launched at the UCO advocates an internationalization process founded on developing a language policy in which languages are viewed as essential for training students for a globalized world, attracting international students, and enhancing the international profile of universities (Bazo et al., 2017).

At the UCO 100% of the courses on the EMI program are delivered in English. EMI programs amount to 4% of the courses on offer and EMI lecturers are requested to have earned a B2 plus teaching experience in EMI or a C1 certificate. One of the distinctive features of this program is that due to the shortage of qualified lecturers to offer studies in English in some areas, the focus is also on building EMI itineraries of 30 credits ECTS, that is to say, a number of classes amounting to 30 credits which are taught entirely in English within various disciplines. In this way students have a reasonable amount of EMI courses to choose from, although they are expected to enroll in all of them in order to get an EMI mention in their degree. Another particularity is an interest in equipping lecturers with specific skills for EMI, and the UCO offers a training program to provide the teaching staff with essential knowledge and techniques.

The participants

The sample was made up of 13 EMI lecturers who were teaching three different degrees: History, Education and Veterinary Science. For the sake of anonymity, lecturers are identified by means of a number. As can be seen in table 1, their teaching experience was 18 years on average, whereas they had less EMI experience (three and a half years) due to the recency of EMI courses in both institutions. Table 1 also provides information about their language abilities: whereas the UCO participants were bilingual in Spanish and English, all but one of the UBC teaching staff were multilingual and their foreign languages included French and Italian, in addition to English (the languages are listed in order of self-reported proficiency).

EMI Lecturer	University	Degree	Languages	Teaching experience	EMI experience
T1	UBC	History	Spanish/English	21	5
T2	UBC	History	Spanish/English/Italian	30	2
T3	UBC	History	Spanish/English/French	30	2
T4	UBC	History	Spanish/Basque/English	16	1
T5	UBC	History	Spanish/Basque/English/ French	26	6
T6	UCO	Education	Spanish/English	24	6
T7	UCO	Education	Spanish/English	8	4
T8	UCO	Education	Spanish/English	9	6
T9	UCO	Education	Spanish/English	8	4
T10	UCO	Veterinary	Spanish/English	17	3
T11	UCO	Veterinary	Spanish/English	14	2
T12	UCO	Veterinary	Spanish/English	20	3
T13	UCO	Veterinary	Spanish/English	15	2

Table 1: Main features of the participants.

It is worth mentioning that lecturers need to certify their language proficiency in order to be able to participate in EMI, whereas students do not have to comply with any linguistic requirement (they are expected to have reached at least a B1 level of competence at pre-university level). The latter take part in EMI courses on a voluntary basis.

Data collection and analysis

Three focus groups were organized in the two participating universities, two of them at the UCO and the remaining one at the UBC. The focus groups were carried out in Spanish because this was the participants' L1 and therefore the language chosen for the discussion of the topics under scrutiny. The researcher chairing each group followed the same guidelines, which included a series of open questions revolving around the two research questions (the participants' opinions about the main challenges in EMI and their attitudes towards team-teaching). The discussions were recorded by the authors of the study. A research assistant based at the UBC provided the verbatim transcriptions of the recordings (40 956 words) which were then translated by the three authors of the study after transcription.

For the data analysis, the three participating researchers followed descriptive and analytic coding procedures with notes for categorization and analytic understanding, working to reconcile any differences until they reached a shared interpretation. Qualitative coding is inherently interpretive and involves continuous interaction and re-reading of the data by comparing and contrasting themes so that the researchers discover patterns in the data (Baralt, 2012). In order to achieve this, during the coding process different keywords were manually identified by each of the researchers of the present

study in the teachers' interventions as reflected in the transcripts, then compared and, finally, generally the noun forms of the most repeated and representative ones were selected. Later, these keywords were grouped under conceptual labels or broad themes (e.g. teaching in a language which is not your L1, weaknesses in the L2, evaluation of the form, collaboration with a language specialist in EMI, implementation of a language teacher's help, etc.), so that they could be successively categorized to address the two research questions. Seven categories were agreed on: teaching in a foreign language, the impact of English on the development of the classes, the students' language skills, focus on form, views on collaboration with language teachers, the profile of the language lecturer and the implementation of the collaboration. The coding procedure was designed to analyse the transcriptions precisely and to minimize the risk of overlooking important categories, which is why it was firstly carried out by each researcher individually and then shared by all three until a consensus was reached.

The results

Table 2 contains the keywords relevant to the first research question, namely, the main challenges faced by the lecturers teaching in EMI and the three categories under which they are subsumed: *teaching in a foreign language, the impact of English on the development of the classes,* and *the students' language skills.* For ease of identification the keywords and their related words are provided between inverted single commas in the main text (e.g. 'limitations', 'limited', although just one of the words – usually the noun form or the most representative word form – is included in the table).

Keywords	Categories
Limitations, vocabulary, pronunciation, detail, spontaneity, insecurity, self-imposed standard of excellence	Teaching in a foreign language
Students' proficiency, student heterogeneity, self-selection, feedback, slow down, participation	The impact of English on the development of the classes
Speaking, writing, reading, listening/native speaker, pronunciation, embarrassment	The students' language skills

Table 2: The main challenges faced by lecturers teaching in EMI.

The discussion groups revealed that *teaching in a foreign language* has three main consequences for our participants. Firstly, lecturers noted a significant reduction in the 'vocabulary' they can rely on (quote 1), an issue of great relevance particularly in humanities where the form is as important as the

message itself (the original quotes, which were in Spanish, have been translated into English):

(1) I am aware that as I go through the door in my class in English, my vocabulary goes from 5 000 to 1 000 words. In the classes in humanities like ours, this is an important problem because suddenly you see that you are much more 'limited' than in Spanish. (T.His.1)

Similar results have been found in the Scandinavian context. Thus, Pecorari et al. (2011: 66) reported that in Denmark the surveyed teachers agreed that "they sometimes could not find the words they needed" (see also Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012, for the Swedish context).

Teaching in a foreign language also conditions the degree of 'detail' in the explanations provided by the lecturers. Thus, there is an inverse correlation between the lecturer's English language competence and the depth of the explanation or the degree of the 'detail' in the information provided: "You are never going to go into the same depth into a subject; you will not provide those in-depth nuances or 'detail'" (T.Hist.2). In addition, in Veterinary Science one of the participants (T.Vet.4) found the 'pronunciation' of technical vocabulary particularly challenging and she sometimes also felt unsure of the corresponding English form of specialized Spanish expressions, which made the preparation of her classes difficult.

Secondly, and related to the first consequence associated with teaching in a foreign language, most of the lecturers, regardless of their discipline, noted that their communication skills are reduced as they are unable to paraphrase the same idea in different ways in English (quote 2), something they could easily do in their L1. Consequently, the array of resources that is available to them to make their message clear to their students is more 'limited'. In addition, their capability to be 'spontaneous' or improvise is also affected, reducing their chances of establishing a good rapport with the students (quote 3):

(2) In Spanish I could say it in five different ways in order to make them understand, or to give them examples. When I am speaking in English, however, this ability is very 'limited'. I just say it in one way. (T.Edu.1)

(3) I think that I lose 'spontaneity' and freshness and I feel a kind of a barrier that is not there when I teach in Spanish because it is

more difficult to connect with the students when the language is not your own. (T.Edu.2)

Similarly, in the Nordic context, the use of more formal language similar to the textbook style, the occurrence of more repetitions in the L2 and the adoption of a slower pace were also observed in the lecture given by a Danish experienced lecturer in English (the L2) in a study conducted by Thøgersen and Airey (2011) and cited in Airey (2012).

Thirdly, some lecturers feel a sense of 'insecurity' when they are lecturing in English. This feeling results from the lecturers' awareness of their formal and rhetorical 'limitations' and their desire to do a good job (T.Edu.4). This weakness puts our highly experienced lecturers in an uncomfortable situation.

The *impact of English on the development of the classes* (the second category) is felt in a number of ways. First and foremost, it conditions students' 'participation' which is admittedly rather low even when the students' L1 is used, a practice common to students in many Spanish universities. The lecturers try to encourage students' 'participation' and engagement by (i) downplaying the importance of accuracy and stating that they also make language 'errors', just like the students, (ii) emphasizing the importance of being able to convey the message over the form, and (iii) creating a relaxed atmosphere in class (quote 4):

> (4) I think that the key element is to relax the atmosphere. This is, perhaps, the first didactic tool we have. (T.Vet.5)

The differences in the 'students' English proficiency' level also condition and hinder the development of the classes. Lecturers observe significant differences among their students' competences and skills in English, complicating their teaching practice.

However, according to some lecturers, 'student heterogeneity' seems to be levelling out as a result of student participation in bilingual programs in secondary schools and extra-curricular activities directed at learning English. Furthermore, the effects of student limited skills in English are counterbalanced by the process of student 'self-selection' (i.e. they signed up for the EMI voluntarily) (quote 5) and the students' bilingual habitus in the UBC (quote 6).

(5) I think they make quite a strict 'self-selection'. Furthermore, I think that there are more students that could come to the classes in English but do not dare. (T.Hist.5)

(6) And then they have a very important thing … a very good thing which I think comes from their 'bilingual habit', right? They would come into the class in English and they expected/assumed everything to be in English. So even when you were leaving the classroom, they would chase you down the hall in English. A monolingual speaker does not do this. A monolingual speaker changes to his mother tongue as soon as he can, at the slightest opportunity. (T.Hist.1)

The lecturers try to minimize the impact of English on their lessons by making sure that the students are following what they are explaining in the class. They seek students' 'feedback' constantly in order to overcome possible breaches of understanding and 'slow down' the pace of their lectures as necessary (quote 7).

(7) I am explaining a topic, a procedure or it could be anything and then I look at their faces, the faces tell a lot. Then I explain the same thing again, and in addition, I ask for their constant 'feedback', because it is a constant 'feedback' of "did you get this?", "is this clear?", "do you understand this?" And I repeat the explanation and repeat it as many times as necessary. (T.Vet.2)

The third category within the challenges faced by the lecturers teaching in EMI corresponds to *the students' language skills*. Not surprisingly, students fare better in the receptive skills of 'reading' and 'listening', which are more passive than the productive skills. They seem to have good 'listening' skills (T.Hist.1), although understanding may be impaired when the speaker is a 'native speaker' (T.Vet.5).

By contrast, students find the productive skills of 'speaking' and 'writing' most challenging, which according to some of the lecturers may be due to the traditional methodology employed in EFL (quote 8) where grammar received the main focus and little practice of oral skills takes place, personal traits (quote 9) as well as students' 'embarrassment' to talk in English (quote 10):

(8) They have a non-existent capacity for expression, mainly for 'spoken' language, but not only that. That is to say, we have learnt the languages to receive, to 'read', and this is the case with Spanish as well, that is to say, here we do not practice and on top of that there are their fears. So I know that it is very hard to do presentations, for example. I know that I am going to ask for volunteers and that there won't be any. (T.Hist.5)

(9) The 'spoken' part is hard for some of them. It is also a question of personality, and I believe that personality traits also 'limit' them in their 'speaking'. (T.Hist.3)

(10) and then, above all, the Spanish are 'embarrassed' to talk among themselves in English. (T.Vet.5)

The students' 'writing' skill is also impaired in English although this problem may not be restricted to the foreign language as lecturers frequently observe that students need to improve their academic 'writing' not only in English, but also in their own L1: "the 'writing'… but they also have difficulties with the 'writing' in Spanish", (T.Hist.2) (see Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012, for similar results).

The second research question, namely, the lecturers' stance regarding the possibility of a collaboration program between content and language lecturers, is approached with the identification and analysis of the keywords subsumed under four categories: (i) *focus on form:* the importance of paying attention to language aspects in their classes; (ii) *views on the collaboration with language lecturers:* their positive or negative stance toward the possibility of collaborating with language lecturers; (iii) *the profile of the language lecturer*: whether the team lecturer should be a language or content specialist; (iv) and *the implementation of the collaboration*: how this collaboration should be carried out (table 3).

Keywords	Categories
Content/language lecturer, grammar, limitations, time, understand/communicate, content, form, error, assessment, be afraid of	Focus on form
Enthusiastic support, positive, fantastic, fear, need, quality teaching, EMI, CLIL; language lecturer vs. content lecturer	Views on collaboration with language lecturers
Language knowledge, knowledge of similar field	The profile of the language lecturer
Benefits for students, benefits for lecturers, time, embarrassment, useful, additional pressure, online, change of methodology, non-generic	The implementation of the collaboration

Table 3: The lecturers' stance regarding the possibility of initiating a collaboration program between content and language lecturers.

The analysis of the participants' responses reveals that the lecturers attach very little importance to the 'form' as their main interest lies in the 'content' (the first category of *focus on form*). Hence, none of the lecturers focuses on the 'formal' aspects of students' productions in English (quote 11):

> (11) I think that the key element is to explain clearly to the students that they need to talk, that it does not matter what they say [here what the teacher means is *how correctly the say it*], that they can say whatever they can … And that they should not be quiet. (T.Vet.5)

In fact, the lecturers go to some lengths to explain to their students that the 'formal' aspects of their speech, i.e. whether they make perfectly 'grammatical' sentences in English, are not important. For instance, in order to downplay the importance of 'form', some lecturers admit to making language 'errors', thereby sharing the idea with the students that they all face the same difficulties and that it is all right. In line with this view, lecturers inform their students that the 'formal' aspects of the written and oral 'assessment' tasks are not taken into account. They do not penalize language or 'grammar' 'errors' and they only pay heed to 'errors' when the student has made some type of basic 'error' that needs to be addressed to ensure a minimum standard in the class (T.Hist.3).

By contrast, all the participants in the discussion groups emphasized the importance for the students' to be able to 'communicate' a message, to be able to make themselves 'understood' and not to 'be afraid' of making 'errors' (quote 12):

> (12) Well, you tell them that, in the English class, we are trying to get them to 'communicate', to be able to 'communicate' in English and that they should not be 'afraid' of making 'errors', that we all make 'errors', but if they let the 'errors' get to them, then they are lost. I don't fool them though, and I tell them that they have to 'communicate' but they have to try to make sentences which are as correct as possible, but I tell them not to be 'afraid', and they respond well. (T.Hist.4)

In general, the only time in which attention to 'form' is provided is when new technical vocabulary needs to be introduced: "I do not deal with 'grammar' in my case, what I do try is for the students to acquire specific

'vocabulary', technical 'vocabulary' on different subject-matters, which is the main advantage of choosing this subject, I think" (T.Vet.1).

The most important reason for the lack of the lecturers' attention to the 'form' is the fact that the participants remain adamant in the belief that teaching English is not one of their responsibilities. In fact, as many of our participants stated, they do not perceive themselves as 'language lecturers' (quote 13) (see Airey, 2012, for a similar view):

> (13) I am not a 'language lecturer'. At the beginning of the course I tell them that "the main objective is not to learn English, although you will. That is to say, I want to be able to 'understand' what you write." (T.Hist.5)

The second reason for the participants' avoidance of attention to 'form' is the lack of the necessary training to teach languages. It should be borne in mind that these lecturers have never taught English in their careers and do not necessarily have the training or the knowledge to deal with language issues. However, even if they were in a position to tackle language-related issues in class, some of the lecturers argue that they would not have enough 'time' to teach both 'content' and 'form'. Moreover, they also draw a line between EMI (English medium of instruction) and CLIL (content and language integrated learning) (quote 14):

> (14) One cannot say that my methodology is CLIL. I am more inclined to do EMI and the 'time' available has a lot to do with that because I would be completely overwhelmed otherwise. I think that we do not have enough 'time' to do anything. Time is an important constraint in the choice of the methodology. (T.Edu.4)

This lecturer's reference to CLIL does not come as a surprise, as these programs have become very popular in Spain and they are often mentioned in mass media. Since the integration of language and content is usually highlighted in CLIL, this lecturer wants to make it clear that such integration does not take place in his courses.

Lastly, another argument put forward by the lecturers not to focus on 'form' is their belief that prospective students may be discouraged from enrolling in their classes if they are made too conscious of their language 'limitations' through the focus on 'form'. Consequently, they only deal with vocabulary

issues when there are no correspondences between the English and Spanish forms, but 'grammar' and other language-related issues are not addressed in their classes (quote 15):

> (15) I give importance to the 'content' and the specific 'vocabulary'. In fact many times we have discussed terms that are not the same in English and Spanish. And I do not pay a lot of attention to the 'grammar' because otherwise they would not feel encouraged to enroll in the English itinerary for the Spanish students. (T.Vet.4)

The analysis of the second category Views on *collaboration with language lecturers* reveals that in general the lecturers assess the possibility of working together with language lecturers in a very positive manner. They point out the potential benefits both for students and for themselves, and stress that this collaboration could be fruitful and make a relevant contribution to the quality of the lessons (quotes 16 and 17):

> (16) It can definitely be very positive and can help enhance the lessons. I think that the students would like this; they would like to feel that they have extra support. (T.Hist.5)

> (17) Yes, I think it's a perfect proposal. That's the way it should be. We have to admit that we are not using our mother tongue and we have certain limitations. Having the possibility to be assisted by a language specialist seems essential to me in order to contribute to carrying out quality teaching. (T.Hist.3)

This positive attitude could be because of a greater need to verbalize knowledge in humanities than in scientific and technological fields (Airey, 2015; Kuteeva & Airey, 2015). However, lecturers from the latter areas agree that collaboration with language specialists would certainly be profitable and add that this kind of support could be offered not only in the classroom but also outside, offering assistance to lecturers while, for example, preparing the lessons. Lecturers would really appreciate having the opportunity to ask about linguistic problems and suggest that this help may be provided as an online resource (T.Vet.1).

But, there are also concerns, especially with respect to some possible emotional drawbacks for both the lecturer and the students who may

experience some type of nervousness or insecurity, if the language specialist is present during the lecture (quote 18):

> (18) It looks all good to me but I have to recognize that the presence of another lecturer in the classroom gives me a sense of… also considering the students, huh? And maybe a bit for myself, I don't know. It may produce a bit of apprehension… I have this little fear; I don't know how it would work in practical terms. (T.Hist.2)

As regards the third category drawn from the data, *profile of the language*, we can detect two different views with respect to the characteristics of the lecturer providing linguistic assistance in the classroom. On the one hand, lecturers suggest that rather than being assisted by a lecturer who is only a specialist in the language, it would be necessary that this lecturer had some knowledge of the content being covered in the lessons, and that it would even be more beneficial if the language team-lecturer were a specialist in the area as well (quote 19):

> (19) Considering all the possibilities, beyond the sole participation of a specialist in the language, I would find very useful that this lecturer is as close as possible to the knowledge area I am teaching. I would be happy if a Veterinary lecturer from an English speaking university could come to my classes. And if he/she were teaching a subject similar to what I teach, that would be extremely helpful (T.Vet.2)

This is interesting as lecturers also have in mind the possibility of collaborating with native English-speaking content lecturers who are specialists in similar areas. The idea would then be that these native lecturers provide linguistic assistance as a model, but not as an instructor. The students would benefit from being in contact with 'authentic' English specific to the content areas, but they would only receive indirect correction in the form of simple feedback or maybe repetition when they are interacting.

On the other hand, there are lecturers who believe that as students do not know much of the content material either, what they need is someone to help them understand the content, in other words, a lecturer who can offer linguistic support and not only a specialist in the area (quote 20):

(20) I agree with him (T.Vet.2), that would certainly be very useful, but there is also another question because if a lecturer from a different field comes to your classroom and he/she understands you, this means that the students understand you, too. Thus, it's not only that lecturers from your area will understand you better because they are more connected, no, they will help you with the most specific and technical vocabulary, but a lecturer who does not know much of the content, who sits in your classroom for some minutes and may understand you or not, they may tell you "hey, that was not comprehensible", "you've got to express it differently", "better this way", or "emphasize that". If you manage to make a person or a student who does not know much (about the topic) understand it, your goal is already achieved. I think that the interesting thing is that this person is a specialist in the language and not only an expert in the area. (T.Vet.5)

The opinions of the lecturers regarding the last category under scrutiny, *the implementation of the collaboration*, run in line with many of the positive beliefs already mentioned but in this case the lecturers go into depth, foreseeing the challenges and rewards of collaborating with language specialists. The possibility that language specialists could perform team-teaching during a certain amount of time in order to cover previously established or emergent linguistic problems is seen by the lecturers as a quite profitable initiative, mainly because the language specialist is particularly qualified to tackle these problems.

Another aspect highlighted by the lecturers is that the help provided by the language specialist should be planned with the objective of subserving the specific necessities in their different areas (quote 21):

(21) It would be more interesting if it were connected to what we are actually doing and not perceived by students as something generic for the class, don't you think? Errors they make constantly, or maybe, I don't know, for example one thing that comes to my mind, they have problems with presentations. And then issues related to History, it would be good, for example, to deal with old English. Because in History we frequently use texts and sometimes they are texts from the 17th, 18th centuries. (T.Hist.5)

Notwithstanding the favorable opinions above, lecturers believe that the implementation of this help has to be administered with caution due to, for example, the consequences of a possible reduction of their own time in the lesson (quote 22):

> (22) …provided it does not mean shortening my time in the lesson (laughs). This is crucial to me, but in principle, yes, I would do it. It could be an important help, and another factor of evaluation for the lecturer, but well, after having done team-teaching with English lecturers I don't feel an additional pressure. (T.Edu.4)

Others add on the argument that it would mean a reduction of their own time, and that the time used by the language specialist would put more pressure on their daily performance (quote 23):

> (23) I would like to do that but it worries me. It worries me because the contents in English have to be simplified. Students have to be taught the same content as in the lessons in Spanish, if we remove more minutes, my doubt is that we could not do that every day because I would not have the time to teach my content. (T.Vet.4)

In order to try to solve this problem, the lecturers suggested introducing virtual language support for students as an alternative, to compensate or offset a lack of time resulting from the presence of the language specialists (quote 24):

> (24) That's why it could also be provided through a virtual environment, online for students and for lecturers so that it does not take up time in the lesson. (T.Vet.2)

All in all, the lecturers are picturing with their comments the difficulties involved in teaching in another language and paying parallel conscious attention to the use and development of the language. They are fully aware that there are significant differences between teaching academic content by merely changing the language of instruction (EMI) or teaching the content material and at the same time attending to language use (CLIL) (quote 25):

> (25) This is why I was saying that we should set out the collaboration in a different way. Because now it is not only a question of teaching the content … it is content and language. (T.Vet.3)

As for the linguistic areas that the lecturers consider to be suitable targets for this kind of support, we found conflicting opinions with respect to the relevance of the different linguistic skills. Maybe because of the different general linguistic level of the students or maybe due to the time and interest devoted by the lecturer to regularly presenting activities related to particular skills, there are some noticeable opposite views, particularly regarding listening skills (see Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012, for same findings) (quotes 26 and 27):

> (26) I'd say that for my students listening is their best capacity, they are strong in it. I play videos and they easily understand 80%. They have more difficulties, I think, with writing. (P.His.1)

> (27) Listening maybe is their main problem when the speaker is native, if it is us who speak, we speak slower and our pronunciation is not perfect, they will understand almost everything for sure, with a native lecturer they may have problems. (T.Vet.2)

Finally, there is one aspect of the language in which all the lecturers concur and which is by far the most problematic: pronunciation. Not only due to the difficulties linked to the pronunciation of native speakers, but also because the lecturers perceive their pronunciation problems as one of the most significant issues to be resolved in their lessons (quotes 28 and 29):

> (28) For us, speakers of Spanish, pronunciation is the most difficult aspect, but I think that it is highly important. There are sounds that I cannot produce and there are words that I've never been able to pronounce correctly. It is easy when you listen but I cannot produce them. Well, it is important to try to improve as much as possible. Then it is important to cover everything. (T.His.4)

> (29) For us it is really difficult to find out how to pronounce correctly every word. And when you come across technical terms, you tend to pronounce them in a Spanish fashion. Then I do find it important. (T.Vet.4)

Conclusions

Both lecturers and educational authorities are becoming aware of the difficulties that EMI programs involve and the implications of transmitting complex academic material to students whose command of English is limited (Contero, Zayas & Arco, 2018). There is growing interest in establishing the factors that can make these programs successful and, more particularly, what measures should be adopted to cope with language issues (Dafouz, Hütner & Smit, 2016; Nikula et al., 2016; Bazo et al., 2017). With this in mind we aimed to investigate the challenges that lecturers have to face when teaching academic content in a foreign language on EMI programs. We also wanted to explore their beliefs and perceptions about the possibility of collaborating with language specialists through team-teaching as one of the possible options to linguistically support both teachers and students.

Analysis of the lecturer's responses in relation to the first RQ posited reveals that, in line with other studies in the same context (Rubio & Moore, 2018), the lecturers are preoccupied with the challenges resulting from using English to transmit content, both for the students and for the lecturers themselves, in three specific areas: *teaching in a foreign language*, *the impact of English on the development of the classes*, and *the students' language skills*. With regard to the difficulties associated with *teaching in a foreign language*, the lecturers did not hesitate to point out their own insecurity as one of the most negative factors. Their inability to deal with language problems (as also observed in the Swedish context (Airey, 2012); the Italian context (Costa, 2012); Catalonia (Spain) (Aguilar, 2017); and Andalusia (Spain) (Rubio & Moore, 2018)), the greater amount of effort demanded by having to prepare the lessons in English, the tiredness produced during the lesson resulting from teaching in a foreign language and in certain cases a lack of experience in EMI, seem to lessen their self-confidence and can also result in a noticeable emotional handicap for some of them. As a consequence, the lecturers stressed the need for training in the most relevant EMI skills in order to perform successfully in their classes.

With respect to *the impact of English on the development of the classes*, our participants clearly established a direct relationship between the students' command of the language and the quality of the lessons: the lower this proficiency is, the harder it is for the lecturers to perform comfortably. This was considered the biggest reason for the reduction in the quantity and quality of what they taught in class. As regards *the students' linguistic skills*, all

the participants concurred and underscored the wide difference in students' language skills as the main reason for slowing down the pace of their lessons (Dearden, 2014; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2014). The lecturers also complained that, due to a general non-ideal command of the language, the smooth flow of lessons was interrupted by having to introduce frequent instruments to check students' understanding, such as paraphrasing. Together with the problems directly stemming from the student's proficiency in the foreign language, the lecturers also highlighted that the students generally had problems with oral production because of lack of habit in using the language orally in front of other students. In fact, the fear of making mistakes in front of other students constituted their worst limitation and frequently ended up in embarrassment and inhibition. As an automatic and genuine response to this problem, lecturers indicated a need to reduce tension by lessening the importance of mistakes made by students. Thus, one of the keys to promoting a relaxed atmosphere is to help students lose their fear of making mistakes, and they also stressed that one of the lecturer's main roles should be to behave as a linguistic facilitator who tries to support students when they face linguistic problems rather than as an instructor (focused on linguistic accuracy).

As for the second RQ, we can conclude that they show a positive attitude towards the possibility of implementing a team-teaching program (see Lasagabaster 2018 for a discussion about how to implement such programs), a general feeling that has been itemized in several different categories: *focus on form*, views on c*ollaboration with language lecturers*, *the profile of the language lecturer*, and *the implementation of the collaboration*. In terms of how much attention to form should be paid by the lecturers, the answer is unanimously simple; they declare that they are content lecturers, not language lecturers (Dafouz, 2011; Airey, 2012; Costa, 2012; Aguilar, 2017; Lasagabaster, 2019). They believe that the most important goal in teaching in English is communication and that the students' use of the language should not influence the evaluation provided they are able to understand and be understood. The assumption is that their target is to teach academic content, which means that they are more prone to participate in EMI programs and not so much in any other program in which they have to pay heed to language (such as CLIL, in which language objectives are explicit and should be addressed). However, this feeling is not the product of a rigid positioning, but rather the result of acknowledging that they are not qualified to do so and that they do not normally have the time to worry

about it. Concerning the lecturers' opinions about *collaboration with language lecturers*, this is an area which may bring positive results and help enhance the development of the language of the students (Gustafson et al., 2011). In this study, it has to be noted that they generally judge the possibility of collaboration as a promising initiative that could help students perform much better in the classroom, specifically in the development of academic literacies (Arnó-Macià & Mancho-Barés, 2015). This positive attitude has, however, its caveats because of the existence of several potential problems, such as a necessity to clarify the characteristics and dynamics of the collaboration (Lasagabaster, 2018) because of its innovative nature for both students and lecturers (Carpenter, Crawford & Walden, 2007), the possible reduction of time in the lessons, and the need for additional resources (mainly online).

As far as the discussion about *the profile of the language lecturer* is concerned, two opposing views were expressed in our groups, with some arguing that the best support would be provided by an English-speaking lecturer who is also a specialist in the area, whereas others believe that the linguistic necessities of students demand that the team-teacher just needs to be a language specialist, mostly in the form of a ESP specialist (Räisänen & Fortanet, 2008; Arnó-Macià & Mancho-Barés, 2015; Basturkmen & Shackelford, 2015). This difference of opinion possibly arises from the lecturers' own personality, the field of study (History lecturers do not even mention this issue), and students' command of the foreign language. In situations where the students' English proficiency is high, the lecturers focus more on the specific academic language, whereas when students' English command is a bit lower, the participants believe that a specialist in the language would foster students' language use. With respect to the last of the categories, *the implementation of the collaboration*, as reported in other studies (Contero, 2018), our participants agree that assistance from a language specialist is a promising proposal, but they also warn against potential negative effects, especially related to the anxiety and additional pressure that this might put on content lecturers and, once again, to time constraints. Identifying the linguistic areas on which the collaboration should focus is a relevant aspect according to the focus groups' responses. As stated earlier, attention to oral production is a must for the lecturers in EMI, but later on their comments also indicated that some effort should be invested in increasing the students' listening and writing abilities. Nevertheless, there is a linguistic aspect that all the lecturers recognize as imperative in the

classroom, namely, pronunciation, and more specifically, the mispronunciation of keywords and ideas, which they perceive as a hindrance in EMI lessons. That said, they also declare that the first objective should be to surpass the level of intelligibility, having pronunciation as an ally to make concepts and ideas intelligible and not as a source of frustration in an unrealistic attempt to achieve native-like accuracy.

Our data analysis has disclosed some relevant aspects of what teaching in another language means. On the one hand, it seems evident that there are structural measures that have to be adopted by the education authorities. How teaching staff are selected for EMI programs is one of them; accreditation of a minimum level of C1 by content lecturers would be advisable (Lasagabaster, 2019), but universities should also ask for a minimum linguistic entry level for the students, which would contribute to reducing the problems ascribed to heterogeneous classes (Halbach & Lázaro, 2015). In addition, it is essential to design a training program for EMI lecturers in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills and techniques to be really effective in the classroom. As the content lecturers pointed out, they need to know what the challenges in EMI actually are and how to cope with them. Also, there is a necessity for material support for both lecturers and students, while online resources are also demanded. Finally, with regard to collaboration with language lecturers, the universities should support this initiative, as team-teaching is considered to be a very valuable resource by EMI lecturers despite some potential side-effects. The discussion on team-teaching thus emerges as one of the main contributions of this paper, as EMI lecturers do acknowledge that its benefits clearly outweigh their potential misgivings, while it may become a very valuable asset when it comes to underpinning the success of EMI classes. Although universities are currently under financial constraints, there are different options available to implement team-teaching, such as funding from research and/or teaching innovation projects in which both language and content teachers could collaborate, or adopting flexible measures in the teaching load of language teachers, whose work on team-teaching projects could be added to their teaching load (alongside their language classes).

As a final remark, it has to be said that this study has obtained qualitative data whose results might have been complemented if more lecturers from the same universities or more lecturers from other universities would have participated. Despite this, we believe that their responses have given us a clear picture regarding their beliefs and attitudes towards the challenges of

teaching in another language and the potentiality of team-teaching through collaboration between content and language specialists.

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