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English Medium Education: A Handbook for Teachers

Insights from the University of Girona

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1. Introduction

English medium education

The term English medium education (EME) is used to refer to:

The teaching of academic subjects through English in contexts where English is not the primary language of communication. This term emphasises the multilingual nature of English medium and teaching, learning, research and administrative dimensions (Galloway, 2020, p. 6).

The term has been proposed as an alternative to the more widely known English medium instruction (EMI) for different reasons. One of the most notable is its inclusion of the word education, signalling a move away from conceptions of teaching as a unidirectional process, which the term instruction may infer. Furthermore, and as indicated in the definition provided above, the term emphasises the multilingual nature of the contexts in which EME is implemented, acknowledging the “diversity, complexity, tensions and richness” of current higher education institutions (HEIs) (Dafouz & Gray, 2022, p. 167).

Whether designated as EMI or EME (sometimes the terms are used synonymously in the literature), the phenomenon describes the increasing tendency to use English for educational purposes in HEIs across the globe (Dafouz & Smit, 2020). This tendency has been observed over recent years at the University of Girona, which provides the context and inspiration for this Handbook.

The English medium education teacher

Do you teach academic subjects through English? If the answer is yes, then you’re **already an EME teacher** and this Handbook may help you reflect on certain areas of your teaching.

Have you considered teaching in English but not yet taken this step? If so, this Handbook may help resolve your doubts and **accompany you on the journey** to becoming an EME teacher.

What it takes to be an EME teacher will be explored throughout this Handbook.

The Handbook

The Handbook aims to be **accessible and useful** to current and future EME teachers. Although conceived initially for teachers at the University of Girona, it may be of equal interest to teachers and policymakers in other higher education (hereinafter HE) settings where EME is being implemented. The Handbook is organised into separate sections focusing on different themes of interest and concern to EME teachers. These themes have been extracted from an in-depth thematic analysis of presentations delivered by members of the EME Teaching Innovation Network (Institute of Education Sciences, UdG). The aim of these presentations was to share **EME teaching experiences**, highlighting notable findings

reported, difficulties encountered, and lessons learned. Ten presentations were delivered by five female and five male teachers with varying years of teaching experience and diverse areas of academic expertise, from different departments in the faculties of Education and Psychology, Sciences, Law, Nursing, Arts, Medicine, Tourism, Economic and Business Sciences, the Polytechnic School, and the School of Health and Sport. The themes that emerged from these presentations were debated at length by members of the Network. The results of these debates have been summarised in this Handbook for the benefit of other university teachers.

As indicated above, the Handbook provides an **experience-based perspective** that aims to be accessible to current and future EME teachers. It is by no means presented as an exhaustive account of EME, but rather as an introductory guide to some of the issues that have emerged from our own experiences. Considerable research has been developed on the topics discussed in this Handbook in the specialised literature on EME and EMI. As a network, our aim is to contribute to these lines of enquiry by carrying out specific studies exploring the themes that have emerged in our own university context. In the meantime, and in response to the growing demand for support and guidance for EME teachers, this Handbook shares our initial findings and encourages other teachers to reflect upon the issues discussed in relation to their own practice. The references provided may be of particular interest to readers who would like to know more about recent developments in EME research.

The teaching innovation network as catalyst for change

Teaching innovation networks have emerged as a response to a shared perception that work needs to be developed around particular academic areas to improve HE (Stasewitsch et al. 2022). As such, networks can be seen as catalysts for change. As a form of professional development, this unique format is underpinned by a grassroots ethos that seeks to reflect on one's own practice, in collaboration with others, to identify areas for improvement and to design actions to introduce changes that could benefit the wider community. For the EME Network, this Handbook represents the culmination of our first line of action. On this initial part of our journey, we have become aware of many connections between our work and that of the other teaching innovation networks (*xarxes d'innovació docent* or XIDs) of the University, organised and supported by the Institute of Education Sciences (ICE). Wherever possible, we will point out these links throughout this Handbook. By doing this, we encourage present and future EME teachers to see these connections and to explore their own interests in and pathways to professional development.

Accessibility and inclusivity

Although developed by and for EME teachers at the University of Girona, this Handbook may be of interest to teachers in other HE contexts. For this reason, we have elaborated an open-access digital version. This corresponds with our belief that knowledge generated within a public institution should be made widely accessible to the public (Labastida, 2008). This accessible digital format also contributes to the aims established in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are the focus of the SDG Teaching Innovation Network at our University:

<https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-ods-en-la-docencia>

Extending the question of inclusivity further, and as a network focused on language, we recognise the fundamental role that language plays in classifying and interpreting experiences and constituting soci-

al relations and realities. We therefore celebrate the work carried out by our own University to promote the use of gender-inclusive language when using Catalan, the university's primary language (hereinafter L1):

https://www.udg.edu/ca/Portals/11/pdfs/UdG_llengua_guia_us_igualitari_llenguatge.pdf

We also support the work carried out by the Gender Perspective Teaching Innovation Network to address gender issues within HE:

<https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-perspectiva-de-genera>

Although English is less gendered than other languages, such as Catalan, care still needs to be taken to ensure appropriate and inclusive use of gender-inclusive English in academic work. Due care has been taken to reflect this in the Handbook, and we encourage all EME teachers to use inclusive language in their teaching and publications. An online search will provide ample support on this question from universities across the globe.

2. Objectives of EME

One of the clear themes that emerged from our analysis concerned the reasons or goals underpinning the implementation of EME. We have organised the different ideas that emerged into two different categories: 1) Internationalisation of higher education and 2) Uncertainty about objectives.

Internationalisation of higher education

Why teach subjects in English at a university where English is not a primary language of communication? According to the thematic analysis of our own experiences, the answer to this question is threefold:

1. To promote the internationalisation of study programmes
2. To develop students' international and intercultural competences
3. To attract students from abroad

Promoting the internationalisation of study programmes

The strength of this objective appears to be stronger or weaker depending on the study programme in question. This is not surprising if we step back and consider what internationalisation refers to. A widely accepted definition is provided below:

Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the **purpose**, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education (Knight, 2003, p. 2).

Although Knight's definition relates to country or institutional policies, we will draw on it here to consider differences across study programmes. Our analysis indicates that the stronger the sense of purpose (or clear mission), the more likely teachers are to advocate for the internationalisation of the study programme they teach on. In some cases, in fields such as law, science or technology, for example, this sense of mission is expressed strongly by teachers who consider the internationalisation of their studies to be a real need. From their perspective, addressing international, intercultural and global dimensions is vital to ensure that studies remain relevant and meaningful in the twenty-first century. In other areas, such as tourism, conceptual links with international relations and global issues have long been acknowledged and calls to promote internationalisation are often propelled at a faculty level, accompanied by a drive to increase the offer of subjects taught in English. Teachers in some subject areas may find the arguments for internationalising their courses rather weak, as occurs in programmes that include little student mobility or have a particularly local focus, as may be the case with some professional or vocational programmes of study. We will return to this point in the last part of this section, which deals with the uncertainties that can arise in EME contexts.

Developing students' international and intercultural competences

Providing subjects in English is seen by many as a way of contributing to the development of students' international and intercultural competences. This is particularly evident in situations in which students need to communicate with colleagues from other contexts. The most common scenarios in which this occurs are when students from international programmes join our study programmes temporarily, or when UdG students opt to spend part of their study programme abroad. Neither of these contexts necessitates the use of English, since incoming students may already speak Catalan or Spanish, or may be interested in learning these languages. Similarly, outgoing students may take the opportunity to learn the language(s) of the host country before they visit. Nevertheless, as a lingua franca (Galloway, 2020: 6), English can facilitate such opportunities, which explains the increasing drive to widen the offer of subjects taught in English across faculties.

Analysing our own experiences, there was a clear consensus that the use of English as a language of education could have a positive impact on students' future prospects, enhancing employment opportunities, international mobility, and the development of global skills and disciplinary knowledge (Beelen & Wit, 2012). Along these lines, some members of the Network referred to the new accreditation programme known as RECI (*Reconeixement d'estudiant amb competència internacional / Recognition as Students with International Competence*), which aims to certify undergraduate students' capacities to work in global contexts (UdG, 2020). To obtain this accreditation, students need to have carried out certain activities, which could include (but are not limited to) passing at least 12 ECTS credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System whereby 1 credit = approx. 25 hours of student work) in subjects delivered in a foreign language or elaborating their final dissertation in a foreign language. This initiative, along with others, is expected to give added impetus to the trend of increasing the use of English in HE.

Attracting students from abroad

In order to sign agreements with partner universities and welcome international students onto their programmes, universities need to provide a minimum number of courses in different languages. In this context, English is often prioritised as a lingua franca that can be shared across contexts. After sharing our experiences of courses that attract international students, we agreed that the presence of international students in our classes makes the EME experience more authentic. This contrasts with situations in which the use of English sometimes seems to be forced or unnatural (when the whole group, including the teacher, is speaking a language which is foreign to them). From this perspective, attracting students from abroad promotes authentic communication and meaningful international and intercultural experiences which considerably benefit both the incoming and home students.

Uncertainty about objectives

In the previous subsection we tried to respond to the genuinely important question: Why teach subjects in English in a non-English speaking university? We provided three reasons to support this line of action, but we also think it is important to highlight the level of uncertainty expressed during presentations and debates. Is EME always appropriate? Is it being pushed forward in a way which is incoherent with the goals of the study programme itself? These are questions that have emerged time and time again and will be explored in more depth in the different sections of this Handbook. It is important to note, however, that this uncertainty has also been raised by organisations such as the European Asso-

ciation for International Education (EAIE) in debates about the internationalisation of HE (IoHE) and the effect this can have on higher education institutions (HEIs):

We often see how IoHE is considered a goal in itself, rather than a means to enhance quality of education and research. Often, there is an over-focus on quantitative outputs: how many students, agreements, flows, how many places gained in the rankings and so on. This is linked to a growing emphasis on economic rationales in IoHE, the trend towards privatisation through revenue generation and the need to position the institution according to international ranking parameters (Hunter, 2015, para. 4).

Some members of the HE community are well aware that EME can contribute to the internationalisation of universities and that this, in turn, can have positive effects on revenue generation and rankings. Nevertheless, other members express concern that this in itself cannot provide the justification for teaching courses in English. In other words, **IoHE cannot be considered the goal in itself**. Although we see EME as part of a drive towards internationalisation, the ultimate goal is to **enhance the quality of education and research**. We need to ensure that EME is incorporated appropriately, in line with the new definition of IoHE advocated by the EAIE:

Internationalisation of higher education is “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society” (Hunter, 2015, para. 11).

An **intentional** process is one involving strategic thinking, planning and decision-making by all interested parties. As such, it encourages us to open up debate and make decisions regarding EME plans and provisions together, at all faculty levels, including students. The rationale behind introducing EME will differ according to study programmes. As such, attempts to impose top-down decisions are inappropriate since strategies need to be tailor-made to the specificities of each area of studies.

Placing more emphasis on the quality of education and research for **all** students and staff means thinking about internationalisation in a more inclusive way, which is not only focused on the small minority who have been fortunate enough to be able to study abroad. In other words, it means bringing the abroad component home and making it accessible to all students. This reminds us that IoHE is not a goal in itself and should not be driven or justified solely by economic interests. Instead, and as argued by Hunter (2015), it can be seen as a way of **enhancing quality** both within and beyond the institution.

The idea of bringing the abroad component home recalls some of the experiences shared by members of the group that involved partnerships with students and teachers from other universities/countries. In some cases, exchange experiences have provided the initial justification for switching to English to facilitate communication between the different participants. Restrictions on mobility imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022 could have signalled an end to such experiences. However, we seem to be witnessing a boom in these kinds of activities, facilitated by our increased familiarity with and use of online tools to carry out educational activities at a distance. It is no coincidence, then, that a new teaching innovation network was founded around the same time as our own, in direct response to the drive towards internationalisation and the growing interest in virtual exchange experiences and collaborative online international learning (COIL):

<https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-intercanvi-virtual-i-coil>

OBJECTIVES OF EME

Highlights

EME facilitates internationalisation processes.

–

Internationalisation processes need to be tailor-made and context specific, not imposed institutionally.

–

EME can contribute to developing international and intercultural competences.

–

EME can generate uncertainty or resistance if objectives and rationales are not clear.

–

EME can enhance the quality of education and research.

–

EME plus virtual exchange activities can make international and intercultural learning more accessible and inclusive.

3. EME teachers

In the previous section, we suggested that EME can contribute to enhancing the quality of education and research. This idea also emerged in discussions related to EME teacher profiles, as we see in the first subheading of this section: **Teacher competences in English**. Debates also emerged around questions of **teacher identity** and **perceptions of EME**, which will be discussed later in this section.

Teacher competences in English language

The EME teacher participants in our Network have different levels of English language competence. At an institutional level, there is no specific level requirement to be able to teach classes in English. As a network, we have frequently raised and debated this question at length. **Should a minimum level be established?** If so, what would this level be (B2, C1 or C2)? Would it be enough to talk about general language competence, or would we need to consider competence levels in English for specific purposes (ESP) or English for academic purposes (EAP). At least two members of the Network have taken exams offered by the University's Modern Language Service to obtain a certificate which recognises their ability to teach classes in English (*Certificat de capacitació del personal docent i investigador per a la docència en anglès / Teaching in English: Qualification certificate for teaching and research staff*). While they were under no obligation to take the exam (the certificate is not a requirement at this moment in time), those who obtained the certificate reported that it gave them more confidence when teaching in English. The question of confidence is of utmost importance, as we will discuss in further detail below in relation to teacher identities and perceptions.

EME teachers who consider their level adequate, but not proficient, provide interesting insights into the questions raised above. Not mastering the language of instruction means that they sometimes have difficulties with certain aspects, such as pronunciation or knowing the correct terminology to use. Teachers report spending more time preparing classes and class materials precisely in order to mitigate such problems. Despite any amount of preparation, spontaneous discussions arise in classroom situations which can be difficult to manage if the language generated moves outside the teacher's comfort zone. Some members reported feeling that their language level was not good enough, or that some students had a better level than they did.

The difficulties reported have also been interpreted as **learning opportunities**, as summed up by one member who saw EME as a way to learn continuously because of the need to:

- read a considerable number of texts to prepare classes,
- watch audio-visual material to be able to develop different kinds of exercises,
- write coherent and meaningful statements and instructions for students, and
- read and understand all the material that students submit.

As this member sums up, "Teaching in English means having to use the language in all its dimensions". Or, in the words of another member, becoming an EME teacher is "like a lifelong learning English experience".

EME is seen as a challenge, but one which can have a dual effect on language competences and professional teaching competences. In this sense, members agreed that they were constantly improving their English by teaching in the language. They also agreed that the challenges raised by EME improved their own teaching practice in different ways and prompted them to reconsider their roles as teachers (see Section 6). One member suggested that “teaching a subject in English develops different skills”, such as:

- the capacity to present a topic succinctly,
- the capacity to interact and communicate with students,
- the ability to understand what students are asking, and
- the ability to articulate appropriate responses.

While prompted initially by the challenges of EME, these improvements are transferred beyond the EME domain and into the general first language (L1) practice of teachers who experience such changes. This supports the suggestion made in the previous section that EME can **enhance the quality of education and research**.

Teacher identity

Research in the field of teacher education highlights the importance of addressing identity as a component in teacher development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teachers’ views of themselves and their professional roles are influenced by their own beliefs and a wide range of contextual factors. Changes in context and beliefs can bring about shifts in identity which have implications for teaching practice. This can be illustrated by referring back to the insecurities reported above in relation to language competence.

A teacher who identifies as a confident university lecturer may experience a shift in perspective if they are constantly questioning their own competence levels or thinking that they are not good enough. In this regard, it is interesting to note how the Teaching in English qualification certificate had a positive effect in terms of **boosting teachers’ confidence and legitimising their work**. However, it is also worth considering the insecurity reported in relation to their perception that students sometimes had a better level of English than they did. Reflecting on this situation prompts us to think carefully about how we perceive ourselves as teachers and how we envisage the teacher-student relationship. Teachers who identify as facilitators and guides are more likely to find ways of taking advantage of high competence levels among students than to feel threatened by them. Similarly, teachers who are immersed in the language learning process will be more likely to empathise with their students and be sensitive to the need to scaffold learning and provide learners with appropriate support. Finally, teachers who understand themselves and present themselves as lifelong learners provide students with **positive role models** at a time when students are developing their own professional identities.

Teacher identities can also be influenced by external factors, such as feedback from students. This question was raised in debates within our network as a factor which could prove to have a dissuasive effect on EME delivery. Commenting on official student surveys, some teachers highlighted disparities between the positive results they obtained when teaching in L1 and the less positive results from EME classes. They felt that specific institutional measures were needed to ensure that official surveys were interpreted appropriately, taking into account the complexities and challenges of EME, and avoiding simplistic quantitative interpretations which may have a demotivating effect on teachers. Throughout

this section we have talked about concepts such as motivation, confidence levels, and self-perception. This is particularly important when exploring questions of identity. Reflecting on these questions helped to address the concerns raised by some members of our Network in relation to their own identities as professionals teaching in a language which they do not master as well as their L1. Some debates uncovered insecurities which echo those identified in recent studies asking us to rethink the “ideal native speaker” teacher and to consider the negative impact that this ideal has on teachers who identify as “non” (i.e. non-native) (Waddington, 2022):

Can I really do this if I'm not a native speaker of the language?

This sense of being “not good enough” has been likened to the **imposter syndrome** suffered by women in professions previously dominated by men (Bernat, 2009). Increasing awareness of these questions can empower teachers by exposing and debunking deficit views (Roberts et al. 2019), replacing them with an appreciative lens focused on “considering what their strengths are, and how these can be used as a basis for further innovation and growth” (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020, p. 124). Rather than self-identifying with a label that defines them as “non”, teachers are encouraged to adopt a more appreciative view which explicitly recognises their multilingual competences and the multilingual realities in which they work. This shift in perspective is in line with evolving understandings of language education and calls to re-designate classroom spaces as **bilingual or multilingual communities** in which “native speaker” and monolingual norms are no longer imposed on multilingual users of language (Turnbull, 2016; Rab-bidge, 2019). The self-reflection activity suggested below can help to identify where we stand in terms of viewing ourselves through a deficit or appreciative lens, as a first step to developing more nuanced and constructive views of EME teaching.

| How do you self-identify as a teacher (when using English)? | |
|---|--|
| Deficit view | Appreciative view |
| Non-native teacher | EME teacher Bilingual teacher Multilingual teacher |

Perceptions of English medium education

When we discussed overall perceptions of EME, one of the most positive findings related to the possibility for internationalising courses and attracting incoming students from mobility programmes. This confirms the points made at the end of the previous subsection regarding the need to re-designate EME classroom spaces as multilingual communities in which an increasingly varied mix of languages and cultural perspectives come together. While these kinds of spaces can generate rich learning environments, teachers need to manage classroom situations effectively, actively creating opportunities

for group work and other activities that stimulate intercultural exchanges. Teachers agreed that, when this works, EME classes provide one of the most effective means of promoting meaningful and purposeful internationalisation, in line with the objectives discussed in Section 2.

Despite this initial positive overview, teachers highlighted the challenges that EME brings. As discussed above, these challenges were generally seen as learning opportunities, prompting teachers to look for and implement different (more active) teaching methods which then expanded and improved their teaching across languages. The kinds of methods that emerged are discussed in detail in Section 6 (Teacher role and methodology). In some cases, negative feedback from student surveys, or disparities between teachers' survey results for classes delivered in Catalan or English, prompted them to question if it was worth doing the subject in English. Again, this suggests the need for institutional measures to ensure that survey results are interpreted appropriately and that the additional effort invested by teachers is acknowledged accordingly. Reflecting further on negative survey results, teachers also wondered what could be done to increase students' awareness of the benefits of EME. They felt that this was a concern, or a goal, that could be shared at faculty or university level, aiming to build constructive attitudes towards EME among staff and students. From the teachers' perspective, emphasising the benefits of EME for students and their future careers at the start of the course was found to be a meaningful approach to ameliorate students' perceptions and attitudes.

EME TEACHERS

Highlights

Teaching in another language (not L1) means constantly learning that language: teachers who present themselves as lifelong learners provide students with positive role models.

–

Challenges raised by EME prompt improvements in teaching practice which are transferred to general/non-EME teaching practice.

–

Switching languages can impact teacher confidence levels: reflection on this can help promote appreciative rather than deficit views of self and conceptualise teacher identity within a multilingual framework.

–

Institutional measures are needed to support EME teachers and recognise the additional effort invested in planning and teaching classes.

4. EME students

This section presents our analysis of findings related to students enrolled on EME courses. As with EME teachers, similar patterns emerged, focusing on their **language competence**, their **identities**, and their **perceptions of EME**.

Student competences in English language

All teachers reported **considerable variability** in relation to students' English language competence, with class groups typically including competence levels ranging from A2 to C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). The degree of variability depended on the type of course. Unsurprisingly, the most pronounced variability was reported on compulsory courses in which students had not chosen to enrol. Also predictable was how students with low language competence levels struggled to follow classes, generating concerns among teachers that this could represent a barrier to their successful learning of the course content. These concerns generated the same question that had emerged in relation to teachers: **Should a minimum level be established?** In the case of compulsory courses, this question seems to be redundant if the course is part of the students' basic study programme, and if a minimum level of English has not been a pre-entry requirement for access onto the programme. In such cases, our discussions highlighted the need to have appropriate measures in place so that students with low language levels are not unduly disadvantaged by the language of the course. The kinds of concerns commonly expressed by students, such as whether they would have to answer exam questions in English, should therefore be taken seriously, as discussed in more length in Section 7 (Assessment). Section 6 (Teacher role and methodology) also sheds more light on the kind of measures that can help reduce the barriers to learning and provide strategies for working with linguistically heterogeneous groups.

Student identity

Recent research stresses the need to consider learner identity in educational practice, "in order to promote the construction of favourable learner identities and to improve the interplay between the individuals' learner identity, the educational activity and its outcomes" (Coll & Falsafi, 2010, p. 211). Changes in learning conditions, such as the language used and the make-up of the group, can have a mediating effect on student identities, which are always in a process of ongoing and co-constructed development (Ushioda, 2011). Taking into account the effect of learning in a second language, Lamb (2011) describes learner identities as "fragile" and stresses the need for teachers to "ensure that the learning environment they create engages, nurtures, and protects their learners' identity as learners through sustained opportunities for autonomy" (p. 68). On this account, increased opportunities for autonomy engender more effective learning, while increased teacher control has the opposite effect, potentially demotivating learners. These considerations can help make sense of some of the situations reported in discussions of our own experiences, particularly with regard to students' language use.

Teachers of courses attracting students from mobility programmes reported positive experiences in which students seemed to be developing identities characterised by **intercultural awareness/interest and flexible approaches to language switching** (relying mainly on English as a means of communication). By contrast, in classes consisting mainly or exclusively of home students, teachers displayed uneasiness insofar as they admitted that students often spoke Catalan when working in small groups or carrying out activities. Furthermore, teachers admitted that they occasionally used Catalan to clarify a message that students might not have fully understood, although they felt that they should probably avoid this. Referring back to Lamb's (2011) warning about increases in teacher control correlating with decreases in motivation, **a strict imposition of language use may be counterproductive**. Instead, it may be worth considering the phenomenon in relation to students' emerging identities and in view of recent developments in research in language education. The uneasiness that teachers reveal about students (or themselves) using Catalan in the EME classroom can be explained by prevailing ideas about how best to teach a foreign language, which have been sustained by an overreliance on research framed within monolingual speaker norms (e.g., English-speaking research communities) and a disregard for knowledge obtained from bilingual/multilingual contexts (García & Wei, 2014; Kachru, 1994; Rabbidge, 2019).

Recent work in the field of language education has questioned received ideas about exclusion (of first language) policies, emphasising the link between language learning experiences and positive identity formation. Wei (2014) has reported that translanguaging grants students complete access to their languages and enables them to utilize all elements of their cognitive ability, including their diverse knowledge and experiences. The resulting transformative effect on the learned information can positively influence their developing identities, as highlighted by Rabbidge (2019), who stresses the implicit connection between language learning and identity formation.

These findings suggest that a **balance** needs to be found between using English as the main language of instruction within the EME classroom and maintaining flexible approaches that recognise **students' autonomy** when choosing which language to express themselves in. Deploying their other languages in the EME class may not only serve to facilitate and advance student learning, but may also contribute to developing positive learner identities, characterised by the ability to switch between languages and operate effectively in multilingual contexts.

Perceptions of English medium education

According to teacher observations, student perceptions of EME vary considerably depending on the course and the study programme. Some teachers reported that students seemed to appreciate EME classes because they realised that "English is the technical language used nowadays", while others reported the opposite, with EME classes creating disorientation, scepticism about the need to have classes in English or resistance among students. The fact that reports of satisfaction were accompanied by comments about the perceived need to acquire English for the purposes of their future professions supports the point highlighted in Section 2 regarding a sense of purpose. We saw that the stronger the sense of purpose, the more likely teachers were to advocate for the internationalisation of their study programmes. The same seems to occur with students: **satisfaction levels correlate with a clear sense of purpose**. Alternatively, and as suggested previously, EME can generate **uncertainty or resistance** if the objectives and rationale behind its implementation are not clear to all parties.

Furthermore, and reflecting the language use debates discussed in the previous section, this lack of purpose affects students' perceptions of the need to use the language. As one teacher noted, "it's very

difficult to stick to English instead of Catalan or Spanish if there’s no obligation to use it”. The difficulty mentioned is different from the question of choice and autonomy in relation to the language switching reported in most EME classes. Instead, the difficulty appears to denote a tension that arises when things do not seem to make sense or lack any real purpose. In cases like this, the question “can’t we just do the class in Catalan?” deserves a well-thought-out response which prompts students to identify the benefits of “doing the class in English” for themselves. However, rather than providing students with a pre-prepared response, it may be more effective to promote reflection and encourage them to construct their own ideas, while simultaneously exploring any potential concerns they may have. The kind of reflection activity suggested below can help build **favourable perceptions**, generating **constructive environments** in which students and teachers can create a **joint sense of purpose** and share their thoughts on how to minimise any difficulties that may arise.

| Reflection activities for 1st class (Individual reflection followed by small group discussions then whole-class debates) | |
|---|---|
| Why do you think this course is in English? | What are your concerns about this (if any)? |
| ... | ... |

EME STUDENTS

Highlights

-
- Measures need to be in place to ensure students are not disadvantaged by the language of course delivery (English), particularly on compulsory courses.
-
- Creating a positive learning environment is important to engage students and protect their emerging multilingual identities.
-
- A strict imposition of language use may be counterproductive: judicious use of students’ first languages may contribute to maintaining a positive learning environment.
-
- EME can generate uncertainty or resistance if the objectives and rationale behind its implementation are not clear to all parties: reflecting on objectives together can help create a sense of joint purpose.

5. Learning objectives & outcomes

In this section, we present findings related to the **learning objectives and outcomes of EME** courses. Our analysis identified a degree of uncertainty regarding objectives and potential outcomes. One of the main concerns related to the question of whether the focus should be on **learning subject content or on learning and improving English**. In this regard, our findings are in tune with research carried out across the globe (McKinley & Galloway, 2022) by aiming to develop understandings of EMI/EME.

Learning objectives

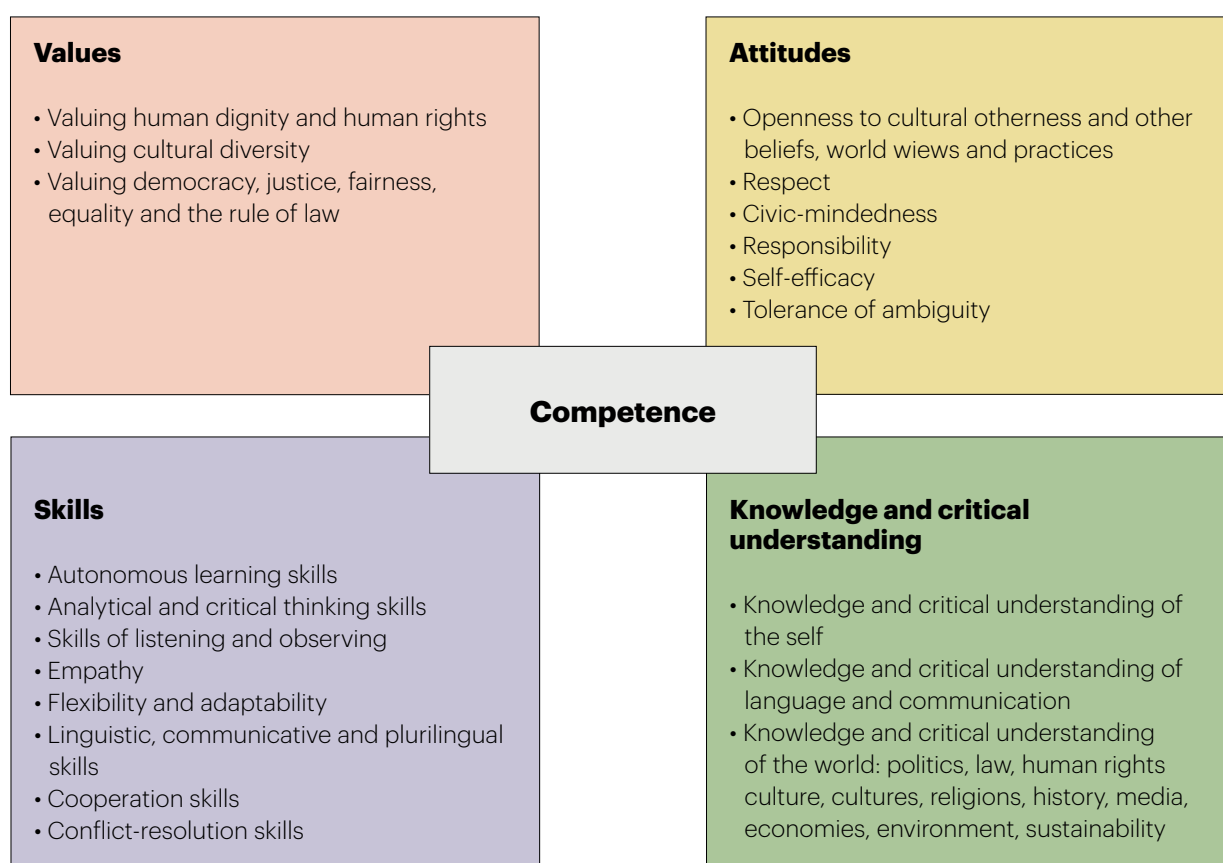
Some teachers reported that they taught some subjects in Catalan or English to different groups of students. In these cases, it was not always clear to them if the objectives of the course remained the same when they changed language. In other cases, they reported teaching different elements of the same course in different languages, which also generated some uncertainty. An example of this is when a lecture is given in Catalan, followed by an active problem-based learning component which is carried out in English. Some of these uncertainties seem to be directly linked to the issues discussed in the previous section (Perceptions of EME), particularly concerning the ability to switch between languages effectively and operate in multilingual contexts. Perhaps these uncertainties will decrease as teachers and learners become more accustomed to operating in multilingual contexts and switching between languages. In the meantime, what emerges is that **establishing clear and transparent objectives** for all elements of courses (overall course, specific tasks, assessment activities) can help alleviate the uncertainties of teachers and students alike. Furthermore, it is important to maintain course objectives despite language changes: if one of the principle objectives of a course is to raise awareness of the importance of xxx in the field of xxx, then this objective should not be altered or compromised by changes in the language the course is delivered in.

Learning outcomes

In relation to the need to maintain objectives and standards, our experiences revealed concerns about the extent to which EME might affect learning outcomes. Reflecting on experiences in the field of science, one member reported that in many ways, using Catalan might have improved students' learning. This perception was shared by members from other areas, with one teacher wondering if it was worth doing the subject in English. On the one hand, these reflections highlight the need for genuine debate about whether EME is appropriate in all contexts, as discussed in Section 2. On the other hand, different experiences suggest that EME teaching may contribute to expanding expectations of learning outcomes beyond an exclusive focus on knowledge acquisition, turning attention to the development of key competences such as **interpersonal and interactional skills, active participation, autonomy, responsibility for one's own learning process**, and so on. This expansion aligns with developments in European policy that repeatedly refer to the need for competence-based study programmes in HE for the sake of individual learners and the societies they live in:

The Paris Communiqué (Bologna Process 2018) emphasised that by providing students and other learners with opportunities for lifelong personal development, higher education enhances their prospects of employment and stimulates them to be active citizens in democratic societies (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 15).

While the “development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 14) is considered to be fundamental to HE, the development of the transversal competences indicated in the model below are also considered essential to promote democratic and human rights.



Source: Council of Europe (2018, p. 38)

This model could provide EME teachers with a useful tool for re-evaluating anticipated learning outcomes and developing holistic approaches within their courses. In this regard, studies have found that classes taught through English are often more **student-centred and interactive** precisely because of lecturers’ concerns to ensure that content is understood by students (Dafouz & Camacho-Miñano, 2016; Dafouz, 2018; Galloway, 2020).

Learning subject content or improving English?

As stated in the introduction to this section, one of the main concerns emerging from our analysis was whether the focus of EME classes should be on learning subject content or on learning and improving English. Experiences suggest that most teachers in our Network position themselves clearly as **con-**

tent experts and not English language instructors, in line with findings from studies in other EMI/EME contexts (Galloway, 2020). Having said that, some teachers mentioned that they provided students with bilingual glossaries and other resources, which can be considered a form of **specific language support**. Similarly, making all written information accessible using the university's virtual learning platform and sending clear messages via forums can also be considered **support mechanisms** that aid comprehension and facilitate learning. Although teachers positioned themselves clearly on the side of content delivery, they believed that students often improved their English as a direct consequence of the course. One common belief was that the quality of work and technical reports improved gradually, even though the use of English was not assessed. They were also aware of the potential disadvantages faced by students with low levels of English, reporting that students with higher levels performed better and achieved higher marks. This supports previous studies of EMI/EME courses warning of the Matthew effect, in which "the students most likely to succeed [...] are those who enter the course already highly proficient in English" (Galloway, 2020, p. 31).

Although English proficiency has been confirmed to be a predictor of success in EMI/EME courses, studies have also shown that perceived success can also predict actual success (Thompson et al., 2019; Galloway, 2020). This suggests the need for a twofold approach focusing on language development on the one hand and self-efficacy beliefs on the other. Universities can foster language development by providing students with linguistic support in the form of language courses and other resources (the Modern Language Service of UdG has a permanent offer of courses which can be consulted at <https://www.udg.edu/en/llengues/>). EME teachers can play a key role in promoting more positive self-efficacy beliefs, as discussed in more depth in Section 4 in relation to student identities. This suggests a need to go beyond the dichotomy suggested by the content or language debate, recognising the need for **holistic teaching approaches focused on developing content, language and the transversal competences** highlighted earlier (Learning Outcomes).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

Highlights

–
Course objectives should be maintained despite changes in language of delivery.

–
EME can contribute to expanding expectations of learning outcomes beyond an exclusive focus on knowledge acquisition, moving towards the development of key competences (interpersonal and interactional skills, active participation, autonomy, responsibility for one's own learning process).

–
EME classes are often more student-centred and interactive precisely because of lecturers' concerns to ensure that content is understood.

–
Although most EME teachers see themselves as content teachers, not language teachers, providing language support mechanisms is part of the EME teacher's role.

–
Holistic approaches focused on developing content, language skills and transversal competences promote the most positive learning outcomes.

6. Teacher role & methodology

This section begins by considering how EME teachers understand their **own roles**. It then highlights **different methods** teachers employ which, in their view, have facilitated and enhanced the quality of their EME courses.

Teacher's role

There was wide consensus among participants in our debates that teacher roles change, or have to change, when teaching through a language which is foreign to most students (English). As mentioned already in Section 3, there is a sense that teaching EME courses has a direct impact on professional teaching competences, prompting teachers to re-evaluate their own roles. This re-evaluation can be summed up by one teacher who insisted that:

The teacher is a guide, not an expert on all things. The teacher provides support, empathy, inspiration...

The emphasis on support, empathy and inspiration is strongly aligned with the call for holistic approaches focused on developing **content knowledge, language skills and the transversal competences** highlighted earlier (Learning Outcomes). In order to become an effective **guide** or **facilitator**, members emphasised the need for careful preparation of activities and materials to generate classroom scenarios in which students take a central role and assume responsibility for their own learning processes. **Minimising teacher talking time** and **maximising student talking time** was seen as crucial to generating discussion and participation among students.

Teaching methodologies

Members reported using **active methods** that moved increasingly away from lecture mode and encouraged **collaborative group work** among students. **Interactive styles** that alternate brief teacher presentations with student activities were mentioned as particularly effective methods. When presenting key content, teachers need to use clear visual supports and to make these available to students before class in a way that aligns with **flipped classroom methods**. Considerable use was also made of **Problem-based learning (PBL)**, particularly in some faculties.

Regarding group work, teachers highlighted the benefits of **grouping students purposefully** to enhance learning experiences. An example of this involved asking students to form **linguistically heterogeneous groups**, thereby promoting peer support and reducing the risk of dropout or disconnection among students with lower language levels. Mixing students from **international programmes with home students** was also mentioned as a key strategy for promoting intercultural exchanges and developing students' transversal competences. Setting meaningful tasks involving **group project development** or the preparation of **group presentations** was mentioned as an effective way to stimulate autonomous learning and maximise participation. Considering the higher cognitive demands of EME classes, teachers mentioned the need to incorporate frequent **changes in class dynamics** and to vary the kinds of activities carried out in class (see examples below), paying particular attention to providing visual supports to facilitate student learning:

| | | |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Creation of mind maps | Case studies | Small group debates |
| Self-reflection activities | Jigsaw readings | |
| Watching/commenting on audio-visual material | | |
| Simulations of professional experiences/roleplays | | |
| Images to elicit information/generate discussion | | |
| Padlet wall to share previous knowledge | | |

Another strategy to maximise student talking time and increase engagement was the incorporation of structured **peer observation and feedback activities**. These could take the form of written feedback using functions available through virtual learning platforms (e.g., forums) or other digital resources, or they could be carried out orally, using peer feedback rubrics to develop interpersonal skills while simultaneously fostering the co-construction of knowledge (Waddington, 2019). The use of **peer evaluation** at the university has been analysed in numerous publications (Arbat Pujolràs et al., 2013; Suñol et al., 2016; Planas-Lladó et al., 2017).

Some of the active methods mentioned in this section can be explored further by consulting the work carried out by other teaching innovation networks (XIDs) at the University of Girona:

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Cooperative learning | XID Aprenentatge cooperatiu | https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-aprenentatge-cooperatiu |
| Flipped classroom | XID Classe inversa | https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-classe-inversa |
| Problem-based learning | XID Aprenentatge basat en problemes | https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-aprenentatge-basat-en-problemes |
| Assessment strategies | XID Estratègies d'avaluació | https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-estrategies-davaluacio |

Information on these active methodologies at the University of Girona can also be found at: https://iceberg.udg.edu/?page_id=74

TEACHER ROLE & METHODOLOGY

Highlights

–

The teacher is a guide, not an expert on all things: becoming an expert guide involves careful preparation of classes and materials.

–

Active methodologies can help minimise teacher talking time and maximise student talking time.

–

Social organisation can impact class dynamics: organising students into linguistically heterogeneous groups can promote peer support and reduce disconnection among students with lower language levels.

–

Frequent changes in class dynamics can help maintain interest, despite the higher cognitive demands of EME classes.

–

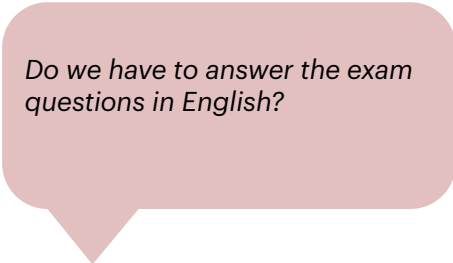
Structured peer observation and feedback activities can further maximise student participation and talking time.

7. Assessment

In this section, we address another issue that generates considerable concern among EME teachers: how to assess students fairly and appropriately. We begin by discussing assessment criteria and reflecting on the use of English in assessments. We then go on to highlight some of the tendencies reported by teachers in our Network regarding assessment methods.

Assessment criteria

Comparing their approach to assessment between L1 and EME classes, some members reported that switching to EME had prompted them to re-evaluate their assessment criteria and the methods they used, while others did not report changes. This is cause for concern if we recall the discussions raised in Section 4 (EME students) about EME courses representing a potential barrier to learning and achievement for students with lower levels of English. Evidence from across different study programmes indicates that some students worried that the language of the course would impact negatively on their performance, as manifested in the following question repeatedly asked by students on the first day of a new course:



Do we have to answer the exam questions in English?

Reporting on similar phenomena across the globe, experts stress that questions like this should be taken seriously by teachers and educationalists alike: brushing them under the carpet or burying our head in the sand like ostriches (Macaro, 2015) is no longer an option bearing in mind the exponential growth of EMI/EME and its impact on students.

Section 4 highlighted the need to have suitable measures in place to reduce the risk of students being unduly disadvantaged by the language of instruction, particularly in the context of compulsory courses in which a pre-entry requirement for access has not been stipulated. In this respect, one of the most significant measures relates to the establishment of clear assessment criteria which are shared with students from the beginning of the course. This information could be shared after or during the reflection activity suggested at the end of Section 4, providing a space for students to air their concerns and for the teacher to explain *how* the course is assessed and *which* criteria are applied (including the use of English, discussed in more detail below).

Several members highlighted the importance of using diverse assessment methods to provide stu-

dents with different opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired and the competences they have developed. In these cases, members discussed the importance of setting clear assessment criteria for the different kinds of tasks and deciding on the value/percentage allocated to each task in relation to the final mark. Some examples of typical distributions reported are illustrated below:

| Example 1 | % of final mark | Example 2 | % of final mark |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Written exam | 30 | Theoretical exam | 20 |
| Training questionnaires | 20 | Group work | 30 |
| Group work | 30 | Presentations of group work | 10 |
| Follow-up activities | 20 | Case resolution | 40 |

Use of English in assessments

Some members noticed a tendency for students with “better English levels” to be the ones with the highest marks at the end of the course. Their observation that language level was an indicator of advantage supports previous studies warning of the Matthew effect in EMI/EME courses (discussed in Section 5), whereby the students most likely to succeed are those who are already proficient in English. The growing awareness of the potentially discriminatory effect of this tendency appears to be filtering through to teachers’ decisions regarding language requirements in assessment procedures, resulting in more flexible approaches to language usage. Three tendencies were reported by members of our Network:

| Tendency | Language use in assessments |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Work submitted in Catalan or Spanish |
| 2 | Work submitted in English |
| 3 | Students able to choose |

The tendencies seem to correlate strongly with whether the course is optional or compulsory. The second option, in which work is submitted in English, seems to be dominant in optional courses or where students demonstrate sufficient levels of English for this not to represent a disadvantage. Not surprisingly, the decision to accept work in the students’ L1 as opposed to English is most common in compulsory courses where students have not been able to choose whether to take the subject in English or not. One member suggested that permitting the submission of work in L1 means that the use of EME is not complete. Whether or not this is the case, teachers on compulsory courses sometimes view this as an essential measure to ensure that students are assessed fairly. The idea that the use of L1 comprises the status of the EME course may reflect prevailing ideas about what constitutes “correct” or “best” foreign language teaching practice, as discussed in Section 4. By allowing students access to their whole language repertoire during assessment procedures, teachers may in fact be promoting the kind of transformative processes which question the exclusion of first language policies and encourage students to utilize all elements of their cognitive ability (García & Wei, 2014; Kachru, 1994; Rabbidge, 2019).

The third option, in which students are able to choose which language to use, aligns strongly with the suggestions advanced in Section 4 about the need to strike a **balance** in the EME classroom and to

maintain flexible approaches that recognise **students' autonomy** when choosing which language to express themselves in. Nevertheless, and as emphasised earlier, it is crucial to establish clear criteria so that students are aware of the implications of expressing themselves in one language or another. One member reported that some students “were brave enough to do the exam in English”. An important question to ask is if this perceived “bravery” is recognised or rewarded in some way, or if their use of English will have no effect on the final mark, or might even jeopardise it. Questions like this should be contemplated beforehand and addressed clearly within the assessment criteria so that teachers' and students' expectations concur.

Assessment methods

Members reported using a diverse range of methods to assess students, which reflect the active methodologies discussed earlier in Section 6:

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Classroom activities (e.g. roleplays, games, interviews) | | |
| Portfolios | Reflective journals | Oral presentations |
| Training questionnaires | Case study presentations | |
| Group projects | Follow-up activities | |
| Case resolution | | |
| Written exams | Weekly assignments | |
| Self and peer assessment activities | | |

Considerable emphasis was placed on the need for continuous assessment measures, with attendance and active participation in classroom activities acquiring particular significance. Emphasis was also placed on the need to include measures to assess students individually, and to balance this with the tendency to assess students as part of a group. One member reported using self- and peer-assessment activities as a means of fostering more student autonomy and developing students' interpersonal skills (for more information on peer assessment see the Assessment Strategies Teaching Innovation Network at <https://www.udg.edu/ca/ice/innovacio-docent/xarxes-dinnovacio-docent/xid-estrategies-davaluacio>).

Overall, and consistent with the findings discussed in Section 5, members of the Network position themselves as content teachers and tend not to assess English language use in an explicit way. Further research is needed to find out if this strategy benefits students (particularly those with lower levels of language competence) or whether students with high levels of English are still in a position of advantage in such contexts.

ASSESSMENT**Highlights**

–

Careful reflection is needed to decide how to assess students fairly and appropriately in EME classes.

Assessment criteria should be clear and transparent, including use of language in assignments. (To what extent is English language competence evaluated? Is use of L1 accepted?)

A combination of diverse assessment methods provides students with different opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge acquired and/or the competences developed.

Continuous assessment methods align particularly well with the active methodologies advocated.

Measures need to be in place to assess students individually as well as in groups.

8. Impact & questions for further study

This final section considers the impact that EME can have at different levels, according to the experiences and perspectives of teachers in our Network. Most of the points have been raised already in earlier sections. They are mentioned briefly in this final section as a way of highlighting critical questions which deserve closer attention and further study.

Effect on quality of studies and student satisfaction

Regarding the quality of the work submitted by students, some members suggest that the work submitted shows gradual improvements in terms of language use and technical content, even though the use of English is not assessed. This idea was reinforced by one member who suggested that “EME is a good way to learn English in a continuous way”. Another member questioned this positive evaluation, wondering if it really is worth delivering some subjects in English, and suggesting that this might have a negative impact on student satisfaction. Conducting their own end-of-year survey to shed more light on the matter, they found that most students would have preferred it if the subject had been delivered in Catalan.

Along similar lines, another member questioned whether students are sufficiently prepared for EME courses and was concerned about teachers potentially “dumbing down” content to compensate for the potential language barrier. This perspective varied considerably depending on the subject taught, the students and teachers involved, the number of students in the group, and the optional or compulsory nature of the course. On this last note, one member reported on the benefits of **including students in consultation processes** when deciding whether to start offering a course in English. Asking current students to help decide on future policy proved effective in terms of establishing viable plans and identifying potential difficulties from the student perspective.

Further research is needed to evaluate the impact of EME on the quality of studies and student satisfaction across the University.

Influence on professional opportunities for students

In Section 2, we reported that there was clear consensus within the Network that the use of English as a medium of education could have a positive impact on students’ future prospects, enhancing their employment opportunities and developing their global skills. It would be interesting to validate this suggestion by testing out students’ perspectives and analysing the link between EME and the development of “global skills” in further depth. It would also be worth considering the extent to which members’ views have been shaped by the increasing drive to internationalisation, which may be more related to market forces and concerns about university rankings than to real questions of individual professional development. The point that has emerged throughout our analysis is that **each context needs to be**

evaluated in its own right, taking into account all factors. One expert asks us to reflect carefully on the assumption that “global is best” by posing the following question:

In the case of subjects which have a clear vocational trajectory, is it the case that the best (or the most comprehensive) learning will take place in the global language rather than the local one? (Macaro, 2014, p. 5).

This reflection aligns with our own observations (see Section 2) that arguments for internationalising courses are less convincing or coherent in the context of study programmes with little student mobility or with a particularly “local” focus. These observations are not intended to undermine or question EME but, rather, to ensure that it is implemented for the right reasons and in the best possible ways. As experts in the field have insisted, asking the difficult questions (i.e., is EME appropriate in all contexts?) is necessary to avoid “top-down initiatives introduced without adequate preparation and without adequate resources” (Macaro, 2014, p. 7).

Influence on professional opportunities for teachers

There was wide consensus among members that becoming an EME teacher had a positive effect on their professional life, generating new opportunities and experiences. At a professional development level, assuming the role of bilingual or multilingual teacher brings challenges, but also many opportunities for advancement. One member summed it up this way:

In my opinion, teaching a subject in English develops different skills: the capacity to present the topic and the capacity to interact and communicate with students.

Further research with EME teachers across the University could explore this further. Identifying the challenges and benefits of becoming an EME teacher could help promote reflection among current EME teachers while simultaneously facilitating the transition from L1 to English medium teaching for more teachers.

IMPACT & QUESTIONS FOR FUTHER STUDY

Highlights

–
EME can promote continuous learning in English, and it can also be perceived as a barrier to learning: its use should be considered carefully according to the course/study plan in question.

–
Involving students in consultation processes can help decide on future policies and identify areas for improvement.

–
Balancing the requirements of the local and global is essential: learning in the global language may not always be the most suitable/appropriate option.

–
Care needs to be taken to ensure that courses are not being “dumbed down” to compensate for language barriers in EME classes.

–
What happens when student satisfaction surveys are affected negatively by EME? What are the implications and what can institutions do to address this?

–
To what extent can EME contribute to the development of students’ and teachers’ “global skills”?

–
How do students and teachers perceive EME and its place in the university? What particular challenges and benefits do they identify?

9. Concluding note

The themes presented in this Handbook have been developed on the basis of an in-depth analysis of presentations delivered by members of the EME Teaching Innovation Network (ICE, UdG). Discussions of the themes have taken into account recent literature in the field, to provide readers with an accessible introduction to some of the key issues that have emerged. The highlights at the end of each section provide a summary of key points and raise important questions for ongoing debate.

At the time of writing, the Network is designing further studies to explore some of these questions in a more extensive way, reaching beyond our own experiences to survey teachers and students across the University. In the meantime, we hope the reflections shared in the Handbook provide insights and orientations that are accessible and useful to current and future EME teachers at our University and beyond.

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